

## A STORY FOR THE FUTURE. MAXXI's First Decade

an intangible exhibition, in which the works are not *physically* present, but rather are brought back to life in a kaleidoscope of over 1,200 images, an outstanding patrimony of archive interviews, texts and publications  
with an engaging, sensory spatial design, signed by Dutch studio *Inside Outside* by Petra Blaisse

an invitation to go back over recent history, that of the Museum, but also the global one, to cast light on the near future and be an active part of an exceptional collective brainstorming

curated by Hou Hanru

main partner Enel

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Rome 16 February 2021. A decade ago **MAXXI** opened its doors, those of the first National Museum in Italy dedicated to contemporary creativity. A major architectural work, featuring audacious and spectacular forms, but above all a place in which to immerse oneself and get ideas to circulate. A “permeable” museum continuously in progress, over the past decade MAXXI has been a modern-day *Roman Forum* for contemporary creativity, open to the city and the world, a crossroads of thinking where the visions and some of the finest works of the artists have joined to discuss the most urgent and pressing matters of our day and age.

Thanks to ***A Story for the Future. MAXXI's First Decade***, a great encyclopaedic exhibition with which the museum inaugurates its next decade, this extraordinary patrimony of ideas, actions, and insights comes back to life.

The project, curated by **Hou Hanru** with the curatorial and scientific coordination of **Elena Motisi**, involved the entire **team at MAXXI** in a monumental iconographic research project lasting over two years, aimed at collecting and organizing an immense archive of photographs, interviews, and publications.

The mission to organize visually and spatially such an explosion of ideas and stimuli was commissioned from the famous Dutch studio ***Inside Outside*** by **Petra Blaisse**, in charge of the exhibition design, realized with the support of the **Embassy of Kingdom of the Netherlands in Rome**.

Main partner **Enel**.

After *Non basta ricordare*, the first project by MAXXI's Artistic Director, in which he rethought the concept of the permanent collection, after emptying out the museum to fill it with the sounds and performances of *Open Museum Open City*, Hou Hanru has once again carried out a radical gesture: an exhibition that is a *non-exhibition*, an intangible one, in which the works are not *physically* present but are rather told and recalled in all their expressive force via image and words.

*A Story for the Future* is not simply a story. It is an expansive and deep re-reading of the museum's experience – its exhibitions, performances, collections, public events, educational and editorial projects – in relation to the changes in and evolution of society. What emerges is a profound link between artistic creation and contemporary reality, also underscored by the collaboration with the **Agenzia ANSA**, which contributed to the telling of a powerful story by offering images of the major events of the past decade.

Hence, an invitation to “go back” so as to look forward, to go back over recent history, not just that of the museum, but also global history, to cast light on the near future. The visitor is invited to explore, to let him or herself be transported, to become lost in a galaxy of images, sounds, colors, projections, and to be an active part of this exceptional collective brainstorming.

In the words of **Giovanna Melandri**, President of Fondazione MAXXI: “MAXXI is a workshop of collective intelligence, it is the product of intellectual, cultural, multidisciplinary research that belongs to many people: to the artists and the creatives that make it real, to the curatorial staff and the entire work team, as well as to all

those who visit it and make it come alive. In a complex and critical time such as the one we are living through at present, the endless possibilities, questions, opportunities explored at MAXXI through exhibitions, encounters, and educational projects can pave the way for new and crucial questions, new visions and perspectives. Everyone is invited to MAXXI to write together *Una storia per il futuro*. In the machine room for a new beginning post-pandemic, culture and critical thinking will have to play a central role.”

**Hou Hanru**, MAXXI’s Artistic Director says: “MAXXI is today’s Roman Forum, it’s a museum in the street, a street museum, a machine to produce creative ideas, a site of memory, a public piazza, a secret garden of conspiracies for exciting but unpredictable futures of the world. It’s open to the city, to the world and, of course, to everyone. It’s a pure form of artistic expressions when purity is no longer possible in this age of cultural hybridity. In this world becoming increasingly ‘virtual’, it’s the real place to be so we can remain real... And here starts A Story For The Future!”

## THE EXHIBITION

**MAXXI DNA is a large poster** that welcomes the visitor in the entrance hall. With a fantastic graphic design, it presents a dense constellation of networks and connections of thematic topics that have formed the DNA of the museum, its soul and identity. (The visitor is also invited to bring home a copy of the poster, distributed in the exhibition.)

The visitor then enters a **black-and-white checkerboard room**, devoted to **MAXXI Before MAXXI**, i.e., the period between 2000 and 2009, when the museum was still undergoing construction but was already very busy with its activities.

Here we find a mosaic of images, some of which have been reproduced on mirrors that, like the gigantic pixels of an old TV set, recall some of the most salient moments in that period.

The visitor continues with Gallery 4: here **14 hanging banners** and **11 monitors** make up the **TIMELINE**, the backbone of the exhibition, a chronological point of reference that helps the visitor to get their bearings in the magma of contents and that like a highway cuts the gallery in two, chromatically as well, half of it white and other half black.

The **banner** lists the various activities of the museum year by year – exhibitions, events, performances, newly acquired works, as well as educational, training, and public engagement projects –, while the **monitors** transmit a montage of powerful photographs in the manner of breaking news, made in collaboration with ANSA, listing the major national and international events that happened during the same year.

From the earthquake in Haiti to the capture of Osama Bin Laden, from the Higgs Boson to the trip into outer space by Samantha Cristoforetti, from the refugees shipwrecked on the island of Lampedusa to the terrorist attack of *Charlie Hebdo*, from the *gilet jaunes*, *Fridays for Future*, and the world lockdown caused by Covid. A look back at recent history, which presents the correspondence between the events in the world and the themes developed at the same time by the artists and architects at MAXXI.

The linear, chronological, black-and-white tale of the *Timeline* is offset by another way, a radically opposite one, of telling the story: a colored and composite one. It is a gigantic **ATLAS** by images that invades the walls, a complex puzzle of texts and photographs made up of and assembled based on themes, which tells of the ideas, reflections, and connections triggered by works and artists in the social, economic, political, and ecological themes of contemporaneity. The examples of visual mapping exhibited in the *Atlas* are inspired by two basic critical references: the monumental **Mnemosyne** project carried out by the art historian **Aby Warburg**, and the notion of the **Imaginary Museum** coined by the writer and politician **André Malraux** in 1947.

The images are organized in five macro-sections (**MAXXI and the City**, **The Multitude**, **Worlds**, **The Challenges of Reality** and **Do You Believe in Innovation?**), which are in turn divided into different theme-based nuclei, surrounded by adhesive tape frames and identified by different colors. They are structured by a dynamic graphic design influenced by the languages of street manifestation.

The general title of the exhibition, as well as every section, is illuminated and distinguished by large neon letterings, respectively *Cità*, *Piazza*, *Mondi*, *Realtà* and *Credo*. They are inspired by some iconic moments of recent protests for freedom and justice in Hong Kong.

The story is sporadically interrupted by colored fissures in the walls, openings that invite one to enter and discover four monochrome and immersive **AMBIENTS**.

**The Yellow Room** presents the **oral history of the museum**, realized in collaboration with **RUFA Rome University of Fine Arts** and assigned to the museum staff. On a large hanging monitor, akin to life-size holograms directors, curators, technicians, administrators, and interns express their experiences and hopes about the museum. Their memories and their words design the portrait of a lively place, brought to life by the passion and the enthusiasm of the people working there.

**The Pink Room** hosts a selection of archive materials, video interviews with artists, architects, and curators who over the years have worked at MAXXI, while in the soundproofed, impeccable, and silent space of **The White Room** visitors can consult over 200 books and catalogues produced by MAXXI.

Lastly, in **The Blue Room** one has the impression of virtually entering the exhibitions, the performances, the very heart of the activities that have taken place at the museum, thanks to the **Museum-scape**, a virtual trip created thanks to the montage of several videos with which the museum, over the course of the years, has documented its life.

## THE SECTIONS:

**MAXXI AND THE CITY** explores the theme of the museum as an urban connector capable of **bringing together** urban and cultural life, literally bringing the city inside its spaces. The story of the museum that is told is that of a *new forum*, a place where ideas and visions are created and exchanged, a place for mapping and experimenting, in which to produce, share, reinvent the values of democracy and its artistic expressions. Among the images that make them up, **Zaha Hadid's** first drawings for MAXXI, **Alighiero Boetti's** and **Huang Yong Ping's** geopolitical maps, the urban utopias of **Yona Friedman** and **Superstudio**, the natural architectures of **Michele De Lucchi**, anti-fascist posters by **Alfredo Jaar**, and sculpture-chairs of **Franz West**.

**THE MULTITUDE**, makes clear the many ways that artists, of diverse origins and active in Italy, have contributed to the evolution of the national creative scene: different, independent, and complex works that do not define a static national identity, but rather offer a plurality of visions and produce a contemporary and global space. Included in this section, among many others, are "Italian landscapes" by **Luigi Ghirri**, portraits of street people by **Letizia Battaglia**, portraits of artists by **Paolo Di Paolo**, the theater projects of **Aldo Rossi**, the *Corviale* by **Mario Fiorentino**, textile books of **Maria Lai**, the fantastic design of **Nanda Vigo** and poetic neons of **Maurizio Nannucci**, and, *Benvenuto* by **Sislej Xhafa**, lastly, *The School of Narrative Dance* by **Marinella Senatore**,

The **WORLDS** section examines the museum as a hub of international exchanges and a laboratory of experimenting with different global visions, via the negotiation between conflicting geographical, cultural, and anthropological contexts. In this section, , emphasizing the intimate interaction between Europe and the Mediterranean South, among others, we have **Amos Gitai's** images of Rabin's murder, **Roy Dib's** performance denouncing the civic war in Syria, the fate of boat people traversing the "Middle Sea" by **Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige**, the reflections stemming from the struggle in Gezi Park in Istanbul in the performance by **Zeyno Pekünlü** and the neon rainbow of **Sarkis**, the *apartheid* in the works of **Kendell Geers** and **William Kentridge**, the marginalized of **Halil Altındır**, and exhibitions like *Indian Highway*, *The Japanese House*. *Architettura e vita dal 1945 ad oggi* and *African Metropolis. Una città immaginaria*, along with monographic exhibitions of global figures, demonstrate MAXXI's active participation in the making of a truly contemporary global art scene.

**THE CHALLENGES OF REALITY** puts forward the activist engagement with the changing world of the creative community. Facing some of the most pressing economic, social, ecological, and political challenges of our time, artists, architects, designers and other creative workers have proposed critical views and inventive proposals to defy the constraints of real life. Here we find **Rem Koolhaas/OMA's** *CCTV Building*, **Cao Fei's** *Whose Utopia*, street sleepers by **Francis Aljys**, the upside-down houses of **Pascale Marthine Tayou**, and **Stefano Boeri's** *Bosco Verticale* (vertical Forest), the overturned truck by **Paola Pivi**, the graffiti brought to life by **Robin Rhode**, the transparent public toilet by **Monica Bonvicini**, the weapons turned into musical instruments by **Pedro Reyes**, **Doris Salcedo's** *Plegaria Muda*, **Shazia Sikander's** animated vision of postcolonial world, and **Didier Fiuza Faustino's** raft for migrants.

The last section, **DO YOU BELIEVE IN INNOVATION?** is devoted to the vital tension between artistic creation, technological innovation, between "scientific truth" and metaphysical-spiritual faith, and eventually, the dilemma of the human conquest of the universe and the future of humanity. We need to overcome the concept of "technology" as a value within itself: to innovate also means looking for imaginative and alternative thinking, and the necessary provocation and defiance facing the domination of the ideology and political power of the "high tech". Here we find images like the air balloon of **Tomàs Saraceno**, the utopian city projects of **Paolo Soleri**, the

algorithm-generated scenario of **Ian Cheng**, the spy satellites tracked by **Trevor Paglen**, the Internet-inspired painting of **Miltos Manetas**, **Sol Lewitt**'s elementary *Wall drawing*, **Pier Luigi Nervi**'s ingenious architonic invention, **Sou Fujimoto**'s aerial architecture, **Bruna Esposito**'s vegetarian mandala, and **Gino De Dominicis**'s enigmatic obsession with immortality, along with many more.

**A Story for the Future** will be accompanied by a rich **palimpsest of events and meetings** with some of the most active personalities on the contemporary art scene. This will include the **video event *REWIND the Future***, presenting an unpublished selection of documentaries dedicated to the most significant moments in MAXXI's activity.

In addition, the Department of Education has put together a program of **activities for adults and families**: visits, workshops, mediation activities to encourage a discussion on the exhibition themes.

The exhibition will be accompanied by **THE STICKER GAME!** a game devised by the Department of Public Engagement that invites the public to interact with the exhibition starting from their point of view: a device used to select a specific path, ask oneself questions, and share one's answers with the other visitors and with MAXXI.

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