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Museo nazionale  
delle arti del XXI secolo

## MAXXI's Collection lands in Berlin with the exhibition *Opera Opera. Allegro ma non troppo*

curated by Hou Hanru, Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, Eleonora Farina

Berlin, PalaisPopulaire  
27 April - 22 August 2022

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Rome, 27 April 2022. Some of the key figures of the Italian and international contemporary art scene will go on display in Berlin as **MAXXI, the National Museum of 21st Century Arts in Rome**, is lending part of its Collection to the PalaisPopulaire for the *Opera Opera Allegro ma non troppo* exhibition.

Curated by **Hou Hanru, Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, Eleonora Farina** and running from **27 April to 22 August 2022**, the exhibition pays tribute to one of the most famous expressions of Italian culture: Opera.

The show brings together Italian and international contemporary artists such as **Vanessa Beecroft, Monica Bonvicini, Enzo Cucchi, William Kentridge, Liliana Moro, Luigi Ontani, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Susan Philipsz, Philippe Rahm, Kara Walker** and **Jimmie Durham**, who died at the end of 2021 and to whom the exhibition curators dedicated this project. Moreover, two new productions have been created especially for this occasion by **Rosa Barba** and **Olaf Nicolai**.

From the perspective of visual art and architecture, *Opera Opera. Allegro ma non troppo* shows opera as an interdisciplinary laboratory for contemporary ideas, a testing ground for aesthetic and collaborative strategies.

Opera reflects the drama of life and unites all kinds of disciplines from music to poetry, from design to choreography, from painting to acting, film, and performance.

This exhibition should thus be seen as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a total work of art, a fruitful place for artistic and interdisciplinary encounters.

**Giovanna Melandri**, President of Fondazione MAXXI, says: "For several years, MAXXI's collection has travelled across the world, as an ambassador of dialogue between peoples and as an instrument of cultural diplomacy, because bridges can be built even through art, against all closure and nationalism.

Now that Europe needs peace more than ever, the creative spark and critical thinking of artists can inspire new awareness, bring about change, and encourage listening and reconciliation.

The exhibition *Opera Opera, Allegro ma non troppo* comes to the Palais Populaire in this spirit. I wish to thank Deutsche Bank, which has long been our partner in the promotion of contemporary creativity."

**Hou Hanru**, MAXXI's Artistic Director, adds: "The PalaisPopulaire's invitation to present our collection in Berlin encouraged us to rethink our works of art, reinterpret them, and narrate them by giving them new nuances and new meanings."

**Bartolomeo Pietromarchi**, Director of MAXXI Arte, adds: "With *Opera Opera*, we embarked on new forms of narration to produce new outlooks and multiple dimensions of reality. I think that any opportunity to repurpose the collection is a chance to restore its relevance and activate new visions and connections".

### The exhibition:

The exhibition runs through four thematic sections.

**The Stage** already begins outside, on the terrace. The sounds of the city mingle with the singing in **Suzan Philipsz's** sound installation *Wild Is the Wind*. **Marinella Senatore**

conceived a light installation for Berlin that associates itself with folk festivals in the south of Italy, with long-lost collective community.

On the border between outside and inside, **Olaf Nicolai** created a stage of meditation and collective interaction with a minimalist floor work.

**The Prelude** chapter in the interior kicks off with *Climbing*, an oversized chandelier by the artist duo **Vedovamazzei** that dominates the rotunda. Right next door, a special work forms the musical prelude to the exhibition: **Philippe Rahm's** sound architecture, which fills an entire exhibition hall.

**The Backstage** section in the basement leads into history, the archive. In addition to models of pioneering architecture of opera houses and theaters, including those by star architect **Aldo Rossi**, **Luca Vitone's** *Sonorizzare il luogo (Grand Tour)* takes visitors on a musical journey through the regions of Italy, a collective memory that unites sounds, places, and cultures.

Upstairs, **Jimmie Durham** invites us to world peace, and also to the section **Theatre of the Everyday**, with a special video greeting. **Rosa Barba's** commissioned work *NO - Orchestra con nastro (2022)*, a kinetic film sculpture that combines sound, light, and celluloid, was inspired by the Archivio Storico Ricordi in Milan. The music archive, which belongs to Bertelsmann, contains what is probably the world's most important collection of manuscripts on Italian opera history, including numerous original scores by Verdi, Puccini, Donizetti, Bellini, and Rossini, but also manuscripts by contemporary composers such as Luigi Nono, whose notations are deconstructed and reinterpreted in Barba's sculpture. Other theatrical performative works include a photographic work of **Vanessa Beecroft's** performance *VB74* hosted at MAXXI in 2014, in which she sets up a chorus of naked, veiled women reminiscent of Renaissance depictions of the Virgin Mary and the Passion. This idealized representation is juxtaposed with the staging of black, enslaved bodies in **Kara Walker's** silhouette work, which focuses on racism, sexism, and oppression. A highlight is *Preparing the Flute*, an animated miniature stage by South African artist **William Kentridge**, created in 2005, while Kentridge was working on a production of Mozart's *Magic Flute*.

With poetry, beauty, and irony, *Opera Opera* penetrates collective history and our everyday lives, paying tribute to the dramas and joys of life.

The show is supplemented by a comprehensive **supporting program** in cooperation with MAXXI and the partner institutions Bertelsmann/Archivio Storico Ricordi, the Italian Cultural Institute, the Hanns Eisler Academy of Music, and the Staatsoper Unter den Linden.

The exhibition is accompanied by a **publication** of the same name published by Kerber Verlag with contributions by the curators and the author Johanna Dombois.

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