

PIER PAOLO PASOLINI. TUTTO È SANTO. *The Political Body*

the works of 19 leading contemporary artists dialogue with more than 200 documents including articles, original typescripts, photographs and interviews, evoking the topicality of Pasolini's thought

Noor Abed, Elisabetta Benassi, Sammy Baloji, Paul Chan, Alvin Curran, Dante Ferretti, Jorge Fuembuena Loscertales, Claire Fontaine, Aziz Hazara, Huang Yong Ping, Mino Maccari, Nalini Malani, Fabio Mauri, Marzia Migliora, Ming Wong, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali, Francesco Vezzoli, Yan Pei-Ming

16 November 2022 – 12 March 2023

curated by Hou Hanru, Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, Giulia Ferracci

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Rome, 15 November 2022. On the occasion of the centenary of the birth of Pier Paolo Pasolini (Bologna, 5 March 1922 – Rome, 2 November 1975), MAXXI National Museum of 21st Century Arts, Rome's Azienda Speciale Palaexpo and the National Galleries of Ancient Art are celebrating the figure of the poet with a major exhibition project coordinated and shared in their respective museum venues.

The choice of the title, **Pier Paolo Pasolini. Tutto è santo (Everything is Sacred)**, is inspired by the phrase uttered by the wise Chiron in the film *Medea* (1969) and evokes the mysterious sacredness of the archaic and religious world of the sub-proletariat, which is in clear conflict with the heroes of a rational, secular and bourgeois world.

Each museum has interpreted the title-theme by delving into it along different paths, namely the *poetic body* at Palaexpo, the *seer body* at Palazzo Barberini and the **political body at MAXXI**, where the voices of **19 contemporary artists** evoke the political work of Pasolini, a prophet to whom many generations have looked to in order to draw the guidelines of their research.

The exhibition **Pier Paolo Pasolini, Tutto è santo. The Political Body**, to be held at MAXXI from 16 November 2022 to 12 March 2023, is curated by **Hou Hanru, Bartolomeo Pietromarchi and Giulia Ferracci** and sponsored by **Intesa Sanpaolo**.

It is conceived as a close dialogue between the works of **19 artists** – either from Pasolini's day (Mino Maccari, Fabio Mauri, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali) or from more recent generations for whom Pasolini still is an essential reference point (Elisabetta Benassi, Marzia Migliora, Sammy Baloji, Claire Fontaine, Francesco Vezzoli) – and the over **200 documents** on display: witness articles and original typescripts, audio and video interviews, Pasolini's personal diary, photographs including the extraordinary and intense portraits by **Dino Pedriali**, all dating back to Pasolini's last period of activity.

In particular, the focus is on **1975**, a year in which Pasolini was particularly active: his conferences, interviews, television appearances, and articles in the most important and authoritative newspapers and magazines of the time (including *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Il Mondo*, *Epoca*, *La Stampa* *Tuttolibri*, the periodicals *Tempo* and *Gente*, and many others) were all characterised by his usual polemical energy and provocative accusatory tone. His speeches touched on burning and topical issues such as abortion, homosexuality, abuses of power, and the destruction of Italian tradition and identity as a result of the unchallenged affirmation of mass culture. The exhibition also features the voice of his cousin and philologist **Graziella Chiaricossi**, who accompanies the visitor in a profound and authentic reading of the poet through eight audio points.

Giovanna Melandri, President of Fondazione MAXXI, said, "For the first time, we have succeeded in establishing an important inter-institutional collaboration with the National Galleries of Ancient Art and Azienda Speciale Palaexpo, thus implementing a major exhibition project comprised of three exhibitions investigating the figure of Pier Paolo Pasolini on the occasion of the centenary of this latter's birth. This unique, coordinated and shared project, for which I would like to thank the entire scientific

committee, delved for over a year into the pulsating veins of Pasolini's body of work and his magnetic genius. In a continuous parallel between past and present, contemporary artists are confronted with his documentary works. The exhibition at MAXXI, the third of three, thereby offers a rich philological reconstruction of his last period of activity analysing the social and political transformations that only Pasolini's mind, heart and eyes could fully grasp, which are now more topical than ever."

THE EXHIBITION

With **Elisabetta Benassi's** work *Alfa Romeo GT veloce (1975 -2007)*, which references the vehicle driven by Pasolini on the night he was killed, visitors immediately enter the heart of the exhibition: the light of the unfolded headlights blinds and disorients them, creating a space-time short-circuit; the car is intact, and the headlights are pointed ahead – just like Pasolini's thoughts, which are alive and illuminate the future. The exhortation to young people not to surrender to homologation, that is, the subject of the poet's pedagogical column in *Il Mondo* (some original copies of which are exhibited along with the typescripts), is echoed in the young people photographed in Rome by **Jorge Fuembuena Loscertales**, who will be presenting a series of images from the *Chavales del arroyo* series, as inspired by *Ragazzi di Vita*. Pasolini's statements on the contemporary power system, sex as a metaphor for consumption and the commodification of bodies are echoed in **Paul Chan's** work *Sade for Sade's Sake*, which transforms scenes from the film *Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom* into projected shadows. From the same film come the three *deco* chandeliers hanging in the centre of the exhibition space, which were created for the set design by Oscar winner **Dante Ferretti**, while scenes from the film have been immortalised in photographs by **Gideon Bachmann** and **Deborah Beer**. Between these two works, visitors will find *FOOTNOTES (2022)* by **Alvin Curran**, a site-specific sound installation evoking Pasolinian themes and passions: a football boot and a lawn; a stuffed crow reminiscent of the film *The Hawks and the Sparrows*; a barbed wire chair serving as a metaphor for the difficulty of the writer's craft and a piano playing an unpredictable symphony on its own. **Fabio Mauri's** *Oscuramento* (Darkening) installation reflects on the degradation of the system of power and politics: 16 large-format photographs portraying politicians of the time obscure the windows, while 29 wax statues in military uniform seated around a table with the figure of Mussolini in the centre recreate the last meeting of the Grand Council of Fascism on 24 July 1943, which sanctioned the end of the regime. In *Pier Paolo Pasolini 2009*, **Marzia Migliora** uses steel letters to recompose the extraordinarily topical phrase "*Forse sono io che mi sbaglio. Ma io continuo a dire che siamo tutti in pericolo*" (Maybe I'm wrong after all, but I keep on thinking that we are all in danger), which was uttered by Pasolini in his last interview with Furio Colombo on 1 November 1975 for *La Stampa's Tuttolibri*. The myth of Medea as an allegory of the lack of values in today's contemporary cynical society can be found in **Nalini Malani's** *Despoiled Shore*, which features 12 prints populated by life-sized mythological figures in which the story of Medea and Jason becomes a metaphor for the exploitation of natural resources in Asia. **Claire Fontaine's** installations *Untitled (Lament)* and *Untitled (Sermon to the Birds)* draw their inspiration from two frescoes by Giotto and speak of the irreconcilable split between authentic values and consumer civilisation, while *They Hate Us for Our Freedom*, the famous phrase uttered by George W. Bush after the attack on the Twin Towers, becomes a writing on the wall made of hundreds of matches ready to catch fire, thus evoking tension and danger.

The subjects of **Yan Pei Ming's** large canvases also feature some of Pasolini's works, such as St. Matthew and St. Paul. Pasolini repeatedly denounced the homologation of culture and the death of beauty in the aftermath of the economic boom, as also fuelled by "stupid compulsory schooling and delinquent television". These themes are featured in **Francesco Vezzoli's** video work *Comizi di non amore* (Non-love Rallies), a reality show in which four celebrities are invited to choose between various suitors. The rise of bourgeois culture, which is traceable in a crowd of men all dressed alike, is also featured in the sketches and collages that **Giulio Paolini** made for the set design of *Teorema*, a ballet for the 1999 Maggio Musicale Fiorentino inspired by Pasolini's novel and film of the same name. Also inspired by *Teorema* is **Ming Wong's** installation *I must go. Tomorrow*, which recounts the constant tension between repressed human passions and the false identities imposed by society.

This section also includes 21 watercolours by **Mino Maccari**, who drew the poster for Pasolini's *Accattone*; the sketches depict scenes of everyday life, as well as surreal and grotesque atmospheres. The lost or barely surviving pre-industrialised world lives on in the exhibition through the two films by **Pino Pascali**, which were shot in 1965 for the Cirio advertisement; in them, the artist interprets the dance of *Pazzariello* and the gestures of *Pulcinella*. The world of football becomes a metaphor and an example

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of life both in Pasolini's writings and in the environmental installation *A Football Match of June 14th 2002* by **Huang Yong Ping**, which was inspired by an event that really happened on 14 June 2002 – when an asteroid almost fell on the earth. Football is also featured in **Paolo Ferrari's** shots of Pasolini with the ball: the artist is depicted intent on playing a game, free, and happy to practice his favourite activity. In the video work *Our songs were ready for all the wars to come* by **Noor Abed**, visitors will see choreographed scenes based on Palestinian folk tales either passed down orally and sung by women. Folk songs thus become an instrument of everyday resistance against homologation.

Sammy Baloji's multimedia installation *Tales of the Copper Cross Garden: Episode 1* recounts the process of transformation of a population from rural to industrial, and how colonialism exploited Congolese people and resources. A message of vital resistance closes the exhibition: enter **Aziz Hazara's** work, *Bowe Echo*. The protagonist is a child from Kabul who tries to climb a boulder to call the flock back with his whistle. A sandstorm pushes him to the ground, but he gets up again. In the end, even Pasolini's last poem in Friulian, *Un saluto e un augurio (A greeting and a wish)*, with which *Bowe Eco* is ideally associated, constitutes an act of life, just like the one the poet leaves to those who read his will: "(...)io camminerò leggero, andando avanti, scegliendo per sempre la vita, la gioventù" (I will walk lightly, going forward, forever choosing life and youth)

THE CATALOGUE

The exhibition is accompanied by a rich catalogue edited by Giulia Ferracci, Hou Hanru and Bartolomeo Pietromarchi (double edition in Italian and English, 224 pages, 5Continents, Milan) that investigates *The Political Body*, the set of texts and documents by Pasolini that, starting from 1975 – the year of his death –, recall the system of anarchy of power, sex as a metaphor of consumption and the commodification of bodies, together with the works of 19 important contemporary artists in the exhibition that recall the themes addressed by the author. Closing the volume is a chronology centred on 1975 that traces the main political and current events of Italy, interweaving them with the author's biography. The result is a collective story in which the philological aspect and the study of Pasolini's last years of activity merge with the documentation of contemporary artistic experimentation, providing a vivid portrait of our present. Texts by Marco Belpoliti, Eleonora Cardinale, Paul Chan, Roberto Chiesi, Silvia De Laude, Giulia Ferracci, Fabio Francione, Giuseppe Garrera, Hou Hanru, Anne-Violaine Houcke, Ara H. Merjian, Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, and Vincenzo Trione.

PUBLIC PROGRAMME

The exhibition will be accompanied by a rich programme of events designed to delve into the figure of Pier Paolo Pasolini and his intense activity as a writer, screenwriter, director, poet and artist. From 15 November to 18 December, a videogallery exhibition curated by Paolo Pisanelli will be dedicated to films and documentaries that recount Pasolini and Cecilia Mangini's passion for realism. Among the other events on the programme will be the theatrical performance *ORATORIO PER CINQUE VOCI RECITANTI IMMAGINI E MUSICA (ORATORIO FOR FIVE VOICES RECITING IMAGES AND MUSIC)*, written by Luca Archibugi; scheduled for 14 January in the MAXXI Auditorium at 7 pm, the performance will recount some of Pier Paolo Pasolini's life stories.

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