

MAURIZIO NANNUCCI WHERE TO START FROM

June 26 / October 18, 2015

www.fondazionemaxxi.it

Rome, June 2015. From June 26 to October 18, 2015 MAXXI dedicates to **Maurizio Nannucci**, one of the most important names in Italian contemporary art from the 1960s to the present time, a major exhibition entitled **Where to Start From**, curated by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi.

The exhibition explores, with works both early and recent, the importance and the central position of Nannucci's artistic research. Two new installations were made for this occasion, including the sound installation *Sound Samples* and *More Than Meets the Eye*, a **large-scale work for MAXXI's facade** which, thanks to *Amici del MAXXI*, will join **the museum collection**.

Since the 1960s, Maurizio Nannucci, **a point of reference for many generations of artists, architects, musicians, critics and curators**, has examined the relationship between art, language, and image. His research, which has always been characterized by the dialogue between the various disciplines, explores the relationship between light, color, sound and both real and imagined space, which becomes particularly evident in his large neon writings. Nannucci's work is conceptual – it is an exploration between culture and society, with a close connection between architecture and urban landscape – whose language restores a symbolic and spatial value to the single words.

As concerns his research the artist says "I believe that the image transcends the limits of the representation, becoming a mental image, a virtual one, an image born from a dream or a dream with eyes wide open, a visualized and relative image, which can be evoked by a single word, a sound, or a scent. The same can be said for the images that refer to each other and require the absence of an object; I do not limit them, nor do I reduce them to a figure; I give them freedom and fantastic independence..."

His works, on view in the museum's Gallery 3, share a reciprocal dialogue.

On display are the following: the installation *Anthology* (1967/2015...), an index of texts and concepts that are continually being updated, and the large wall in white neon: *There Is Another Way of Looking at Things*. The exhibition presents historic and anticipatory works such as the pages of *Dattilogrammi* (1964/1965), *Alfabetofonetic* (1967), *M40* (1967), *Corner* (1968), *Colors* (1969), the large installation *The Missing Poem Is the Poem* (1969), the sound explorations (since 1966) and the photographic series *Giardini Botanici* (1967) and *Scrivere sull'acqua* (1973). An integral part of the exhibition is the presentation of the **multiples** that the artist has produced since the 1960s: **more than one hundred editions** including multiples, artists' books and records, photos, magazines, ephemera, which express another fundamental practice of the artist's work. Along this trajectory the works interact with the museum space, perceptively changing it, as in the case of the installation *Sound Samples*. This work creates a further ideal connection to the nearby Auditorium Parco della Musica for which the artist made, in collaboration with Renzo Piano in 2002, a large permanent installation of neon texts entitled *Polifonia*.

Maurizio Nannucci (Florence, 1939) is one of the protagonists of Italian art in the recent decades, as well as having achieved international acclaim. Since the mid-1960s he has explored the complex relations between art, language and image, creating unprecedented conceptual proposals, characterized by the use of a variety of media: neon, photography, video, sound, artists' editions and books. His first neon texts date from 1967: these bring to his work a more varied dimension of meanings and a new perception of space. The artist has always been interested in the relationships between the artwork / architecture / urban landscape, thereby creating the premises for an integration between environment, language, color and light, the core elements of his work. Thus were born, in the 1990s, collaborations and projects with Renzo Piano as well as with other architects, such as Massimiliano Fuksas, Mario Botta, Nicolas Grimshaw, Stephan Braunfels. On a number of occasions Maurizio Nannucci was invited to the Venice Biennale

Documenta Kassel, the Biennials in São Paulo, Sydney, Istanbul, and he has showed his work in some of the major museums and galleries across the world.

On the occasion of the exhibition a **catalogue dedicated to the exhibition** will be published (Mousse Edizioni) with critical essays by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi and Stefano Chiodi and an interview with Hou Hanru.

The press pack and images of the exhibition can be downloaded from the Reserved Area of the Fondazione MAXXI's website at <http://www.fondazionemaxxi.it/area-riservata/> by typing in the password **areariservatamaxxi**

MAXXI - Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo

www.fondazionemaxxi.it - info: 06.320.19.54; info@fondazionemaxxi.it

opening hours: 11:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Sunday)

11:00 a.m. – 11.00 p.m. (Saturday); closed on Mondays, May 1 and December 25

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MAXXI

MUSEO NAZIONALE
DELLE ARTI DEL XXI SECOLO



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MAURIZIO NANNUCCI WHERE TO START FROM

Giovanna Melandri, President Fondazione MAXXI

Light and color bend space in the direction of the future. The words of the installation *More than meets the eye* propel us towards something new, through the perceptual filter of the eye and the analytic filter of language. They encourage us to look beyond, to look at the world with a different gaze. An explosion of energy lights up the museum and offers a new view of Zaha Hadid's fluid architecture. And so Maurizio Nannucci's show "Where To Start From" – which brings together thirty works ranging from the famous *neons* to sound projects, from photos to artist's editions – is not meant to offer any pre-packaged truth, but rather to suggest an unconventional way of thinking about museum spaces and the role of the public. The aim is to engage visitors in a profound sensory experience, tapping the infinite power of the imagination that is released through artistic activity, engendering new worlds, new connections, new constellations. In the words of Nannucci himself, his works do not seek to blend in or merge with the architecture, but rather, "through the use of the light, color and meaning of the text, I manage to make the architecture even more visible". It is precisely this tension between art and language, between architectural space, light, color and sound, that once again comes to life in the works on view at MAXXI and leads the public along a path of extraordinary intensity. In the catalogue he has conceived, the artist tells us how the works lose their aesthetic function, creating an anthology of stories where connotation mingles with context, looking for meanings outside and inside the physical space. Like Maurizio Nannucci, MAXXI also wants to build new spaces of perception, connection, and inspiration: spaces that look to the future and focus on the public, who is our polestar.

"Where To Start From" once again shows the museum's commitment to promoting internationally acclaimed Italian artists and architects. From Alighiero Boetti to Ettore Spalletti, Gaetano Pesce, Lina Bo Bardi, Luigi Ghirri, Olivo Barbieri, Francesco Vezzoli, Lara Favaretto, and more, there are so many figures we have decided to spotlight, drawing a true atlas of Italian creativity. And as it has before with many other projects, through the support of the Friends of MAXXI, our museum will gain an extraordinary new installation by Nannucci. *More than meets the eye* will become part of the collection that began with Zaha Hadid's construction site, is growing rapidly through the contributions of private individuals and businesses, and can now boast over 400 artworks and more than 20,000 sketches, drawings and architectural designs.

**MAURIZIO NANNUCCI
WHERE TO START FROM**

Hou Hanru, Artistic Director MAXXI

Neon is an element that constantly recurs in my work. The first time I used it in text form was in 1967 with *Alfabetofonetico*, a work that also marks the beginning of the *Anthology*, an ongoing collection of my neon texts, made uniform in scale and in color with blue glass and light. I had used neon before as a light-sign in several geometric structures. Neon allows me to shape and reshape space into sensations and concepts that come very close to the degree zero of representation, while opening up new perspectives and horizons of perception and interaction with the reality. I think this is one of the reasons why my work has come to have a close relationship with architecture, or rather, with its primary elements: line and angle. The borders between wall and ceiling, between wall and floor, are the points of tension that I want to work with... That I want to stimulate and make interact with the tool of language. So that the word, always suspended between the possibility of significance and the physical, chromatic reality of sign, opens itself up to dialectical interaction with the surrounding space. While the word, in its linearity, ushers in the image, at the same time, as raw material, material to be formed, it becomes an expedient for active and interactive interaction with the context. By using color and light as elements that both blend and delimit word and architecture, I make the work take shape as a new reality: of sign and meaning.

The construction of this “mental space” has constantly guided Nannucci’s interest in verbal signs and wordplay, in the energy that they focus and deploy, and is also the driving force behind his efforts to organize and link together collective projects and publishing initiatives, from the publishing house Exempla, founded in Florence in 1968 and specialized in artist’s editions and multiples, to Zona Archives Editions (from 1974 to the present) active in the same fields, to the record label Recorthings (1975), dedicated to sound art and sound poetry, which has published records, the first of the kind in Italy, like *Poesia sonora* (1975), *Audio Intellect: Artist’s Audioworks Anthology* (1979-84) and *Fluxus Anthology* (1989). The list of collaborative projects should also include the magazine *Mèla* (1976-81), which drew its name from the island of Elba where it was published, which brought together works by visual artists, musicians and poets, and above all, the collective non-profit spaces *Zona* (1974- 85) and *Base/Progetti per l’arte* (1998, still active), both in Florence: testing grounds for a kind of activity that constantly questions its own methods, reconfigures space, mingles different references, media, idioms, generations. In this sense, multiples and editions, as well as collective undertakings, group exhibitions, and collaborations, are for Nannucci not just a way to expand the circulation of his “work”, but to structurally change its nature, pushing its material and semantic boundaries in a relational direction and extending the creative process to the entire range of perceptual, verbal, and social connections in which the artist moves, in dialogue with the “post-studio” currents that emerged in the Sixties and Seventies and in more recent times.

From Hou Hanru. “Conversation with Maurizio Nannucci”, in *Maurizio Nannucci. Where to Start From*, catalogue of the exhibition, MAXXI, Mousse, Milano 2015

MAURIZIO NANNUCCI WHERE TO START FROM

Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, curator of the exhibition

Where to start from is an anthological exhibition dedicated by the MAXXI to Maurizio Nannucci, one of the most original and important figures on the Italian and international art scene since the 1960s. Nannucci creates artworks that explore and utilise diverse languages and media – light and sound installations, performances, artist's books, photography – drawing inspiration from a host of disciplines, from concrete poetry to electronic music. Language, colour, light and space are the keys to understanding Nannucci's poetic. In the project he created for this exhibition each piece is intimately engaged in a dialogue with the others. The layout of the show designed to activate new paths and wholly original visions of the spaces designed by Zaha Hadid, beginning with the large permanent work on the Museum's façade. Using a non-chronological examination of historic pieces in dialogue with others created or re-presented for this occasion, the exhibition presents the richness and multiplicity of Nannucci's work: from the large and famous pieces created with neon to the series of photographs, from audio works to artist's books.

"The art of Maurizio Nannucci does not privilege the image, but instead evokes it through words, perception and imagination, founded a totalizing engagement in which space, light and colour stimulate perception and modify ideas". This is how we are to read *More than meets the eye*, the large neon installation on the external façade of the MAXXI, the ideal introduction to the exhibition and sum of Nannucci's poetic. Created especially for this event, the piece invites viewers to engage in a "reading" that goes beyond that which only vision can capture, to become part of a dynamic of exchange and comparison between its meanings and the form and function of architecture. Neon light, together with the content of the message expressed, enters into a physical, conceptual and emotional tension with the concrete skin of the building, with its sinuous and fleeting perspectives, and with the institutional and symbolic value of the "Museum".

The exhibition continues inside. From the entrance to the galleries visitors are already offered a glimpse from below of the large coloured neon light installation that hovers above the space and almost touches the ceiling: *New Art Fly*. On the first floor, in front of the large neon installation *There is another way of looking at things...*, (which can be considered a poetic declaration of all of Nannucci's work) visitors are welcomed by *Sound Samples*, a new audio installation, created in collaboration with Simone Conforti. The form of this interactive and site-specific piece is inspired by a text that changes in relation to the presence of visitors and their position in space, creating constantly varying sonorities. An ideal continuation to the layout of the exhibition, *Scrivere sull'acqua* (1973) is a documentation/ work that captures Nannucci as he writes words on a surface of water. Similar to the new sound piece, the language is strongly connoted by its relational and spatial qualities: "I seek to capture the idea that crosses a place", he has declared. However – in both cases – the language is once again ephemeral, a phrase written as if it had only been pronounced, which appears for a brief moment only to disappear without a trace, remaining impressed only in memory. The first terrace of the gallery, regularly divided into three rooms, hosts *The missing poem is the poem* (1969-2015), a piece formed by the phrase that composes its title realised in blue, red and yellow neon. The work speaks of a practice that defines the concept of language, concentrating on the further meanings that emerge above all from the personal, perceptive, psychological and emotional senses projected by each visitor. The second terrace is dedicated to a nucleus of important works from Nannucci's debut. In particular, his earliest works in which he explored the relationship with architectural space and the dimension of colour: from the seminal *Who's afraid of yellow, red and blue* to *M40*, from *Corner* to *Alfabetofonetic* and *Colors*, all realised between 1967 and the early '70s. Word, space, image, the letter and meaning, perception and context, exist in a state of constant equilibrium and opposition in which all of Nannucci's work oscillates.

The pieces testify to the search for a dimension of space and perception (colour, sound, performance, etc.) and other meanings, contradictory or merely evoked, conveyed by language when it is related to a specific context, place or space. The third terrace is dedicated to multiples, to artist's prints, books and albums, which Nannucci considers an integral part of his artistic practice. Pieces produced by an

international network of editors tied to his efforts in the sphere of publishing, such as *Exempla*, which he founded in 1968, and successively *Zona Archives Edizioni* (1974-1985) and *BASE / Progetti per l'arte* (1998 – on-going). In his vast and abundant production (more than 100 examples of his own work and dozens by other artists) the multiple and the print are the expression of a practice dedicated to the diffusion, dissemination and multiplication of art. What would now be termed a “network of relations” serves to complete the dimension of diffusion, in this case geographic, of the language and message of art. Concluding the exhibition (with what could also be considered a new beginning) is the score (a reference to the architectural element of the ceiling) for the large installation *Anthology* (1967-2015...). A work in progress that brings together some of the neon texts used over the course of Nannucci's career in his installations. The piece documents the richness and multiplicity of meanings and shades of language. Moving from the single sign and extending into the word, the phrase and from here into space and the living presence of the public, Nannucci's “grammar and syntax” have created a truly new, unique and recognisable language with its own rules and possibilities. Its meanings are enriched by each specific context, by the relations established, by the sensations stimulated, by the messages transmitted and by all other possibilities of meaning we are able to project upon them. As an ideal continuation of the exhibition the public is invited to visit the nearby Auditorium Parco della Musica where Maurizio Nannucci created one of his most important permanent public works in 2002, in collaboration with Renzo Piano: *Polifonia*, an installation composed of phrases in red and blue neon, borrowed, what is more, from his personal *Anthology* of quotes from musicians, authors, poets and philosophers, from Plato to Haydn, from Stravinsky to Borges, from Russolo to Berio and Lennon. The continuous flow of references creates a unique experience that stimulates considerations, ideas and images about art, architecture and music.

**MAURIZIO NANNUCCI
WHERE TO START FROM**

Biography

Maurizio Nannucci was born in 1939 in Florence, lives and works in Florence and in South Baden, Germany. Since the mid-Sixties, Nannucci has devoted himself to exploring the multifaceted interrelations between language, writing and visual images, drawing on concepts and linguistic ideas and employing a wide variety of media, including photography, video, artist's books, editions, and sound installations. In his research he has developed an interdisciplinary approach that have opened up a network of cooperation in the fields of art, architecture, and poetry. In addition to language, he is keenly interested in color in all its manifestations. As early as 1967 he began to create his first neon "writings", adding a further dimension of meaning. Through colorful lighted installations, the artist arranges word-images into a fluid circuit that flows between color, sign and meaning. The artist uses colored glass tubes and neon lights which have the effect of sharpening visual perception. The variety of luminous configurations motivates the viewer to see and interpret language as well as the spatial context in a new way. Documenting his linguistic investigation and color experiments, Nannucci continuously collects his own writing into the work-in-progress Anthology (1967-2015...). From 1974 to 1985, he organized the activities of the Zona non-profit art space in Firenze and in 1998 was a co-founder of Base / Progetti per l'arte. Nannucci has created Zona Archives, Recorthings and Exempla Editions, curating several exhibitions in museums and public institutions. In the early Nineties, Nannucci started to collaborate with architects as Fritz Auer, Mario Botta, Stephan Braunfels, Massimiliano Fuksas, Nicholas Grimshaw, and Renzo Piano, and realized several projects for public buildings. Maurizio Nannucci has participated several times in the Venice Biennale, Documenta in Kassel, and the biennals of São Paulo, Sydney, Istanbul and Valencia; his works have been shown in over 300 museums and gallery exhibitions. Maurizio Nannucci's work is in collections worldwide, including Fondazione Guggenheim, Venice; Staedtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich; Berliner Museen, Berlin; Kunstsammlung des Deutschen Bundestages, Berlin; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and CNAP, Paris.