

## on the spiritual matter of art

curated by **Bartolomeo Pietromarchi**  
17 October 2019 – 8 March 2020

JOHN ARMLEDER | MATILDE CASSANI | FRANCESCO CLEMENTE | ENZO CUCCHI |  
ELISABETTA DI MAGGIO | JIMMIE DURHAM | HARIS EPAMINONDA | HASSAN KHAN | KIMSOOJA |  
ABDOULAYE KONATÉ | VICTOR MAN | SHIRIN NESHAT | YOKO ONO | MICHAL ROVNER |  
REMO SALVADORI | TOMÁS SARACENO | SEAN SCULLY | JEREMY SHAW | NAMSAL SIEDLECKI

with loans from:

**Vatican Museums | National Roman Museum | National Etruscan Museum - Villa Giulia |  
Capitoline Museums**

*dedicated to Lea Mattarella*

[www.maxxi.art](http://www.maxxi.art) #spiritualealMAXXI

Rome, 16 October 2019. What does it mean today to talk about spirituality? Where does spirituality fit into a world dominated by a digital and technological culture and an ultra-deterministic mentality? Is there still a spiritual dimension underpinning the demands of art? In order to reflect on these and other questions **MAXXI**, the **National Museum of XXI Century Arts**, is bringing together a number of leading figures from the contemporary art scene in the major group show *on the spiritual matter of art*, strongly supported by the President of the Fondazione MAXXI **Giovanna Melandri** and curated by **Bartolomeo Pietromarchi** (from 17 October 2019 to 8 March 2020). Main partner **Enel**, which for the period of the exhibition is supporting the initiative *Enel Tuesdays* with a special ticket price reduction every Tuesday. Sponsor **Inwit**.

*on the spiritual matter of art* is a project that investigates the issue of the spiritual through the lens of contemporary art and, at the same time, that of the ancient history of Rome. In a layout offering diverse possible paths, the exhibition features the works of **19 artists**, leading names on the international scene from very different backgrounds and cultures. The works of **John Armleder, Matilde Cassani, Francesco Clemente, Enzo Cucchi, Elisabetta Di Maggio, Jimmie Durham, Haris Epaminonda, Hassan Khan, Kimsooja, Abdoulaye Konaté, Victor Man, Shirin Neshat, Yoko Ono, Michal Rovner, Remo Salvadori, Tomás Saraceno, Sean Scully, Jeremy Shaw** and **Namsal Siedlecki**, mainly produced in the last two years and reworked specifically for the MAXXI space, are displayed alongside **17 extraordinary Etruscan, Roman and local archaeological relics** loaned by four of the city's leading museums: **Vatican Museums, The National Roman Museum, The National Etruscan Museum - Villa Giulia and the Capitoline Museums**. The relics date from a period between the VIII century B.C. and the end of the IV century A.D., that is, from the origins of the Roman period through to the moment in which Christianity became a state religion, and are therefore representative of the path that leads to the ancient and the pre-modern world, from the collective dimension of the sacred in the pagan era to the establishment of a more individual dimension of the spiritual in the post-classical era.

"The question of being, of man's spiritual expansion, has always defined artistic research", says **Giovanna Melandri**, "Art is at times capable of capturing our tension and going beyond the illusion of forms and matter (Maya). As Schopenhauer wrote, art can miraculously elevate itself above life, contemplating and transcending it. I was very eager for this project to go ahead. It was not easy to define its contents and confines, but I am certain that this exhibition will make a further contribution to amplifying the boundaries of the artistic and conceptual research of the MAXXI "laboratory". I am convinced that the question of our spiritual nature, above and beyond any religious dogma, is a question that urgently needs to be asked of contemporary man. I would like to thank the Vatican Museum, the National Roman Museum, the National Etruscan Museum - Villa Giulia and the Capitoline Museums for having contributed to this project alongside us."

"The compresence and the relationship between contrasting elements are clearly evident", says **Bartolomeo Pietromarchi**, Director of MAXXI Arte, "and its emphasis underlies the entire project. It is actually this impossible composition of body and spirit, between matter and spirit that is the most faithful representation of our existence. By the "spiritual stuff of art", I mean that which leverages this dichotomy, between a material dimension bound up with personal experience and a need to rediscover practices and meanings that elevate the spirit above it."

Gallery 4 will be dedicated to *on the spiritual matter of art*, welcoming visitors with an exhibition layout composed of lateral visions and totemic walls that permit a play of references between works of art and archaeological relics, thus facilitating continuous dialogue between ancient and contemporary sensibilities.

There will be a number of installations on display, including those by **Matilde Cassani** (fabric drapery, like a threshold introducing the space of the sacred), **Enzo Cucchi** (an artist to whom MAXXI is also devoting an Art Collection Focus show in the Gian Ferrari Hall, 17 October – January 2020), **Jimmie Durham**, **Haris Epaminonda**, **Remo Salvadori** and **Namsal Siedlecki**, produced or revised specifically for this project. The layout opens and closes with sound installations by **Hassan Khan** (a composition for hand claps) and **Kimsooja** (transmitting the echoes of a Tibetan chant), after which one accesses the large central space that houses large two-dimensional works including those by **John Armleder**, **Francesco Clemente**, **Abdoulaye Konaté**, **Victor Man** and **Sean Scully** in close relations with the objects from antiquity (the pair of **Peacocks** from the **Musei Vaticani**, the **Fegato dello Scasato** from **Villa Giulia**, the **Winged Scarab** from the **Musei Capitolini**, the **Chrismon Necklace** and the **Leontocefala** statue, both from the **Museo Nazionale Romano** and the **Gem of the Goddess Rome** from the **Musei Capitolini – Fondazione Santarelli**). Photography (the hands of Iranian women in the gesture of offering verses by poets of the Farsi tradition by **Shirin Neshat**) and video (**Michal Rovner** and **Jeremy Shaw**) dialogue with the immersive installations by **Elisabetta Di Maggio** (who recreates with postage stamps the Cosmatesque floor of St. Mark's Basilica) and by **Tomás Saraceno** (who transforms the fluctuations of spider's webs into sonic vibrations), concluding with a major work of participatory work by **Yoko Ono**.

The *on the spiritual matter of art* project also provides for the creation of a **catalogue due to be published by Quodlibet** in the autumn of this year that will feature texts by **Andrea Carandini**, **Padre Paolo Benanti**, **Stefano Catucci**, **Raffaella Frascarelli** and **Riccardo Venturi**. The critical apparatus present in the book also underlies the curatorial thinking and layout of the exhibition, the visual-photographic design of which will be curated by **Agostino Osio (Alto Piano studio, Milan)**.

Flanking the exhibition project, an extensive **Public Program** will see a series of talks with the artists (**Sean Scully**, 17 October 2019 – **Jimmie Durham**, 17 November 2019); lectures (**Massimo Cacciari**, 25 October 2019 - **Corrado Augias**, 21 January 2020 – **Andrea Carandini** 25 January 2020 - **Massimo Recalcati**, 7 March 2020); film screening (**A true story**, dedicated to Paramahansa Yogananda, the Indian philosopher, mystic and yogi, 13 November 2019); performances (**Pejman Tadayon Ensemble**, 30 November 2019 – **Krishna Das**, 4 December 2019).

On the occasion of the exhibition *della materia spirituale dell'arte* MAXXI will be screening three films, part of the official programme of the XIV edition of the Rome Film Festival, exploring the theme of the spiritual through the eyes of three great directors: *Dersu Uzala - The Hunter*, 1975, by **Akira Kurosawa** (18 October, 4:30 PM); *The Tree of Life*, 2012, by **Terrence Malick** (22 October, 4:00 PM); *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* by **Julian Schnabel** (25 October, 5:00 PM). Admission with a ticket or accreditation from the Rome Film Festival, [www.romacinemafest.org](http://www.romacinemafest.org).

**PRESS KIT AND PHOTOS:** <http://www.maxxi.art/area-stampa/> password **areariservatamaxxi**

**MAXXI PRESS OFFICE** +39 06 32.48.61 [press@fondazionemaxxi.it](mailto:press@fondazionemaxxi.it)

#### **MAXXI National Museum of 21st Century Arts**

Via Guido Reni 4a-8, 00196 Rome

**Opening hours:** Wednesday, Thursday, Sunday 11.00 AM - 7.00 PM; Tuesday, Friday, Saturday 11.00 AM-8.00 PM; Closed on Mondays.

The ticket office is open until 1 hour before museum closing.

**Tickets:** € 12 full price; € 9 reduced; € 5 last hour (wed. thurs. sun. from 5.00 PM; tue. fri. sat. from 6.00 PM)

main partner

enel

sponsor

INWIT

media partner

LEON DESIGN INTERNI sky arte