

Isaac Julien. Lina Bo Bardi – Un meraviglioso groviglio

The film installation and photographic series by the British artist invite us on an immersive journey through the life and ideas of the great Italian Brazilian architect, and their meaning in current times.

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Rome, 22 September 2020. **Lina Bo Bardi – A Marvellous Entanglement** is an enthralling tribute to the great Italian Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi by the English artist and filmmaker **Isaac Julien**, presented at **MAXXI the National Museum of XXI Century Arts from 23 September 2020 to 17 January 2021**, and curated by **Luigia Lonardelli**.

Following the exhibition *Lina Bo Bardi in Italia. Quello che volevo era avere storia*, organised by MAXXI on the occasion of the centenary of her birth, **Lina Bo Bardi – A Marvellous Entanglement** offers the public an opportunity to rediscover this pioneer of Italian modern architecture from a new vantage point.

Isaac Julien's passion for Lina Bo Bardi emerged in the 1990s during a trip to Brazil, where he saw a number of her fascinating and bold buildings. Since then, his artistic career regularly crossed paths with her creative universe, establishing a fruitful and successful dialogue between their works.

The result of a six-year research project, **Lina Bo Bardi – A Marvellous Entanglement** is a multi-layered immersive film installation presented on nine screens. The images were filmed in a number of buildings designed by Lina Bo Bardi in São Paulo and Salvador between the 1960s and the 1980s. These locations are exceptional settings which occasionally take on different lives to house events, leisure activities, convivial and cultural initiatives.

On this journey we are accompanied by the actresses **Fernanda Montenegro** and **Fernanda Torres**, true screen icons in Brazil and beyond. Montenegro and Torres, mother and daughter in real life, interpret the role of Lina Bo Bardi in her maturity and in her youth, staging a number of the most extraordinary episodes taken from her writings.

Isaac Julien's installation creates a dynamic yet intimate dialogue with the MAXXI building designed by Zaha Hadid, bridging further to the oeuvre of another pivotal female architect. If Lina Bo Bardi's originality found its highest expression in some of her museum projects, such as the MASP in São Paulo, Zaha Hadid's vision also came to fruition in designing the MAXXI, considered as one of her master works.

Isaac Julien has completely taken over MAXXI's Gallery 3, conceiving a **total work of art in situ**, from the curtains to the seats, via wallpapers created especially for this occasion. Thus, we immerse ourselves in Lina Bo Bardi's life and work: her life experiences, her reflections on politics, society and culture are presented both through her personal architectural vision and through Julien's artistic vision. An immersive aesthetic experience, characterised by sophisticated research into the composition of sounds and images, Isaac Julien's video installation – the beating heart of the exhibition – envelopes the viewer and crosses boundaries between artforms, time and continents.

Conceived as a multilayered film, the work is projected simultaneously and alternatively on **nine screens**, resulting in time losing its chronological feeling. The narrative planes are superimposed and both actresses – the younger and the older Lina – are often present in the same scene. That way, the limit between fiction and reality is blurred and the linearity of the biographical account is called into question. In one of the best-known passages from her correspondence, Bo Bardi writes: "Linear time is a western invention. Time is not linear, it is a marvellous entanglement, where at any moment, points can be chosen and solutions invented, without beginning or end".

Lina Bo Bardi's work exemplifies admirably how the union of several cultures can inspire and generate a fervid creative energy. Thanks to Isaac Julien's delicate sensibility, Lina Bo Bardi's relationship with multi-faceted Brazilian culture and her bond with her Italian homeland emerge in all their complexity.

In this visual poem, Bo Bardi's powerful architecture inspires and generates performances, whirling choreographies and intense dialogues, starting at the **SESC Pompeia**, new home to the Serviço Social do Comércio and the result of the 1970s conversion of an old factory into a cultural and leisure centre. In this opening sequence, Fernanda Montenegro recites an extract from a text written by Bo Bardi in 1986, which also gave the title to the exhibition. Following this scene, a performance by the young Bahian dancer Diego Pinheiro and that of the Bahian ARAKÁ collective are staged in the former **Restaurante Coaty** - one of Bo Bardi's redevelopment projects for the *Ladeira da Misericórdia*, a steep street weighted by historical baggage that links the higher and lower parts of Salvador. On the street below passes a Candomblé procession. In the entrance of the **Casa do Benin** (the Centre for Brazilian Culture in Salvador), Isaac Julien hung fabrics designed by artist Goya Lopes as a tribute to the politician and activist Marielle Franco, who was violently killed two years ago, just before Julien's film was shot, in March 2018. For the scenes recorded at the **MAM-BA Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia**, an institution housed in the Solar do Unhão complex, Julien collaborated with the Brazilian choreographer Zebrinha and the Balé Folclórico de Bahia company, filming them as they danced on the exhibition space's iconic spiral staircase, designed by Bo Bardi and inspired by a traditional cartwheel building technique.

Another part of the exhibition features a series of **photographic collages** created for MAXXI as well as biographical and archival material associated with Lina Bo Bardi. A **timeline** winds along the glazed corridor of the gallery, exploring the genesis and the production of the work by reconstituting the stages of research and the shooting of the film installation. An **archival display** concludes the show, accompanied by a biographical timeline: with a selection of original periodicals and magazines, the importance and relevance of Bo Bardi's oeuvre is enlightened.

On the occasion of the exhibition, MAXXI Educazione is also presenting a rich programme of activities dedicated to schools and focusing on the relationship between cinema and the visual arts. There will be visit-explorations, both for school groups and adults, to learn more about the exhibition's set-up, the artist's creative process and Lina Bo Bardi's life. Moreover, a family workshop will be dedicated to the concept of "non-linear" time – that "marvellous entanglement" Bo Bardi speaks of – which will focus on deconstructing the fairy tales of the Italian tradition and will discuss the creative reworking of a story.

Isaac Julien CBE RA was born in London in 1960. He pioneered multiple screen installation techniques in the field of contemporary art over the last 25 years. His works have been critically examining questions connected to the poetics of migrations, black politics and cultures in the diasporas, researching important cultural and political figures from Frantz Fanon in *Frantz Fanon, Black skin White Mask* (1995) to Frederick Douglass in the recent *Lessons of the Hour* (2019). His films have also focused on questions of queer aesthetics, as in his cult film on Langston Hughes, *Looking for Langston* (1989). In 2013, he had a solo exhibition at MoMA - Museum of Modern Art, New York - with the nine-screen installation *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010) starring Maggie Cheung. Julien received a CBE for his work in the Arts in 2017 from Her Majesty the Queen and was made a member Royal Academy in London, in 2018.

This is his first major solo exhibition in Italy.

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