

INNER ISLAND: ART OF SURVIVAL

“The island isn’t just a geographical reality, but a symbolic one as well. In the collective imagination it synthesises themes and myths that art has always represented. Survival, return, departure, shipwreck, nostalgia and landing are the interior aspects of an island adrift from art in manifold forms.

The island of San Servolo is the theatre, bounded by the waters of the Venetian lagoon, in which each year one artist emblematically represents one of these themes. The art of survival is the theme taken on by Michelangelo Pistoletto through a collective work entitled: CITTADELLARTE, the product of a choral elaboration.

Pistoletto closes the circle of his works that started out from the mirror reflecting reality, to reach a radical conclusion that implies such great involvement in the attempt to make concrete changes in society, through new linguistic models and collective behaviour that influence everyday life.

Inner Island is introduced by an installation by Michelangelo Pistoletto on the tug-boat Impetus in the waters of the lagoon facing the gardens of the Venice Biennial: a visual announcement pointing to the island of San Servolo in the distance.

If the island, in the literary imagination of Defoe implies an idea of survival as the colonial supremacy of Robinson Crusoe over nature and men, that of Pistoletto instead offers an idea of exchange, equality, co-existence, emancipation from needs and improved standards of living. Here survival becomes an art, in that it implies a project directed toward the quality of life and the capacity to formally elaborate objects of collective use.

The art of survival in the end becomes a practical utopia that doesn’t simply indicate an impossible elsewhere, but that seeks its own realisation in the concrete foundation of languages that give a statue of reality to the ideal values

that permeate it.

Thus Pistoletto moves the collective of his “Cittadellarte” from the island of Biella to the island of San Servolo, to creatively participate in a concrete dream, that of making a difference not in quantity, to which the simple concept of survival is linked, but in quality through a collective work that operates on the form of everyday objects.

Pistoletto accepts the idea of taking on a new identity, passing from individual to collective person in artistic creation, seizing the opportunity to transform San Servolo into a factory for ideas, above all in permanent synchrony with the international university already residing there. Thus art throws off its platonic guise to take on an active identity in full contact with real things, as demonstrated by the production disseminated between Marseilles, Arles, Sarajevo, Beirut, Biella and other cities of the world, by Pistoletto and the others of his collective. We’ve seen Mediterranean tables, multi-faith chapels, doors like frames with “art and politics” written over, lagoon yachts with “Love difference” written on their sails, all works that confirm that Cittadellarte is here and fighting with us. San Servolo becomes the inner island that guards the treasures of being, having, willing and knowing”.

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