

Michelangelo Pistoletto – Biography

Michelangelo Pistoletto was born in Biella in 1933.

His artistic training began in the studio of his father, a painter and restorer, where he went to work at the age of fourteen. He subsequently attended Armando Testa's advertising design school.

In 1955 he began to exhibit the results of the inquiry into self-portraiture that characterized his painting in the late fifties. He received the San Fedele Prize in Milan in 1958. In 1960 he had his first solo show at Galleria Galatea in Turin. That same year he made several life-sized self-portraits on gold, silver and copper monochrome backgrounds. In 1961 he created the series of works entitled *The Present*, painting his own image on a black background to which a layer of transparent varnish gave a mirror gloss.

In 1962 he perfected the technique of his *Mirror Paintings*: he produced an image on tissue paper by enlarging a photograph to life size, painting it with the tip of a brush, then affixed it onto a sheet of mirror-finished stainless steel (after 1971 the painted tissue was replaced by a silkscreen of the photographic image). These works directly include the viewer and real time, and open up perspective, reversing the Renaissance perspective that had been closed by the twentieth-century avant-gardes. The *Mirror Paintings*, shown for the first time in March 1963 at Galleria Galatea, quickly brought Pistoletto international acclaim and led to his inclusion in major exhibitions of Pop Art and Nouveau Realisme. During the sixties the artist had solo shows in important galleries and museums in Europe and the United States (in 1964 at Galerie Sonnabend in Paris, in 1966 at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, in 1967 at the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels, in 1969 at the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam). In 1967 he received the Belgian critics' prize and that of the São Paulo Biennale. The *Mirror Paintings* are the foundation of Pistoletto's subsequent artistic output and of the theoretical thought that consistently parallels it.

In 1964, at Galleria Sperone in Turin, he showed the body of work called *Plexiglass* — a first transposition in real space of the new open dimension of the mirror paintings, as well as a declaration of art's "conceptual" character.

In 1965-1966 he showed a set of works, entitled *Minus Objects*, in his studio. These works, made in the contingent dimension of time and based on the principle of difference, broke with the dogma of the uniformity of individual artistic style. They are considered fundamental to the birth of Arte Povera, an art movement theorized by Germano Celant in 1967, of which Pistoletto was an animating force and a leading figure.

In March, 1967 Pistoletto began to work outside traditional exhibition spaces. In December of that year he announced the opening of his studio, in a manifesto. In this context The Zoo arose—a group of people from different artistic disciplines, together with whom Pistoletto carried out actions conceived as creative collaborations from 1968 to 1970. Invited to the Venice Biennale in 1968, he published his *Manifesto of Collaboration*.

Between October 1975 and September 1976 Pistoletto carried out a work that was intended to fill a full year. Divided into twelve consecutive exhibitions, entitled *The Rooms*, the piece occupied the spaces of Galleria Stein in Turin. It was the first of a series of complex works, each developed over a year's time and named "time continents". Other works from the series are *White Year* (1989) and *Happy Turtle* (1992). In 1976 he published *One Hundred Exhibitions in the Month of October*, a booklet that describes a hundred ideas for works conceived over a month, many of which he carried out in the following years. In March 1978, in a show at Galleria Persano in Turin, Pistoletto defined two main directions his future artwork would take: *Division and Multiplication of the Mirror* and *Art Takes On Religion*. In this same month he began a one-year residency at DAAD in Berlin, in which city he presented a retrospective exhibition at the Nationalgalerie and in thirteen public places.

Over the two-year period, 1978-1979, he presented a series of one-person shows, installations and actions in cities across the United States. This included *Creative Collaboration* in Atlanta, a broad creative partnership extended to the entire city, in which he involved local artists from different disciplines together with artists with whom he had worked in the past (actor Lionello Gennero, musician Enrico Rava, composer Morton Feldmann) and members of his family. His artistic collaborations continued throughout 1979 in different places, particularly at Corniglia (Liguria), a village with whose inhabitants he staged the play *Anno Uno* at the Teatro Qurino in Rome in 1981.

In 1981, at Salvatore Ala Gallery in New York, Pistoletto showed *The Nativity*, a first example of the rigid polyurethane sculptures he created in the early eighties. In 1984 he remade some of these works in marble and on a large scale in his one-person show at Forte di Belvedere in Florence. From 1985 to 1989 he created a new cycle of works, made up of surfaces and volumes in anonymous materials and dark, gloomy colors, called *Art of Squalor*, exhibited at Galleria Persano in Turin and at Galleria Pieroni in Rome.

In 1991 he was appointed Professor of Sculpture at the Vienna Fine Arts Academy, a position he kept until 2000. With his students, he developed an innovative program intent on breaking down the traditional barriers between artistic disciplines.

In 1993 he began the phase called *Art Sign*, based on an idea conceived in *One Hundred Exhibitions in the Month of October* (1976). In addition to producing a series of works sharing a form that constituted his personal *Art Sign*, the artist invited other people, on diverse occasions, to create and present an *Art Sign* of their own.

In 1994 began *Project Art* with which Pistoletto – by means of a program manifesto, public meetings, displays and exhibitions that involved artists of different disciplines and representatives of broad sectors of society – placed art at the center of socially responsible change. 1998 witnessed the establishment of *Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto* in a former mill in Biella, Italy, acquired by the artist in 1991. Here the goals expressed in *Project Art* are still being developed and accomplished.

2000 saw the inauguration, at the Paoli-Calmettes Cancer Institute in Marseille, of the *Place of Meditation and Prayer*, a multireligious, secular space conceived and executed by the artist.

In 2002 Pistoletto was Artistic Director of the Turin International Biennial of Young Art entitled *Big Social Game*. That same year he received the Diploma di Benemerito della Cultura e dell'Arte from the President of the Italian Republic.

In 2003 he was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale. At the same Biennale he presented *Love Difference - Artistic Movement for an InterMediterranean Politic*, a project born in April 2002 at Cittadellarte, for which Pistoletto made a large reflecting table in the shape of the Mediterranean basin, around which many of *Love Difference's* activities will take place in the following years.

In 2004 Turin University graduated him with a laurea honoris causa in Political Science. On that occasion the artist publicly announced the most recent phase of his work, *Third Paradise*, whose symbol is a reconfiguration of the mathematical sign for infinity conceived by the artist in 2003. From this date, for Pistoletto and Cittadellarte, the *Third Paradise* will increasingly become a work conducted by weaving a dense network of relationships and collaborations with countless partners - individuals, associations, organizations, and institutions - active not only in the artistic sphere, but in the most diverse spheres of society, making the *Third Paradise* a large collective and participatory work.

In 2007, in Jerusalem, Pistoletto was awarded the *Wolf Foundation Prize in Arts*, “for his constantly inventive career as an artist, educator and activist whose restless intelligence has created prescient forms of art that contribute to fresh understanding of the world.”

In 2009, he presented the performance and installation *Twentytwo less Two* at the Venice Biennale, with which he inaugurated a series of works based on the breaking of the mirror. In 2010 he wrote the essay *The Third Paradise*, published in Italian, English, French and German. In 2011 he was the artistic director of *Evento 2011 – L'art pour une ré-évolution urbaine* in Bordeaux.

In 2012 he started promoting the *Rebirth-day*, first worldwide day of rebirth, celebrated every year on 21st December with initiatives taking place all around the world and generating a wide international network of Third Paradise Embassies.

In that same year he is bestowed the title of Grand Officer of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic. In 2013 the Louvre in Paris hosted his personal exhibition Michelangelo Pistoletto, *année un – le paradis sur terre*. In this same year he received the *Praemium Imperiale* for painting, in Tokyo. In 2014 the symbol of the *Third Paradise* was installed in the hall of the headquarters of the Council of the European Union in Bruxelles for the period of the Italian Presidency of the European Council.

In May 2015 he received an honorary degree from the Universidad de las Artes of Havana in Cuba for "his contribution to contemporary art and his influence on several generations of artists".

In October of the same year he realized a work, called *Rebirth*, in the park of the Palais des Nations in Geneva, headquarters of the UN, constituted of a huge symbol of the *Third Paradise* formed of 193 stones, one for each UN State Member.

Also in 2015, the first "Rebirth Forum," a major art and policy workshop involving organizations, businesses, associations, and institutions, takes place in Havana. The Forum places at the center of its work the 17 Goals for Sustainable Development of the UN "Agenda 2030", signed in this same year by its member countries, goals that will also be a constant reference of the "Rebirth Forums" to be held in subsequent years in different cities.

In April 2016, the Brera Academy of Fine Arts conferred him an honorary degree in Communication and Art Education.

In 2017 a re-elaborated version of the symbol of the *Third Paradise* was adopted for the VITA space mission logo; during the mission, the photos taken by astronaut Paolo Nespoli were shared through the SPAC3 app to create a social planetary artwork.

In the same year the text written by Michelangelo Pistoletto *Ominitheism and Demopraxy. Manifesto for a regeneration of society* was published.

Between 2018 and 2020 he has been particularly active in various South American countries (Mexico, Chile, Peru, Argentina, Cuba), with various initiatives, solo exhibitions and an extensive exhibition as guest of honour at the Biennalsur in Buenos Aires.

In the same years, he has also received several honours: in 2018 the *Roswitha Haftmann Prize* in Zurich, in 2019 honorary degrees from the Academy of Fine Arts in Lecce and Catania and the *Order of Minerva* from the University of Chieti, in 2020 the *Clavis Palafoxiana Prize* in Puebla, Mexico, in 2021 the *Lorenzo il Magnifico Lifetime Achievement Prize* from the Florence Biennale, in 2022 the *Artis Suavitas Prize* and the *Culture+Enterprise Prize*.

In 2021 the *Universario*, an exhibition space in which the artist presents his most recent research, was inaugurated at Cittadellarte, and in December 2022 his book, *La formula della creazione*, in which he retraces the fundamental steps and the evolution of his entire artistic career and theoretical reflection, was published. The presentation of the book is the occasion, during 2023, of a busy programme of conferences and debates in various venues, including a series of lectures given at the Louvre Museum in Paris.

In the same year, he received several honours, including the Presidio Culturale Italiano award on the occasion of his exhibition *Infinity* at the Chiostro del Bramante in Rome, the title of Socio emerito SIEDAS, conferred on him on the occasion of his exhibition *La pace*

preventiva at the Palazzo Reale in Milan,, the title of Accademico d'Onore of the Accademia di Belle Arti in Naples, the *International Leoncino d'Oro Award*, the *European Relations Award*, the *Ecologia Città di Varese Award*, the *La Ginestra Award*, and the *Le pagine della terra Award*.

Between 2023 and 2024, a series of his new works, for which Pistoletto coined the term “meta-work” and in which he explores the possibilities offered by new technologies such as QR code and Artificial Intelligence, are presented at various exhibitions.

In 2024 he received the Laurea Honoris Causa from the Accademia Belle Arti Foggia, the *Centrocot Prize* from Busto Arsizio for “the integration of art and sustainability”, the *De Sanctis Europa Prize for Art*, and the *Gran Prix for Lifetime Achievement* at the Osten Biennial Skopje 2024.

In February 2025, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

He has participated thirteen times in the Venice Biennale (1966, 1968, 1976, 1978, 1984, 1986, 1993, 1995, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2011, 2017) and four times in Documenta, Kassel (1968, 1982, 1992 and 1997).

Main solo show in museums and exhibition institutions (for a complete list of solo exhibitions see the dedicated website page):

1966: Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; 1967: Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels; 1969: Boymans van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam; 1973: Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover; 1974: Matildenhöhe, Darmstadt; 1976: Palazzo Grassi, Venezia; 1977: Museo Diego Aragona Pignatelli, Napoli; 1978: Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Aalborg; Nationalgalerie, Berlin; 1979: Rice Demenil Museum, Houston; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Georgia Museum of Art, Athens; L.A.I.C.A., Los Angeles; 1980: University Art Museum, Berkeley; Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; 1981: Westfälisches Landesmuseum-Altenbergen, Münster; 1983: Palacio de Cristal, Madrid; 1984: Forte di Belvedere, Firenze; 1986: Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Musée Cantini, Marseille; 1988: Grazer Kunstverein, Graz; P.S.1 Museum, New York; Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden Baden; 1989: Museo di Capodimonte, Napoli; Kunsthalle, Bern; Secession, Wien; 1990: Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Roma; 1991: Museet for Samdtkunst, Oslo; Camden Arts Center, London; 1992: Deichtorhallen, Hamburg; 1993: Fundação de Serralves, Porto; Witte de With Art Centrum, rotterdam; Creux de l'Enfer C.N.A.C, Thiers; Centre d'Art Contemporain de Vassivière, Vassivière; Musée Departmental de Rochechouart, Rochechouart, Porto, Fundação de Serralves; Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw; 1994: Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul; 1995: Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts, Wien; Palazzo Fabroni, Pistoia; 1996: Lenbachhaus, Munich; Mala Galerija Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana; Museo Pecci, Prato; 1999: MMAO, Oxford; Henry Moore Foundation, Halifax; Galerie Taxispalais, Innsbruck; 2000: Palazzina della Società della Promotrice delle Belle Arti, Torino e Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli; MACBA, Barcelona; Neue Kunstmuseum, Luzern; 2001: Umjetnicka galerija, Sarajevo; Ludwig Museum Budapest; Musée d'Art Contemporain, Lyon; Contemporary Museum of Bosnia, Sarajevo; Ludwig Museum, Budapest; Palazzo Vitelli, Pinacoteca Comunale, Palazzo Comunale, Città di Castello; 2003: MuHKA, Antwerpen; 2005: Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, Modena; 2007: MAMAC, Nice; Musée d'Art Moderne, Saint - Étienne; NCCA, Mosca; CAMEC, La Spezia; MADRE, Napoli; 2010: MARCA, Catanzaro; Palazzo Strozzi, Firenze; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; 2011: MAXXI, Roma; 2011: Serpentin Gallery, London; 2012: Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz; Terme di Caracalla, Roma; BOZAR, Bruxelles; 2013:

Musée du Louvre, Paris; 2015: Castello di Gallipoli; 2016: Blenheim Palace, Woodstock; Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Aalborg; GAMEC, Bergamo; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, La Habana; 2017: Abbazia di San Giorgio Maggiore, Venezia; 2018: Palazzo Ducale, Mantova; MAC - Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Santiago de Chile; Museo de Arte Italiano, Lima; MACRO, Roma; 2019: Palazzo Gromo Losa, Biella; 2021: Palazzo Boncompagni, Bologna; Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona; Shanghai Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai; Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Málaga; 2022: Museo del Novecento e del Contemporaneo di Palazzo Fabroni, Pistoia; Cukrarna Gallery, Ljubljana; Louvre Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi; 2023: Palazzo Reale, Milano; Chiostrò del Bramante, Roma, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli; 2024: Beograd, Museum of Contemporary Art; Caserta, Reggia di Caserta.

His works are present in the permanent collections of leading museums of modern and contemporary art and in private collections open to the public, including:

Aalborg, KUNSTEN - Museum of Modern Art
Ajaccio, FRAC Corse
Ancona, Museo Tattile Statale Omero
Antwerpen, MuHKA - Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst
Atene, The George Economou Collection
Barcelona, Macba - Museu d'art contemporani de Barcelona
Beirut, Aishti Foundation Museum
Berlin, Neue Nationalgalerie
Biella, Museo del territorio biellese
Bolzano, Museion - Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea
Brescia, Museo di Santa Giulia
Bruxelles, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique
Bruxelles, Vanhaerents Art Collection
Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts
Buffalo, AGK Art Museum
Cáceres, Museo de arte contemporáneo Helga de Alvear
Cambridge, Harvard Art Museums
Camogli, Fondazione Pier Luigi e Natalina Remotti
Caracas, MAC - Museo de Arte Contemporáneo
Caserta, La Collezione Lucio Amelio alla Reggia di Caserta
Cassino, CAMUSAC - Cassino Museo Arte Contemporanea
Catanzaro, MARCA - Museo delle Arti
Châteaugiron, FRAC Bretagne
Chicago, Chicago Art Institute
Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art
Cold Spring, Magazzino Italian Art
Dallas, Dallas Museum of Art
Dallas, The Rachofsky House
Des Moines, Des Moines Art Center
Detroit, Detroit Institut of Art
Dortmund, Museum Ostwall
Dunkerque, FRAC Nord-Pas de Calais
Durham, NASHER Museum of Art at Duke University

Düsseldorf, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
Eindhoven, Stedelijk van Abbemuseum
Erlangen, Kunstpalais - Städtische Sammlung Erlangen
Firenze, Collezione Roberto Casamonti
Firenze, Galleria degli Uffizi
Fort Worth, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth
Frankfurt am Main, MMK – Museum für Moderne Kunst
Genève, FMAC - Fonds d'art contemporain de la Ville de Genève
Gent, Herbert Foundation
Gent, S.M.A.K. – Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst
Graz, Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum
Hanover, Hood Museum of Art
Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art
Houston, The Menil Collection
Ithaca, Herbert F. Johnson Museum
Jesi, Pinacoteca di Jesi
Köln, Museum Ludwig
La Habana, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes
L'Aquila, MUSPAC - Museo Sperimentale d'Arte Contemporanea
La Spezia, Camec - Centro Arte Moderna e Contemporanea
Lisboa, Museu Coleção Berardo – Arte Moderna e Contemporânea
Locarno, Ghisla Art Collection
London, British Museum
London, Tate Modern
London, Victoria and Albert Museum
Los Angeles, Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation
Los Angeles, LACMA - Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Lugano, MASI - Fondazione Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana
Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía
Malo, Museo Casabianca
Marseille, MAC - Musées d' Art Contemporain
Mexico City, Colección Isabel y Agustín Coppel
Miami, CIFO - Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation
Miami, The Margulies Collection at the Warehouse
Miami, PAMM - Pérez Art Museum Miami
Milano, Fondazione Prada
Milano, Museo del Novecento
Milano, Pinacoteca di Brera
Milwaukee, Milwaukee Art Museum
Minneapolis, Minneapolis Institute of Art
Minneapolis, Walker Art Center
Mönchengladbach, Städtisches Museum Abteiberg
München, Sammlung Goetz
München, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus
Naoshima, Benesse House Museum
Napoli, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donna Regina Madre
Napoli, Museo di Capodimonte
New Orleans, New Orleans Museum of Art
New York, Brooklyn Museum

New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York, MoMA - The Museum of Modern Art
New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
Nice, MAMAC - Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain
Northampton, Smith College Museum of Art
Nürnberg, Neues Museum
Oslo, The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design
Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum
Paris, Bourse de Commerce — Pinault Collection
Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou-Musee National d'Art Modern
Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art
Pieve di Cadore, Museo dell'occhiale
Pistoia, Fattoria Celle - Collezione Gori
Porto, Fundação de Serralves - Museu de Arte Contemporânea
Potomac, Glenstone
Prag, National Gallery - Veletrní Palace
Prato, Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci
Prato, Museo di Palazzo Pretorio
Reggio Emilia, Collezione Maramotti
Rimini, Palazzo dell'Arengo, Collezione Fondazione San Patrignano
Rivoli, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea
Rochechouart, Musée départemental d'art contemporain
Roma, GNAM - Galleria Nazionale d'arte moderna
Roma, MAXXI - Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo
Roma, Terme di Caracalla
Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen
Rovereto, Museo per l'Arte Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto (MART)
Saint-Étienne, Musée d'art moderne de Saint-Étienne Métropole
San Francisco, MOMASF-Museum of Modern Art
Sarajevo, Ars Aevi - Museum of Contemporary Art
Savona, MUSA - Museo della Ceramica
Seul, National Museum of Contemporary Art
Sidney, Chau Chak Wing Museum
Sindelfingen, Shauwerk Sindelfingen
Singapore, Parkview Museum
Stockholm, Moderna Museet
Tarquinia, Casa Museo di Tarquinia - Collezione Peruzzi
Teheran, Museum of Contemporary Art
Thiers, Le Creux de l'enfer - Centre d'art contemporain
Torino, GAM - Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea
Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario
Toulouse, Les abbatoirs - Musée d'art moderne et contemporaine
Toyama, The Museum of Modern Art
Toyota, Toyota Municipal Museum of Art
Vaduz, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein
Vassiviere, Centre International d'Art & di Paysage - Bois de sculptures
Venezia, Ca' Pesaro – Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna
Villeurbanne, FRAC-Rhône-Alpes
Warsaw, CSW - Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle

Washington, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution
Washington, National Gallery of Art
Wassenaar, Museum Voorlinden
West Hartford, Art Museum University of Saint Joseph
Wien, MUMOK - Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig
Wien, Sammlung Essl im Schömer-Haus Museum Kunst der Gegenwart