

Michelangelo Pistoletto

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Biography

Michelangelo Pistoletto was born in the town of Biella at the foot of the Italian Alps in 1933. He began exhibiting his work in 1955, and in 1960 had his first solo show at Galleria Galatea in Turin. An inquiry into self-portraiture characterises his early work: in 1961–62, he made his first Mirror Paintings, which directly include the viewer and real time, opening up and reversing the Renaissance perspective closed by the twentieth-century avant-garde. These works, which brought Pistoletto international acclaim and led to solo shows in galleries and museums in Europe and the US, are foundational to his artistic output and theoretical thought. In 1965 and 1966 he produced his Minus Objects, considered fundamental to the birth of Arte Povera, a movement of which Pistoletto was an animating force and proponent. In 1967, he began working outside traditional exhibition spaces and also initiated 'creative collaborations' with artists from different disciplines and sectors of society. In 1975–76 he presented a cycle of twelve consecutive exhibitions, *Le Stanze*, at Galleria Stein in Turin, the first in a series of complex, year-long works called 'time continents'. In 1978, in a show at Galleria Persano in Turin, Pistoletto outlined two main directions his future work would take: *Division and Multiplication of the Mirror* and *Art Takes On Religion*. In the early eighties he made a series of sculptures in rigid polyurethane, translated into marble for his solo show in 1984 at Forte di Belvedere in Florence. From 1985–89 he created the series of 'dark' volumes called *Art of Squalor*. During the nineties, with *Project Art* and with the creation in Biella of *Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto* and the *University of Ideas*, he brought art into relation with diverse spheres of society, with the aim of inspiring responsible social change.

In 2003 Pistoletto won the Venice Biennale's Golden Lion for Lifelong Achievement and a year later, when the University of Turin awarded him a laurea honoris causa in Political Science, he announced what has become the most recent phase of his work, *Third Paradise*. In 2007, in Jerusalem, he received the Wolf Foundation Prize in the Arts, and in 2008, *Cittadellarte* was awarded the Special Prize City of Sasso Marconi for innovative languages of communication. This year he has a retrospective at the Contemporary Art Museum in Philadelphia.