

Walter De Maria

Fondazione Prada

Milan

November 11th 1999 - January 4th 2000

The Fondazione Prada opens Thursday, November 11th with the first one-man exhibition in Italy produced by Walter De Maria (1935, Albany, California).

The American artist, is regarded as one of the leading protagonists of the Sixties and Seventies precursor of such stylistic directions as Minimal and Conceptual art. In search of a diverse contextual language between art and natural environment, De Maria formulated writings and projects that preceded the international Land Art movement.

The exhibition, conceived by De Maria and organized by Germano Celant for the Fondazione, presents three large groupings of sculpture created during the late Sixties and early Seventies that come from American and European museums and institutions. The show itinerary - conceived as one large installation where the works are all interconnected - begins with *Cross* (1965), *Museum Piece* (1966) and *Star* (1972), then continues with *Gold Meters* (1976) and concludes with *Bed of Spikes* (1968/69).

In accordance with the artist's intention, the sculptures presented in this occasion should ideally be viewed under the natural light during the day.

The first room of the exhibition opens with three sculptures coming from The Solomon R. Guggenheim, New York. These works are made of solid, polished aluminium. Each contains a 9,1 cm diameter ball which has the potential of movement when the sculptures were in a private collection.

These three "signs/symbols" sculptures, *Cross*, *Museum Piece* and *Star*, represent basic historical meanings while at the same time they function as modern sculptures.

The exhibition continues with *Gold Meters* (1976), from the Dia Center for the Arts, New York. This is the first time that the sculpture has been exhibited. The artist has held back more than twenty years the work from the public because he was searching for a space which had the right proportion and light to succeed. The sculpture is composed of 8 one-meter by one-meter (39,3 x 39,3 inches) solid, polished stainless steel plates on which circles of gold can be seen. In fact, each circle correspond to a solid cylinder of gold which reaches flush to the surface of the plate. Each plate contains one pound of gold. The diameter of each circle is 1.8 cm. The circles vary in depth below the surface to reflect their proportionate weight in gold. The number of gold circles inserted in each plate increases by a progression in the numbers 2 through 9 times themselves square (for example: in the first element $2^2=4$ circles; in the second element equal $3^2=9$ circles and in the last element $9^2=81$ circles).

The exhibition itinerary concludes with *Beds of Spikes* (1968-69), from the collection of the Kunstmuseum of Basel. The artwork is a complex sculptural whole of five rectangular elements in stainless steel. Each rectangular element (or *Bed*), contains solid obelisk-shaped spikes. These spikes are 10 ½ inches long and they are arranged in a grid array and fixed on the plate base which measures 78 ½ x 41 ½ inches. The number of spikes on the short side of the rectangular base are 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9. The number of spikes increases in each of the five elements: 3, 15, 45, 91, 153. The number of rows per element is twice

the number of spikes on the short side, minus one. For example, the element with 5 spikes on the short side will have 9 rows. The element with one spike on the short side, or 3 spikes in total, is an exception to this rule. The spikes are sharp and dangerous therefore the viewers are requested to stand one meter away from each sculpture so that the possibility of danger is avoided. To be double sure that the public understands this, each visitor will be asked to read and sign a short statement so that he understands that the sharp element exists and he will take a proper care.

For the occasion of the exhibition, the Fondazione Prada publishes the book "Walter De Maria 1999 Milano 2000". This volume containing a statement by Walter De Maria and an essay by Germano Celant, originates with the intent to document the grouping of sculptures chosen for the exhibition. The artist takes it a step further by weaving together sculpture and city, art and photography, art book and catalogue. An essential part of the book is the portfolio of black and white images documenting various street intersections of Milan taken by the photographer Nanda Lanfranco as requested by the artist.

Exhibition info

Title: Walter De Maria
Location: Fondazione Prada
Address: Via Spartaco 8, Milan (Italy)
Date: November 11th, 1999 - January 4th, 2000
Times: from Tuesday to Sunday, 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM, closed on Monday
Admittance: free
Publication: Fondazione Prada
Information: Fondazione Prada, ph.+39-02-54670216, fax+39-02-56470258
www.fondazioneprada.org
Press office: Fondazione Prada - Alessandra Santerini
Ph.+39-02-54670515, fax+39-02-56470258