

FONDAZIONE PRADA PRESENTS “STOP PAINTING”, AN EXHIBITION BY PETER FISCHLI, IN VENICE FROM 22 MAY TO 21 NOVEMBER 2021

Venice, 15 April 2021 – “Stop Painting” is an exhibition conceived by artist Peter Fischli on view at the historic palazzo of Ca’ Corner della Regina, Fondazione Prada’s Venetian venue, from 22 May to 21 November 2021. The press preview will take place on Wednesday 19 May.

Described by Peter Fischli as “a kaleidoscope of repudiated gestures”, the project explores a series of specific ruptures within the history of painting in the last 150 years, intertwined with the emergence of new social factors and cultural values. The exhibition also projects itself into the dimensions of the present and the future. It intends to understand if a further development is taking place today and if the current digital revolution can also cause a new crisis of painting or, on the contrary, contribute to its renewal.

“Was the recurring ghost telling the story of the end of painting a phantom problem? And if yes, can phantoms be real?”. These were Fischli’s doubts at the beginning of the process leading to the conception of his exhibition. In an attempt to answer these and other open questions, he identified five radical ruptures caused by technological and social changes that marked artistic paradigm shifts through rejection and reinvention of painting.

The first rupture was provoked by the diffusion of photography. As underlined by Rosalind Krauss, “Photography calls into question the whole concept of the uniqueness of the art object, the originality of the author... and the individuality of so-called self-expression.” This is the reason that led painter Paul Delaroche to exclaim for the first time around 1840 the famous and shocking sentence: “from today, painting is dead.” Painting was therefore forced to renounce its mimetic function in order to survive. The second crisis is represented by the invention of the readymade and the collage that pushed painting to extend itself and “move beside itself in space through objects,” as noted by David Joselit. The third one was provoked by the questioning of the idea of authorship, or as defined by Roland Barthes in 1968 “the death of the author”. In any case authenticity and originality issues had been addressed by artists several years earlier. The fourth crisis can be identified with the critique of painting as a commodity, because of its mobility, its symbolic value, and its easy preservation, in the late Sixties. The fifth rupture focuses on the crisis of criticism in the so-called late capitalist society, as formulated in the seminal studies by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello. “Since the 1980s the idea of an avant-garde became obsolete and dissolved and, again, the end of a critical position in painting was proclaimed”, as noted by Fischli.

The artist devised this exhibition as a plurality of different narratives told by himself in the first person, in a subjective tone. The show begins on the ground floor of Ca’ Corner della Regina with a new site-specific artwork by Fischli that consists of a scaled-down model of the entire project, defined by the artist as “a sculpture of a painting exhibition”. This work is

accompanied by texts written by Fischli to illustrate each of the 10 sections of the project, which brings together more than 110 artworks by over 80 artists. "Stop Painting" unfolds on the first floor of Ca' Corner della Regina following not a chronological order, but a personal and idiosyncratic approach. The display consists of a system of temporary walls that cross and cut through the spaces, passing through the thresholds that connect the different rooms. The uniform and modernist appearance of these structures is in stark contrast to the frescoed and decorated walls of the central hall on the first floor, echoing the different artistic positions expressed against the medium of painting.

"Stop Painting" is accompanied by an illustrated book published by Fondazione Prada. It includes essays by Diedrich Diederichsen, Eva Fabbris, Arthur Fink, Peter Fischli, Mark Godfrey, Boris Groys, John Kelsey, Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer, and Hanna Magauer, as well as an interview by Mario Mainetti with the exhibition curator.

Overview of the exhibition sections

The section titled "Delirium of Negation" occupies the central room on the first floor of Ca' Corner della Regina. According to artist and critic John Kelsey, "the end of painting can only ever be a repetition". All the works on display realized by artists such as Lucio Fontana, Lee Lozano, Francis Picabia, Adrian Piper, Ed Ruscha, and Jean-Frédéric Schnyder, which deal with the canonical moments of crisis in the history of painting induced by the readymade, the photography and the commodification of painting itself, clearly demonstrate this assumption.

The "Mensch Maschine" section investigates the obsolescence of the artist as producer and questions the idea of subjectivity as inspiration for creative activity. Works by Andrea Fraser, Pinot Galizio, Alain Jacquet, Piero Manzoni, and Niki de Saint Phalle, that incorporate new technological devices and inventions, illustrate the possible and frightening erasure of the difference between works of art and everyday objects.

Gathered under the title "Niente da vedere niente da nascondere", the works by Carla Accardi, Walter De Maria, David Hammons, Klara Liden, Martin Kippenberger and Albert Oehlen hide, cover or destroy the image making it impossible for the viewer to fetishize its surface.

The "Word Versus Image" section explores the inclusion of textual fragments on the picture and investigates the relationship between images and texts as one of the key aspects of 20th-century painting represented by the works on display by John Baldessari, Gene Beery, Karen Kilimnik, Pino Pascali and Jim Shaw, among others.

As stated by scholar Boris Groys, "painting itself lost its context and became an object, a ready-made, context-less and world-less". In the works included in the "When Paintings

Become Things” section, painting becomes autonomous from the pictorial surface, “after many centuries of understanding of painting as representation of the external world.” The works by Dadamaino, Carol Rama, Jean-Frederic Schnyder and Rosemarie Trockel are tautological representations of real elements or consist of profane and simple objects.

The questioning of established canons and the rejection of painting and the culture industry in general are the basis of Boris Lurie’s “NO” paintings, Gustave Metzger’s self-destructive art and Henry Flynt’s violent signs against art museums. These artists are part of the “Let’s Go and Say No” section, which demonstrates a close link between criticism of art and its commercial drift and broader political and social protest movements.

The room titled “Readymades Belong to Everyone” presents appropriations of both commercial culture and art history, treating them as part of the same realm. Marcel Duchamp, Sturtevant, Ben Vautier, and Andy Warhol, among others, challenge the idea of authorship with their works and deconstruct the notion of painting with their practices.

The “Next to Nothing” section deals with the monochrome, the blank canvas and the idea of tracing marks on the surface. Martin Barré’s isolated and anonymous signs, Francis Picabia’s late abstract paintings “decorated” with spare dots, Blinky Palermo’s fabric paintings and Lynda Benglis’ “pours” are all symptoms of this tendency to essentiality that resets or ridicules the act of painting.

In the “Spelling Backwards” section the works by Roy Lichtenstein, Gerhard Richter, and Josh Smith, among others, “aim to demonstrate that something like an ‘essence of painting’ does not exist. In doing so they emphasize the conventionality of the medium, while the gesture as an autographical mark is being deconstructed”, in the words of Peter Fischli.

The “Die Hard, Stirb Langsam, Duri a morire” section brings together works that express an empathetic nostalgia for the medium and the impossibility even for avant-garde artists like Marcel Broodthaers, Asger Jorn and Kurt Schwitters to escape the latent force of attraction of figurative painting.

A selection of works by Theaster Gates, Wade Guyton, Bruce Nauman, Lawrence Weiner and other artists disseminated on the ground floor, in the courtyard, and in the staircase of Ca’ Corner della Regina enriches the intersecting storylines that constitute the exhibition “Stop Painting”.

Information

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AN EXHIBITION BY PETER FISCHLI

Fondazione Prada - Venezia

Ca' Corner della Regina

Santa Croce 2215, Venice

fondazioneprada.org

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Press Preview: 19 May 2021

Press Contacts

Fondazione Prada

T +39 02 56 66 26 34

press@fondazioneprada.org

fondazioneprada.org