

PRESS RELEASE

Together, Jaume Plensa



la Biennale di Venezia

56. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Eventi Collaterali

A SERIES OF NEW SCULPTURAL INSTALLATIONS
IN COLLABORATION WITH ABBAZIA DI SAN GIORGIO MAGGIORE
COLLATERAL EVENT OF THE 56TH INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

PRESS PREVIEW MAY 5th & 6th BY APPOINTMENT
PREVIEW OPENING 7th May 5 – 8pm (RSVP)
<http://jaumeplensa.com/venice2015/>
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On the occasion of the 56th International Art Exhibition of la Biennale di Venezia, one of Venice's most celebrated landmarks, the Basilica of San Giorgio Maggiore, will host *Together*, a major exhibition of new works by Spanish artist Jaume Plensa.

Plensa (Spain, b.1955) is one of the world's foremost artists working in the public art space, with permanent works spanning the globe including the *Crown Fountain* (Chicago), *Echo* (Seattle), *Breathing* (London) and *Roots* (Tokyo). The exhibition is curated by Clare Lilley, Director of Programmes at Yorkshire Sculpture Park. The works in the exhibition all make their debut in San Giorgio and reflect the artist's continued interest in a bodily relationship to space, scale, material and place.

For four hundred years the Basilica of San Giorgio Maggiore has been a place of worship, communication and meditation, where Palladio's profound architecture creates a stilling and contemplative environment. Plensa's response to this powerful space is *Together*; a conversation between two sculptures - hand, suspended beneath the cupola in the foreground of the altar, and head, sited in the nave. Placed on the dominant west-east axis of the building, the works set up a line of spiritual and intellectual discourse which evokes emotion and seeks to connect with his viewers on an intuitive level.

As a speaker of five languages alongside a nomadic life that takes him around the globe, Plensa's work reflects a desire to break down barriers. Merging difference is a cornerstone of his work, and here it is further emphasized by the installation of meticulous drawings and a group of five alabaster portraits in the contiguous Officina dell'Arte Spirituale, located 300 meters from the entrance to the Basilica on the island's northern edge. Plunged in darkness and lit to reveal their luminous opacity, the sculptures were carved using reformed scans of real girls; chosen because, like nomads, they have traveled, settled and traveled again. Chosen, too, because they are teenage girls on the cusp of leaving and arriving, whose potential – like that of all humanity –

so deeply glows.

Plensa's sculptures reference a Judeo-Christian tradition while connecting with a much longer human history, where the making of art has social purpose and which we see played out across histories and geographies – in heads from the Croatian Upper Paleolithic, carved some 26,000 years ago; in exquisite, elongated hands incised in stone from 1300 BCE Egypt. For these and other reasons, Plensa's forms will connect people and welcome them into the Basilica. Made from stainless steel which distills and diffuses light, Plensa's hand and head are at times transmutable hazes that pull and root the gaze. The opening, gestural hand formed from characters of eight languages, speaks of a coming together of peoples and traditions. Similarly, Nuria's face speaks of diversity; indeed the subject is the daughter of a Chinese friend in Barcelona, who in her young life has already crossed many borders.

Clare Lilley, Curator, commented: *"Plensa's installations for the Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore are testament to his acute understanding of space and scale. His sculptures do not impose themselves on these historic spaces; rather they capture and reflect the actual light and shadows within to communicate a metaphorical language. Both visually stunning and intimate, they draw our attention to a world where migration and difference challenge civilised behaviour; in this place, which for centuries has welcomed world travellers, Plensa's work will connect people of many faiths and of no faith."*

In collaboration with the monks of the Abbazia di San Giorgio, as part of the cultural activities of the Benedicți Claustra Onlus, *Together* hopes to advance the Benedictine community's efforts to develop a number of restoration projects of the monumental Palladian complex on San Giorgio Maggiore. Inspired by textual elements in the body of Plensa's work, the project has contributed a significant donation to restore the Abbazia's 15th and 16th Century illuminated manuscripts; prayer books previously too delicate for public view.

Dr. Carmelo Grasso, head of the Benedicți Claustra Onlus explains: *"During the Plensa exhibition an 'Illuminated choral' of San Giorgio Maggiore Abbey, liturgical instrument of prayer and spiritual dialogue used by the monks for centuries for the daily Opus Dei and community prayer, will be placed on the lectern of badalone's choir behind the main altar. This is the contribution of the Benedictine Community to strengthen the sense of togetherness and the intellectual and spiritual dialogue between the hand, the head and those who wish to enter into a relationship with the artist's work and the great Palladian Basilica."*

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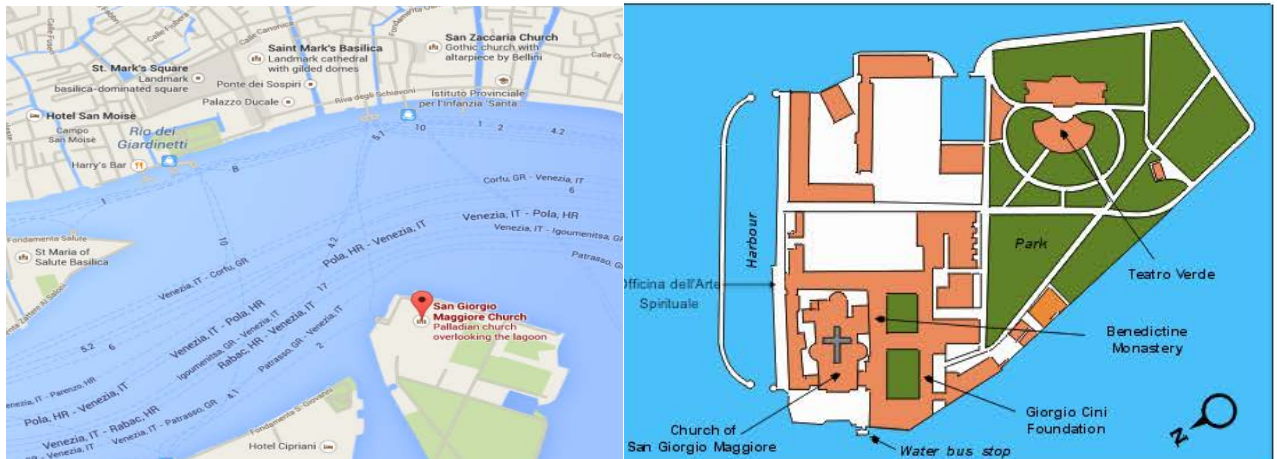
Press materials and images can be accessed here: <http://jaumeplensa.com/venice2015/>

For the opening preview on 7th May - RSVP: rsvp@richardgraygallery.com

Notes to Editor

How to get there

The Basilica of San Giorgio Maggiore and Officina dell'Arte Spirituale are located on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore across the waters of Bacino San Marco. The best way to reach the island is by The Vaporetto (water taxi) line '2'. San Giorgio Maggiore is 1 stop away from Vaporetto stop San Zaccaria/Pieta (near St Mark's Square). The Vaporetto departs frequently and runs for 24 hours a day.



Jaume Plensa

Jaume Plensa (Spanish, b. 1955) is one of the world's foremost artists working in the public realm with numerous projects spanning the globe including the *Crown Fountain* (Chicago), *Echo* (Seattle), *Wonderland* (Calgary), *Breathing* (London) and *Roots* (Tokyo). The winner of the 2013 Velazquez Price, Plensa is currently the subject of a solo exhibition in the Millennium Park, Chicago and will debut his most comprehensive North American exhibition to date in May 2015 at the Frist Center of Visual Arts and Cheekwood Botanical Garden and Museum of Art in Nashville. The artist has had solo exhibitions at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton, U.K; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, USA; the Musée Picasso, Antibes, France; Galerie National du Jeu de Paume, Paris, France; and the Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain among many others. Plensa's work has also been acquired by the permanent collections of major museums including the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume in Paris; the Seattle Museum of Art in Washington; the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York; deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, Massachusetts; the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City; the Henry Moore Sculpture Trust in Halifax, England; the Malmö Konsthall in Sweden; the Städtische Kunsthalle in Mannheim; Musée D'Art Contemporain in Lyon; Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid and the Museum de Modernen Kunst in Vienna. Jaume currently lives and works in Barcelona.

www.jaumeplensa.com

Basilica di San Giorgio Maggiore

The monastic community of San Giorgio was founded in 982, when the island was donated to the Benedictine Giovanni Morosini by Doge Tribuno Memmo to build a monastery dedicated to San Giorgio. When the celebrated Italian architect Andrea Palladio arrived in Venice in 1560, he made great improvements to the refectory, and in 1565 was asked to prepare a model for a new church. Although work was not completed until Palladio's death in 1580, the body of the church was complete by 1575 and it was ultimately finished thirty years after the death of Palladio in 1610. The interior of the church contains beautiful sculptures and considerable works of art created by Jacopo and Leandro da Bassano, Sebastiano Ricci, and Domenico and Jacopo Tintoretto. The church of San Giorgio achieved the title of 'basilica' under pressure from the Venetian prelate Giuseppe Sarto (the future Pope Pius X) to mark the hundredth anniversary of the election of Pope Pius VII.

Abbazia di San Giorgio Maggiore Benedicti Clastra Onlus

The non-profit organization Benedictine Clastra has the clear and determined will of the Benedictine monks to promote and support projects for the development of art and artistic research, always privileged channels for evangelization and spiritual growth.

The Benedictine Clastra non-profit conducts social utility through initiatives of design, collaboration, realization of cultural events such as permanent and temporary exhibitions and restoration activities in the context of the protection, promotion and enhancement of historical and artistic heritage of the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice and the Abbey of Praglia in the town of Teolo (PD).

To do this, a part of the site was converted to exhibition space with the title of "Officina dell'Arte Spirituale" (cfr. RB 4.78), aimed at fostering the exchange of ideas and dialogue spiritual / cultural between the monastic community, artists and visitors of the Abbey. In previous Biennales the Benedicti Clastra non-profit organization has presented exhibitions by Anish Kapoor (*Ascension*, 2011); Real Venice (curated by Elena Foster in 2011); John Pawson (*Perspectives*, 2013) and Not Vital (*700 snowballs*, 2013). In 2013, the exhibition *Ethiopia - Spiritual Imprints* of Lizzy Manola, with images of sacred places and communities in the country, was presented in the Officina dell'Arte Spirituale. The Benedictine Clastra non-profit also

organizes concerts of sacred music in the Basilica. One of the latest restoration works as part of the project called "Art saves Art" was the restoration of the statue of St. George, which is located on the top of the dome of the Basilica.

Clare Lilley

Clare Lilley is Director of Programmes at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP), awarded Art Fund Museum of the Year in 2014. Recent curated and published work includes Ai Weiwei, Fiona Banner, Amar Kanwar, James Lee Byars, Shirin Neshat, Yinka Shonibare MBE, and James Turrell. She has curated Frieze Sculpture Park, London since 2012. Clare sits on the Advisory Committee of the Government Art Collection. She is a member of the Perrier Jouët Arts Salon and the Women Leaders in Museums Network. She has presented papers concerning contemporary public art at symposia, including The China Museum, Beijing; the Province of Limburg at Z33, Belgium; and the Kyiv Sculpture Project, Ukraine

Richard Gray Gallery

Founded in Chicago in 1963 and now located both in Chicago and New York, Richard Gray Gallery is one of the leading dealers in modern and contemporary American and European art. The gallery represents internationally recognized and mid-career living artists with a focused program of exhibitions and artist publications.

www.richardgraygallery.com

Galerie Lelong

Galerie Lelong has maintained galleries in Paris since 1981 and in New York since 1985. Galerie Lelong's focus is international modern and contemporary art, representing artists and estates from around the world. Among the two galleries, the artists work in a wide range of media, including painting, sculpture, film, photography, installation, printmaking, and drawing.

<http://www.galerie-lelong.com>