

A hub of contemporary creativity in a Baroque jewel

MAXXI L'AQUILA OPENS ITS DOORS

Inauguration on Friday 28 May with Minister Dario Franceschini

Opening to the public on Sunday 30 May 2021

In 18th-century **Palazzo Ardinghelli**, skilfully restored by the **Italian Ministry of Culture**,

the works created by **8 protagonists of the contemporary art scene** dialogue with **60-odd of the most iconic works in the MAXXI National Collection** within the exhibition

POINT OF EQUILIBRIUM. Thought space light from Toyo Ito to Ettore Spalletti
curated by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi and Margherita Guccione

Elisabetta Benassi, Stefano Cerio, Daniela De Lorenzo, Alberto Garutti, Nunzio, Paolo Pellegrin, Anastasia Potemkina, Ettore Spalletti

from the Collection: **Alighiero Boetti, Monica Bonvicini, Allora & Calzadilla, Maurizio Cattelan, Yona Friedman, Toyo Ito William Kentridge, Maria Lai, Piero Manzoni, Liliana Moro, Maurizio Nannucci, Giulio Paolini, Pistoletto, Superstudio** and many more

A project based on **international and institutional collaboration**

to contribute to the **relaunch of the region through culture**,

offering the community a **new space for research, freedom and rebirth**

the programme includes free visits complete with cultural mediation (booking required), talks with artists, educational activities, high-level training courses, and commissioning projects designed and implemented with local ins

MAXXI L'Aquila will be **open to the public from Thursday to Sunday**

with **free admission for the inhabitants of L'Aquila and Abruzzo for the entirety of 2021**

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L'Aquila, 28 May 2021. **MAXXI L'Aquila**, the new Museum of 21st Century Arts housed in the Baroque spaces of Palazzo Ardinghelli, skilfully restored by the technicians of the Italian Ministry of Culture, **officially opened its doors on Sunday 30 May 2021** with a **major exhibition**, a programme of **free visits (booking required)** and **many initiatives** developed in collaboration with the **area's institutions**, including talks with artists, educational activities, training courses and commissioning projects.

The project was presented in L'Aquila on **Friday 28 May 2021 at 12:30 pm** by the Italian Minister of Culture **Dario Franceschini**, to whom we owe the idea of providing L'Aquila with a hub for contemporary arts, **Giovanna Melandri**, Fondazione MAXXI's President, **Bartolomeo Pietromarchi**, Director of MAXXI L'Aquila and MAXXI Arte, **Margherita Guccione** Director of MAXXI Architettura; **Hou Hanru**, Artistic Director of MAXXI; **Pietro Barrera**, Secretary General of MAXXI.

Sergey Razov, Ambassador to Italy of the Russian Federation, which contributed to the restoration of the palace with a generous donation of 7.2 million Euros, **Pierluigi Biondi**, the Mayor of L'Aquila, **Marco Marsilio**, the President of the Abruzzo Region also attended the event.

As a symbol of the rebirth of the city, Palazzo Ardinghelli comes back to life as a new hub of contemporary art.

Public resources for the project amount to a total of 2 million euro per year. Collaborations with private partners, such as **Cassa Depositi e Prestiti** and **BPER Banca**, are already in place.

Giovanna Melandri, Fondazione MAXXI's President, says: "We are here today thanks to a fortunate idea of Minister Franceschini dating back to 2014, that is, to bring a hub of contemporaneity to a jewel of Italian Baroque and the heart of this wounded city. It was an institutional call, to which we responded with accountability and honour. The opening of MAXXI L'Aquila is a very important, exciting moment that we have been awaiting for a long time, a concrete sign of rebirth through culture for this wonderful city and a new beginning after the coronavirus emergency. This openness is also the demonstration that **together** we can do it!

I would like to thank the Italian Ministry of Culture, the Russian Federation, Cassa Depositi e Prestiti, BPER Banca, our historical partner Enel, which supports us in all important initiatives, the Mayor of L'Aquila and the President of the Abruzzo Region. I would like to thank the technicians who carried out the wonderful restoration work, the teams that skilfully adapted the Palace to its new museum purpose and all those who have made it possible to achieve this goal with competence, generosity and passion.

It is now up to us to bring this *laboratory of the future* to life together with the administrations, the university, the scientific and cultural institutions, the study and research centres and the associations in the area.

We are more than a project 'for' the region: we are a project 'with' the region. We are not a showcase alien to the city and the social, cultural and civil forces, but a meeting place, a place for exchanges and collaboration, a space open to all. We are here to work with the very rich artistic, cultural and scientific community of Abruzzo, to make this museum a research centre that, like the one in Rome, brings together art, architecture, photography and all the lingos of contemporary creativity, experimenting in particular with the connections between art and science".

The collaboration with local talent will underpin MAXXI L'AQUILA's cultural policies. The Museum has already launched the first artist residency and commissioning projects, which, in addition to the production of new works, include events, workshops and in-depth studies.

Two projects involving **Masbedo** and **Claudia Pajewski** have been launched with **MunDA – Abruzzo National Museum** and its Director Maria Grazia Filetici.

A photographic commission has been awarded to **Armin Linke** in collaboration with the **Gran Sasso Science Institute** and the **National Institute of Nuclear Physics – Gran Sasso Laboratory**.

Pierluigi Biondi, the Mayor of L'Aquila says: "Culture and beauty are two fundamental elements of the city of L'Aquila, which strategically characterise the ongoing process of rebirth. The inauguration of MAXXI adds a valuable piece to the dynamic and complex mosaic that is being reassembled following the 2009 earthquake: an inclusive and original reality, in tune with the identity of this city. This day bears witness to the fact that the propulsive force of culture has not been suffocated by the coronavirus. MAXXI has bet on L'Aquila and this land has embraced it with warmth and a sincere welcome. My thanks go to all those who contributed to the recovery of Palazzo Ardinghelli, restored thanks to the generous contribution of the Russian Federation, and to those who believed and worked so that this time of celebration could finally arrive".

POINT OF EQUILIBRIUM: THE OPENING EXHIBITION

In the **POINT OF EQUILIBRIUM. Thought space light from Toyo Ito to Ettore Spalletti** opening exhibition, curated by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi and Margherita Guccione, **8 new site-specific productions** dialogue with **60-odd of the most iconic works** in MAXXI's **National Public Collection** of art, architecture and photography and with the Baroque spaces of the Palace, from the courtyard to the grand staircase, from the chapel to the exhibition rooms on the main floor, up to the tower, as though **exploring the potential of**

the new museum and understanding how best to develop the dialogue among the works, the historical spaces of the building and the city.

"This first exhibition inaugurating MAXXI L'Aquila is dedicated to Ettore Spalletti - says **Bartolomeo Pietromarchi** -. The point of equilibrium is a statement: it holds ethical and aesthetic, political and social significance. In a period of great unrest, emergencies, drama, uncertainty and confusion, art helps us to find a point of balance, an existential stability. The exhibition first of all reveals a previously unknown space, where the works enter quietly and with respect for the location, its past and recent history, and connect with the palace, the entire city and the surrounding landscape to imagine other balances between the forces that govern the world. In future programming, special attention will be paid to Italian art in the global context".

Margherita Guccione underlines that: "The rooms of Palazzo Ardinghelli provide the setting for an itinerary in which the works of art, which resonate with the new museum spaces, lead us to reflect on the value and meaning of 'balance', understood both as a founding principle of architecture and an ideal point beyond which to push towards new visions, all with a view to the architecture and landscape of the future".

The site-specific works commissioned to **Elisabetta Benassi**, **Daniela De Lorenzo**, **Alberto Garutti**, **Nunzio** and **Ettore Spalletti**, together with the photographic commissions to **Paolo Pellegrin** and **Stefano Cerio**, dedicated to the L'Aquila area, and the project by Russian artist **Anastasia Potemkina**, produced in collaboration with the *V-A-C Foundation* (Moscow), constitute the heart of the exhibition, inhabit the building and interact with works by great protagonists of Italian and international art – such as **Alighiero Boetti**, **Monica Bonvicini**, **Maurizio Cattelan**, **William Kentridge**, **Maria Lai**, **Piero Manzoni**, **Liliana Moro**, **Maurizio Nannucci**, **Giulio Paolini**, **Michelangelo Pistoletto**, **Allora & Calzadilla** and **Juan Muñoz**, **Yona Friedman**, **Superstudio** and **Toyo Ito**, **Iwan Baan** and **Gabriele Basilico**, just to name a few – from the MAXXI Collection.

As soon as you enter from Via Garibaldi, **Nunzio's** *Untitled* site-specific installation in burnt wood outlines, by means of its curved planks suspended from the ceiling, a path that guides the eye to the main courtyard, where the echoes of **Liliana Moro's** *Fischio 3/2018* sound installation resonate, and further on to the other entrance in Piazza Santa Maria Paganica, symbolically connecting the two entrances to the museum with the city and vice versa.

Once inside, the oriental-looking character of **Jaun Muñoz's** *Untitled* sculpture welcomes visitors and seems to invite them to continue their journey towards the majestic Borromini-style staircase lit by **Maurizio Nannucci's** neon *The Missing Poem is the Poem*. This work ties in with Vincenzo Damini's 18th-century frescoes above the staircase and accompanies the visitor to the main floor, where a series of **16 exhibition rooms** hosts the dialogue between the site-specific works, those of the MAXXI collection and the historical spaces.

The ring-shaped gallery overlooking the courtyard hosts two works by **Maria Lai**: *Untitled*, which consists of sheets of fabric sewn with black thread onto a large piece of fabric – from the *Lenzuoli* series – and *Il viaggiatore astrale*, one of her famous sewn books.

In the first of the two large halls containing two monumental fireplaces enriched by precious stuccoes, **Maurizio Cattelan's** *Mother*, **Alighiero Boetti's** *Mimetico* and **Michelangelo Pistoletto's** *Quadro di fili elettrici* are joined by **Elisabetta Benassi's** *La città sale*, namely a salt sculpture that the artist defines as a 'repository of memory'. By drawing inspiration from Umberto Boccioni's *La città che sale*, a Futurist masterpiece dedicated to the dynamic force of the modern city, Benassi reflects on the fragility of cities in spite of their strong appearance and on the relationship between past and present, between history and the future.

For the next room, **Alberto Garutti** has created *Accedere al presente*, a long canvas that almost imperceptibly runs on five rolls, thereby slowly revealing its colours: it is a narrative work on the sense of time that abstractly, suggestively and inexorably flows before our

eyes. In the same room, we find *Achrome* by **Piero Manzoni** and *Wireless Fidelity* by **Luca Trevisani**.

The main hall, called *Sala della Voliera*, is dedicated to **William Kentridge**, with a selection of tapestries including the famous *North Pole Map*.

Further along the gallery, which houses the plan of *Roma Interrotta* (a collage of the visionary proposals of 12 architects called upon to design a new Rome in 1978) introduced by a panel by **Aldo Rossi**, one reaches the first of a series of rooms set one inside the other, beginning with the one housing **Monica Bonvicini's** dazzling *Bent and Fused* light sculpture, and then the **former chapel** of the palace.

Master **Ettore Spalletti**, chose this evocative setting for his masterpiece, *Colonna nel vuoto, L'Aquila*: a column, a central element in the history of art, which, placed at the centre of the space, becomes an expression of the intangible link between the earthly world, where it rests, and the afterlife, symbolically represented by the lantern of the dome towards which it tends. The work will remain on permanent display, as a tribute to the great master from Abruzzo.

The chapel leads to the room that houses **Giulio Paolini's** *Studio per "Eco nel vuoto"*, **Salvatore Arancio's** drawing *The Circular Crest Of A Submerged Crater* and **Daniela De Lorenzo's** *Come se*, which translates a performance act into a sculpture made of layers of overlapping paper cut out according to the projection of her moving body.

The following rooms contain works on the **theme of the city** taken from the architecture collection: *Cartoline Postali* of Venice and two *maquettes* of *La Ville Spatiale* by **Yona Friedman**, the model of *La Città Compatta* by **Franco Purini** and **Laura Thermes**, a panel from the *competition project for the new Offices of the Italian Chamber of Deputies* by **Maurizio Sacripanti**, *Monumento Continuo* by **Superstudio**, drawings dedicated to Beirut by **Bernard Khoury**, *Elementi di Città* by **Giovanni Michelucci** and two models by **Toyo Ito**.

The itinerary continues with a series of **rooms dedicated to photography**, starting with **Stefano Cerio's** *Aquila* project: the work of the photographer, who has been investigating the relationship between reality and fiction for years, focuses on the Abruzzo landscapes of Campo Felice, Campo Imperatore and Pescasseroli, where he installed inflatable playgrounds. The contrast between the austerity of the landscape and the playful character of the inflatables creates a surreal condition.

In the following rooms, there are works by **Iwan Baan**, **Olivo Barbieri**, **Gabriele Basilico**, **Giovanni Chiaramonte**, **Guido Guidi**, a focus area dedicated to the mountains with the diptych by **Walter Niedermeyer** and the models of the *Kostner Atelier-House* by **Modus** and *Bivacco Fanton* by **Demogo**.

This sequence ends with the space hosting **Paolo Pellegrin's** *L'Aquila* project: a large polyptych of 140 black and white shots dedicated to the city and 2 colour photographs of mountains and villages outside L'Aquila taken on a full moon night: evocative landscapes which transcends the passing of time and refers to the romantic landscape art of the 19th century.

From here, one accesses the room that houses the *Untitled* project by Russian artist **Anastasia Potemkina**, a work composed of two interconnected elements: a hydroponic basin inhabited by a spontaneous native plant, and a series of mirrors engraved with the profile of weeds, which will be arranged in city places that are important for the community. It is a symbol of Nature's re-appropriation of the city as a form of silent resistance and regeneration.

In the adjoining room, the sound installation *Live Ammunition!* by **Hassan Khan** leads us to the stairs to the Project Room, at the ground floor, where the video by **Allora & Calzadilla** *The Great Silence* concludes the journey.

ACTIVITIES AND COLLABORATIONS

Already **sold out** the first four days of free preview visits, from Sunday 30 May to Wednesday 2 June, organised to celebrate the opening of the new museum. MAXXI L'Aquila will be officially open from Thursday, 3 June on Thursdays (3-7 pm), Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays (12-8 pm) **with free admission for the inhabitants of L'Aquila and Abruzzo for the whole of 2021**.

Throughout the duration of the *Punto di equilibrio* exhibition every Saturday and Sunday, visits will be enriched by a **cultural mediation** service run by MAXXI's Education and Training Offices and featuring students from the **Academy of Fine Arts** and the Cultural Heritage degree course at the **University of L'Aquila**. The cultural mediation service makes a visit to the museum an active and participatory experience.

In June and July Palazzo Ardinghelli will host a cultural entertainment programme that will make use of **Books at MAXXI**, realized thanks to the support of **BPER Banca**, as a new opportunity to provide locals with moments of reflection and in-depth examination regarding the stories of our time.

Many art events will be held after Summer, such as the tribute to master **Ettore Spalletti** featuring the screening of Alessandra Galletta's *Semplicemente Ettore Spalletti* docufilm, the talks with **Elisabetta Benassi** and **Paolo Pellegrin** and the **Performance Festival** in collaboration with the **Academy of Fine Arts** in September, which will include choreographer and dancer **Virgilio Sieni** as well as **Alessandro Sciarroni** with **Collettivo Cinetico**.

Great emphasis will be placed on training and education: in addition to the **Città come cultura** workshop, which will be held in L'Aquila in the summer and will be devoted to professionals in the field and the sustainable development of local areas, MAXXI L'Aquila will also be hosting two of the **MAXXI KNOW HOW** advanced training courses, which are organised by the museum and aimed at young professionals with a view to developing skills in the art professions: *Designing the ephemeral* (which began in May) and *Narrating with photography* (October).

24 June will see a **workshop dedicated to Maria Lai** for students from L'Aquila's University and Academy and the mediators of the new museum, as part of the project *Maria Lai. Los diarios del alma*, carried out thanks to the support of the Italian Council of the DG for Contemporary Creativity of the Italian Ministry of Culture.

As of September, the students of the Abruzzo capital's secondary schools will also be the protagonists of a new L'Aquila edition of **MAXXI A[R]T WORK**, the Pathway to cross-cutting skills and guidance organised in collaboration with the **Gran Sasso Chamber of Commerce**.

MAXXI L'Aquila

Piazza Santa Maria Paganica, L'Aquila

Info: maxxilaquila@fondazionemaxxi.it | www.maxxilaquila.art

Open on: Thursday (3 – 7 pm), Friday, Saturday and Sunday (12 – 8 pm)

Ticket: 7 Euro full price, 5 Euro reduced price; free admission for the inhabitants of L'Aquila and Abruzzo until 31 December 2021 and for holders of the *myMAXXI* membership card

MAXXI PRESS OFFICE +39 06 324861 press@fondazionemaxxi.it

MAXXI L'AQUILA PRESS OFFICE Elisa Cerasoli, comunicazioneaq@fondazionemaxxi.it

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