"Take Me (I’m Yours)”: experience works of art at Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan

Posted on 20/12/2017

Art Radar explores “Take Me (I’m Yours)” at Pirelli HangarBicocca in Milan.

Grown out of a series of conversations between curator Hans Ulrich Obrist and artist Christian Boltanski about the need to rethink how artworks are shown, the exhibition has been celebrated as a major event in the art world.

Open to the public at Pirelli HangarBicocca until 14 January 2018, the group exhibition “Take Me (I’m Yours)” finally lands in Milan, Italy. Presented for the first time in 1995 at the Serpentine Gallery in London, it has been re-staged multiple times recently, from 2015 on, in Paris, Copenhagen, New York and Buenos Aires, each time with a different group of artists.

Exhibition view of “Take Me (I’m Yours)” at Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milano, with Christian Boltanski’s Dispersion. Image courtesy of photographer Lorenzo Palmieri/Pirelli HangarBicocca
"Take Me (I’m Yours)" is a radical show in the attempt to defy the rules of the art market and how people can experience art. In Milan, alongside Christian Boltanski’s work, entitled Dispersion – made up of piles of used clothing that visitors can pick out and carry off – a number of works ideated by renowned artists are literally given away. Installed in the thousand-square-metre shed, paper objects celebrating the printed word and graphics, as well as digital and immaterial works, can be touched, used or changed; they can be consumed or worn, purchased and even taken free of charge, in the shopping bags re-designed by Boltanski and printed with the word "Dispersion", a work innately destined to scatter and vanish.

**Aggregate, experience, disseminate.**

While Boltanski’s art has just been celebrated in Bologna with a major project that took place at museum MAMbo and in other locations, the group exhibition in Milan curated by the two initial creators Boltanski and Obrist, as well as by Chiara Parisi and Roberta Tenconi, is finally gaining momentum, opened to dynamics that are difficult to control.

The show welcomes a diverse audience, throughout the day. The works given away are worth very little, being reproductions that have been fabricated in mass quantities. Maybe that is why the so-called “device” of “Take Me (I’m Yours)" is effective in disseminating interest around the idea of experiencing (or grossly consuming) more art.

Installed in the shed, there are reproductions of the poster that Maurizio Cattelan received as a gift from artist Alighiero Boetti in 1990 at the Venice Biennale. The poster is printed with a list of truisms by artist Jenny Holzer that Boetti completed with the sentence "Non scrivere mai cazzate" (never write bullshit) and signed before giving it away to Cattelan. Visitors can leave a photographic trace of their presence there, by posting a selfie on the Instagram account @esposizionintemoporeale46 (Real-time exhibition n. 46) for a project by Franco Vaccari (Modena, 1936); or they can discover the works of some of the artists featured in the show of 1995, such as Douglas Gordon and Gilbert & George.

In *Handle (With Care)* (2015), a **seven-minute video** (on YouTube and in the show on a tablet), Singapore-based artist **Ho Rui An** (b. 1990) features archive images from the first edition of 1995, when the show was not immediately acclaimed by art writers. Throughout the video, the artist reflects on the themes of the initial exhibition: participation, exchange, gifting and immateriality.
The work of artist Yoko Ono welcomes visitors at the entrance. For her Wish Trees series of installations (1996/2017), that have been presented in different locations since the 1990s, Ono invites the public to become part of the work by tying wishes to the branches of trees grown from the region where the exhibition is taking place. In Milan, two Maderno lemon trees from the Garda Lake bear messages of love and joy, confessions and prays in a collective gesture that is – slowly but inexorably – becoming a poem for hope and justice. To honour wish writers’ privacy, Ono claims she does not read the wishes, and collects them all to be buried at the base of the Imagine Peace Tower on Viðey Island in Kollafjörður Bay in Iceland.

A few steps ahead, a series of hardwood sticks keep the copies of a quirky magazine tidy. It is point d’ironie, the atypical periodical launched in 1997 and originated from a talk between French fashion designer Agnès Troublé, in art agnès b., Christian Boltanski and Hans Ulrich Obrist themselves. The title refers to the punctuation mark (as an exclamation or a question mark) by the same name invented by the French writer Alcanter de Brahm in the late 19th century to indicate ironic sentences and passages in a text.

Distributed in a scattered way in museum galleries, bookshops, schools, cinemas and shops throughout the world, each issue of point d’ironie is interpreted by a different artist who makes it his own and brings it up into a singular work of art. For “Take Me (I’m Yours)” it is Damascus-born Simone Fattal (b. 1942) who curated a special issue in which she has developed a series of works on paper and collages inspired by her country of origin, Syria.
Artists from Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

In Milan, the scale of the exhibition, which includes more than 50 artists (versus the initial 12 in 1995) is ambitious. Occasionally favouring the interaction between digitisation of collections, websites and social networks, the low-tech show has been revisited with new collaborations from Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

The works of Simone Fattal and Ho Rui An are amongst them, as well as a series of drawings on cardboard by Etel Adnan inspired by the words in the Divine Comedy of Dante. But there is more to experience. While visitors will have to wait until the closing days to attend the performance of Nigeria-born artist Otobong Nkanga, they could also join a tour through the Bicocca neighborhood that South Korean artist Koo Jeong A (b. 1967) has created for the show.

The staging of the exhibition and the interstitial spaces between one work and the other, put a strain on visitors. As they enter the shed, they are unconventionally welcomed by a mountain of business cards. Monument to the People We’ve Conveniently Forgotten (I Hate You) (2008) is an installation by Malaysian artist and writer Heman Chong, who has literally covered a portion of the exhibition floor space with a million black business cards. The caption instructing visitors about the artwork reads:

The installation is conceived as an ephemeral "monument" to unknown people. We all may encounter and subsequently forget over the course of our lives: a blank, unidentified trace of those we left behind in memory.
A project involving communication but also technology, has been presented, on the other side of the exhibition space by aaajiao, a media artist, blogger and activist born in China in 1984. For "Take Me (I’m Yours”) he conceived the installation Email Trek (2016), which analyses how connections and communications between people get lost when an email system ceases to exist.
And because this is the revisited version of a show presenting contemporary art practices in a world that should not be just ‘The West’, good vibes also come from the Middle East. Experimental music, noise and poetry can be experienced through the use of a personal device: a computer tablet. For “Take me (I’m Yours)”, Algeria-born artist Mohamed

Bouroissa presents a compilation of sounds, music and poetry recorded in Beirut, Lebanon, in 2017, which he releases on a website.

Bouroissa’s art uses photography and video to document life in urban outskirts emphasising the stereotypes present in societies. In Milan, postcards promoting (or disseminating) the project can be collected from a desk, where visitors stop for wearing headphones and listening to a compilation featuring, among others, a short interview with musician Sharif Sehnaoui, who 17 years ago contributed to creating the festival Irtijal, the oldest in the region for improvised and experimental music.

Elisa Pierandrei

“Take Me (I’m Yours)” is on view from 1 November 2017 to 14 January 2018 at Pirelli HangarBicocca, Via Chiese 2, 20126 Milan.

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