

PRESS RELEASE

GLASSTRESS 2019

Curated by Vik Muniz and Koen Vanmechelen

Organised by
fondazioneberengo

9 MAY - 24 NOVEMBER 2019

Fondazione Berengo Art Space

Campiello Della Pescheria, Fondamenta dei Vetrai, Murano



Artwork by Tony Cragg for GLASSTRESS 2009, Courtesy Berengo Studio

Returning for the 58th Biennale di Venezia, the sixth edition of GLASSTRESS brings together a new line-up of leading contemporary artists from Europe, the United States, Latin America, India, and China in an ambitious exhibition exploring the endless creative possibilities of glass.

GLASSTRESS is a project by Adriano Berengo dedicated to supporting his mission of marrying contemporary art and glass. Since its debut in 2009, GLASSTRESS has revived the traditional craft of Murano glassblowing by forging new alliances with internationally renowned artists and designers. With little or no prior experience working with glass, these artists have embraced the challenge of creating extraordinary works in cooperation with Muranese maestri. The output of this unusual encounter defies the stereotypes associated with this ancient artistry, ultimately pushing the boundaries of both contemporary art and glass.

To celebrate 10 years of GLASSTRESS and 30 years of Berengo Studio, the exhibition goes back to its historical roots on the island of Murano. An old abandoned glass furnace is now an evocative

exhibition space for striking new works and installations by returning artists **Ai Weiwei, Laure Prouvost, Tony Cragg** and **Thomas Schütte** as well as first time participants **Prune Nourry, José Parlá** and **Rose Wylie**, amongst others. For this section, Brazilian artist Vik Muniz has invited all artists to explore 'how glass redefines our perception of space'.

In another section, curated by Belgian artist Koen Vanmechelen, highlights from the past ten years will also go on display, including *Mutter* (2016/17) by **Erwin Wurm**, a series of sculptures exploring the equilibrium between everyday objects and their meaning; *Laura's Hands* (2011), a piece by **Jaume Plensa** referencing the artist's ongoing series of giant sculptures of a Barcelonan girl in a state of dreaming; and *A Different Self* (2014) by **Mat Collishaw** which combines the unique form of a Venetian mirror with a digital screen to evoke reflections from the past. Referring to the making of glass works, Vanmechelen says: 'the world of the unknown and unseen becomes visible and tangible through beautiful accidents in time.' A special project by **Robert Wilson**, curated by Jean Blanchaert will also feature as part of the exhibition.

NEW WORKS AT GLASSTRESS 2019

Many of the artists in the exhibition produced pieces which engage with pertinent environmental concerns and man's relationship to nature. These include *Bricolante* by French - Argentine artist **Pablo Reinoso**, a life-size sculpture which references the wooden poles ('bricole' in the Venetian dialect) that line the channels of the city and its lagoon. Reinoso views these poles as a strong visual identifier of the city which, when translated into glass, echoes its fragility and the ecological threats it faces.

Similar issues are addressed in the work of Brazilian sculptor **Valeska Soares**, titled *Acqua Alta* after the yearly flooding of the city, comprising a series of glass containers which refer to the pollution of manmade objects as well as to vessels used to carry water. *Acqua Alta* acknowledges water as a precious natural resource, susceptible to the forces of nature and highlights the tensions between excess and decay.

New-York based, French artist **Prune Nourry** has created a sculpture inspired by an anatomical drawing of the human vascular system. Symbolising our inherent connection to nature, the glass veins and arteries which make up its structure resemble both a system of rivers and streams as seen from above, and the sprawling branches of a tree – two elements essential to our survival but which are suffering under the strain of environmental damage.

Socio-political topics are the focus of several works this year including *Tiempos Frágiles (Fragile Times)* by American artist **José Parlá**. Inspired by recent tumultuous political events in the US, the piece is composed of a metal fence, glass barbwire and parts of ribbons made from Murano glass which spell out the word 'Fragile'. For Parlá, the contrast presented in glass, a material that is both delicate and dangerously sharp, is a metaphor for the polaric state of the world. *Tiempos Frágiles* emphasises the very fragility of humanity in its current state of existence and the human-made divisions imposed by borders.

Italian artist, **Monica Bonvicini's** sculpture *In My Hand* references her piece, *A Choir of Five* (2016), during which a group of female performers produced clacking sounds using leather belts. *In My Hand* depicts female hands firmly holding a belt bent in half, as if it were ready to deliver a strike. Nevertheless, the violent move is frozen in glass, representing the struggle against cultural symbols of masculinity, discipline and violence

Other artists, such as **Vik Muniz**, have used conventional craftsmanship methods in unexpected and innovative ways. Known for incorporating mundane and everyday objects into his photographic collages and mosaics, Muniz has appropriated a centuries-old decorating technique

to produce a hyper-realistic self-portrait made completely with Murrine - colourful glass patterns, traditionally used to ornament blown glass works.

Reflecting on his collaboration with Berengo, Vik Muniz says: 'The idea of transforming Murano by breathing life into the creative craft of glassworks brings a new vision of what glass can be and do. GLASSTRESS speaks about tradition, about the history of the city and what was done here centuries ago. It's a very interesting way not only to see how the city has adapted to its context as a contemporary art capital but also how it managed to still retain a lot of its own soul.'

NOTES TO EDITORS

GLASSTRESS 2019 - PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

New artists

Renate Bertlmann (Austria), Saint Clair Cemin (Brazil), Antonio Dei Rossi (Italy), Pedro Friedeberg (Mexico), Carlos Garaicoa (Cuba), Artur Lescher (Brazil), Denise Milan (Brazil), Prune Nourry (France), José Parlá (USA), Pablo Reinoso (Argentina), Valeska Soares (Brazil), Tim Tate (USA), Francisco Toledo (Mexico), Janaina Tschäpe (Germany), Robert Wilson (USA), Rose Wylie (UK).

Returning artists

Ai Weiwei (China), Fiona Banner (UK), Monica Bonvicini (Italy), Tony Cragg (UK), Shirazeh Houshiary (Iran), Karen LaMonte (USA), Massimo Lunardon (Italy), Haroon Mirza (UK), Vik Muniz (Brazil), Jaume Plensa (Spain), Laure Prouvost (France), Andrea Salvador (Italy), Thomas Schütte (Germany), Joyce Jane Scott (USA), Wael Shawky (Egypt), Sudarshan Shetty (India), Lino Tagliapietra (Italy), Koen Vanmechelen (Belgium), Joana Vasconcelos (Portugal), Erwin Wurm (Austria).

Anniversary highlights

Jean Arp (Germany), Ayman Baalbaki (Lebanon), Mirosław Balka (Poland), César (France), Jake and Dinos Chapman (UK), Mat Collishaw (UK), Tracey Emin (UK), Jan Fabre (Belgium), Kendell Geers (South Africa), Francesco Gennari (Italy), Abdunasser Gharem (Saudi Arabia), Michael Joo (USA), Ilya & Emilia Kabakov (Russia/USA), Michael Kienzer (Austria), Hye Rim Lee (South Korea), Oksana Mas (Ukraine), Hans Op de Beeck (Belgium), Tony Oursler (USA), Javier Pérez (Spain), Antonio Riello (Italy), Bernardí Roig (Spain), Bertil Vallien (Sweden), Fred Wilson (USA), Dustin Yellin (USA).

GLASSTRESS - THE PROJECT

GLASSTRESS was launched in 2009 by **Adriano Berengo** as an official collateral event of the Biennale di Venezia. Today it is the world's leading showcase for the collaborative work of contemporary artists and designers with **Berengo Studio's** Muranese glass masters.

Organized by **Fondazione Berengo**, GLASSTRESS exhibitions have been presented in prominent museums and institutions worldwide including the **Boca Raton Museum of Art**, Florida, the **London College of Fashion** and **The Wallace Collection** in London, the **Art Museum Riga Bourse** in Riga, **Millesgården Museum** in Stockholm, the **Museum of Arts and Design (MAD)** in New York, the **Beirut Exhibition Center (BEC)** in Beirut, and the **Ptuj City Gallery** in Ptuj, Slovenia.

www.glasstress.org

FONDAZIONE BERENGO

Fondazione Berengo was founded by **Adriano Berengo** in 2014 as a cultural institution consolidating and strengthening his mission of marrying the Muranese glass-making tradition with contemporary art. The foundation seeks to achieve this goal through educational initiatives and an interdisciplinary program of exhibitions and special projects in collaboration with internationally acclaimed artists, designers, and architects. In 2016, it sponsored the first retrospective of the late Dame Zaha Hadid. In 2017, Fondazione Berengo, forged a partnership with the European Institute for Human Rights and Democracy to explore ways to use art to raise awareness of human rights issues.

www.fondazioneberengo.org

ADRIANO BERENGO

Adriano Berengo, a true Venetian, lives and works in Venice. He holds a foreign languages degree from Ca' Foscari University (Venice) and specialised in comparative literature in a state university in New York. Adriano Berengo is the visionary behind **Fondazione Berengo**, **GLASSTRESS**, and the glass factory **Berengo Studio 1989** which is celebrating its 30th anniversary. Following in the footsteps of Egidio Costantini and Peggy Guggenheim who introduced outstanding artists such as Pablo Picasso and Marc Chagall to Murano glass, Berengo has been championing the innovative use of glass as a medium in contemporary art for 30 years by inviting more than 300 artists to work with the glass masters in his studio on Murano. In the 2019 Biennale, artists representing both Austria and France are featuring works made in Berengo Studio.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

PUBLIC OPENING

9 MAY - 24 NOVEMBER 2019

Fondazione Berengo Art Space: Campiello Della Pescheria, Fondamenta dei Vetrai, Murano
Open daily (excluding Wednesdays) from 10am to 6pm

PRESS PREVIEW

7 & 8 MAY*
10am – 2pm

*A boat service from San Zaccaria (in front of Palazzo delle Prigioni / Hotel Danieli) to Murano will be provided for journalists at 10am and 12pm. Prior booking required: polly@reiberpr.com

PRESS INFORMATION

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