

Mike Kelley: *Eternity is a Long Time*

HangarBicocca, contemporary art space promoted by Pirelli, presents an exhibition devoted to one of the most influential artists of the past twenty years, Mike Kelley

Opening on May 23, 2013

Exhibition runs May 24 – September 8, 2013



Mike Kelley

*John Glenn Memorial Detroit River Reclamation Project
(Including the Local Culture Pictorial Guide, 1968-1972,
Wayne/Westland Eagle), 2001*

Photo: Fredrik Nilsen; Rennie Collection

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April 18, 2013 (Milan) — HangarBicocca, the contemporary art space in Milan promoted and supported by Pirelli, presents **Mike Kelley: *Eternity is a Long Time***, an exhibition devoted to the American artist who helped trace out new avenues in the history of contemporary art. The exhibition is curated by Emi Fontana, a Mike Kelley expert and independent curator based in Los Angeles, and Andrea Lissoni, curator at HangarBicocca. The exhibition runs May 24 – September 8, 2013, with an opening reception on May 23. The exhibition is

made possible by Pirelli, the leading premium Italian tire maker, charter member, and supporter of Fondazione HangarBicocca.

Mike Kelley: *Eternity is a Long Time* offers an unprecedented opportunity to examine the work of the late Mike Kelley (Detroit, 1954 – Los Angeles, 2012), focusing on his installations, videos and sculptures mainly from 2000 to 2006, a period of enormous creative maturity in his career.

The exhibition interacts with the huge industrial spaces of HangarBicocca, a former industrial site with more than 15,000 square meters (42,000 square feet), that was built to manufacture electric train motor bobbins with a series of fundamental works that have rarely been shown in public. The works have been loaned by some of the leading international institutions and collections, including the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary in Vienna, and the François Pinault Collection in Paris and Venice. The works included are of great intensity and perfectly represent the complex, visionary universe of the artist, who is considered one of the most influential figures in contemporary art and a role model for the new generations of artists.

The project is given an unmistakable touch by Emi Fontana, the Italian curator who lives in Los Angeles and worked closely with Mike Kelley during the last fifteen years of his life.

The Exhibition

Mike Kelley: *Eternity is a Long Time*, has been conceived as a way of coming to grips with the artist's complex and highly diverse body of work, while simultaneously creating the opportunity to examine the fascinating web of cultural aspects and autobiographical memories that are so engrained in his art. These include his relationship with education, his links with modernist architecture, his view of the tradition of painting and of American literature, and his approach to the vernacular, popular culture, youthful initiatory rites and styles of musical subcultures. The exhibition occupies the entirety of the vast spaces of HangarBicocca, and is arranged in an open, non-chronological order, which underlines the sense of continuity in Mike Kelley's art. It also shows how he was able to enter with the most amazing freedom and eclecticism into different expressive genres, ranging from installation to sculpture, through to performance and video, sound and drawing.

The exhibition opens with *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 (Domestic Scene)* (2000) (on loan from François Pinault Foundation) and *Runway for Interactive DJ Event* (on loan from Collezione La Gaia), two significant installations that were shown together at Mike Kelley's first solo exhibition in Italy at the Galleria Emi Fontana in Milan in 2000. In the video titled *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 (Domestic Scene)* (2000) (on loan from François Pinault Foundation) one of the two protagonists

utters the phrase, "Eternity is a long time" to his partner before both of them take their own lives. It is this work that gives the exhibition its title. These two works provide a powerful opening to the exhibition as each constitute a fundamental turning point in the artist's work and each were created at the dawn of his most prolific period.

One of the key works in the exhibition is the *John Glenn Memorial Detroit River Reclamation Project (Including The Local Culture Pictorial Guide, 1968-1972, Wayne/Westland Eagle)* (on loan from Rennie Collection) installation of 2001, which takes inspiration from a monument to the astronaut John Glenn, after whom the high school Mike Kelley attended is named. The fragments of colored ceramic and glass covering the sculpture were picked up by Kelley in the river in Detroit. Sophisticated, artistic techniques and typically vernacular processes, the monuments of tradition and anti-monumentality, personal and collective memory, and a media-based world of the imagination and pop culture all come together in this emblematic work.

The Artist

Mike Kelley started his artistic career in the 1970s and firmly established himself in the world of contemporary art in the 1980s. His highly diversified work ranges across various media, wanders into different fields of expression in both art and music, and never accepts a distinction between high and vernacular art. Kelley is interested in returning to forms and figures linked to an adolescent world of the imagination and examining how popular culture produces myths and rituals. He mainly explores themes of memory, identity and authority. He uses commonplace objects and artefacts, subverting their meaning and emphasising their power of communication. Kelley's ability to find his way through different codes and universes without conceptual filters makes him one of the most interesting artists of our contemporary age.

Mike Kelley died on January 31, 2012 in Los Angeles. His works are in the world's most prestigious public and private collections, including those of the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim in New York, the François Pinault Collection in Paris and Venice, the Reina Sofía in Madrid, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Detroit, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris.

Leading International Exhibitions

Mike Kelley started exhibiting in the early 1980s, taking part in the Whitney Biennial in 1985, 1987, 1989, and the Venice Biennale (1988). In 1992, he was part of the *Post Human* group exhibition, a traveling exhibition curated by Jeffrey Deitch that was initially shown at the Fondation Asher Edelman Musée d'Art Contemporain of Pully in Lausanne, Switzerland and was shown in Italy at Castello di Rivoli in Turin. In 1993, his name became firmly established in the

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United States and internationally with the *Catholic Tastes* anthological exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. He took part in the prestigious documenta in Kassel in 1992 and again in 1997, when he set up the huge multimedia *Poetics Project* installation with his friend and collaborator Tony Oursler. Kelley curated *The Uncanny* (2004) exhibition at Tate Liverpool, which went back to and brought up to date the show put on in 1993 at Arnhem for Sonsbeek. He again exhibited at the Whitney Biennial in 1993, in 1995 and in 2002, as well as in 2012, when he also showed his *Mobile Homestead* project — a model of his childhood home mounted on wheels and moved around Detroit, the city where he was born. Solo exhibitions of his work have been presented in museums and institutions including WIELS in Brussels, the Louvre in Paris, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles, the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London and Portikus in Frankfurt. A retrospective of his works, currently underway, is set to go to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Museum of Modern Art PS1 in New York and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

HangarBicocca and the curators, Emi Fontana and Andrea Lissoni, would like to acknowledge the generosity of the Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts and the numerous lenders who have made the exhibition, ***Mike Kelley: Eternity is a Long Time***, possible.

About HangarBicocca

HangarBicocca the contemporary art space in Milan is the brainchild of Pirelli chaired by Marco Tronchetti Provera. Pirelli, the legendary Italian brand, wanted to create a tangible sign of its dynamic presence within the community: a place where the values of artistic research interact with those of a company whose core principles have always been innovation, the promotion of talent, and dialogue between different disciplines. Pirelli is a charter member and promoter of the Fondazione HangarBicocca, a natural continuation of a corporate culture that has always focused on research and innovation.

HangarBicocca is devoted to the production, exhibition and promotion of contemporary art supported by Pirelli. Set up in 2004, it occupies more than 15,000 square meters (42,000 square foot), a vast redeveloped industrial complex that was built to manufacture electric train motor bobbins and formerly owned by AnsaldoBreda. The renovation project launched in 2012 preserved the original industrial architecture while opening up new spaces and introducing new services for the public.

With solo exhibitions of works by top international artists, the artistic programme is characterised by its focus on research and experimentation and by its particular emphasis on site-specific projects capable of interacting with their unique setting.

HangarBicocca

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