

Press release

Mircea Cantor

Art Club #32

20 May - 19 September 2021

Curator: Pier Paolo Pancotto

Drawing on a universal iconographic and iconological repertoire represented by **images and simple gestures from everyday life**, Mircea Cantor develops a reflection on the historical and cultural components that shape reality and on the various semantic nuances that articulate it. This process of observation often stems from the artist's individual experience, first in Romania and then in France, and is expressed through numerous linguistic forms, several of which are represented in his intervention at the Villa Medici. The exhibition brings together a variety of works, some of which were conceived for the occasion, which are displayed in different areas of the Academy's gardens in a subtle dialogue between contemporaneity and heritage.

After crossing the main Loggia of the Villa, topped by the **monumental work *Flag* (2017)**, the itinerary opens onto the small Loggia Balthus where, traced in the smoke of a candle (a technique as ephemeral and transient as the meaning of the text it expresses), appear on the ceiling the words *Ciel variable* (2007-21), which are part of the series of the same name begun by the artist in 2007 and centred on the theme of the fragility of the human condition. The route then takes the visitor to Balthus's former studio, where a previously **unseen film** shot in Rome on the occasion of the exhibition is shown, testifying to the artist's long-standing relationship with the city. Other video works - *I decided not to save the world* (2011), *Regalo* (2014) and *Am I really free* (2020), with a decidedly autobiographical structure - are scattered over various spaces of the Renaissance gardens.

In front of the small Loggia Balthus stands a geometric structure along which is arranged the piece *Chaplet* (2021) consisting of 120 metres of celluloid marked with the author's fingerprints. Like a rosary, the fingerprints run uninterrupted across the celluloid strip to form a kind of profile of the author, inviting a **reflection on the concept of identity and individual freedom**. In the Studiolo of Ferdinand de Medici, a small, enchanting vaulted room painted by Jacopo Zucchi and his atelier in 1576-1577, Mircea Cantor's work *Empire of all Poetical Encounters* (2017-2021) takes the form of a painted wooden pallet placed in the centre of the room, resonating with the frescoes on the ceiling with botanical motifs. The route ends in the Villa's Gypsotheca, where the plaster relief *Homo homini lupus* (2021) echoes the casts of the Trajan column kept in this space.

VILLA MÉDICIS

The exhibition is organized with the support of Magazzino gallery.

Mircea Cantor is a visual artist born in 1977 in Oradea (Romania). He currently lives and works in Paris. Numerous solo exhibitions have been dedicated to his work, notably in the following places: Fondazione Giuliani, Roma (2017); Centre Pompidou, Atelier Brâncuși, Paris (2016); Fondation Francès, Senlis (2016); Musée Picasso, Paris (2015, performance); National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest (2013); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2013); Museum of Moving Image, New York (2013); Macro, Roma (2013); Musée Rodin, Paris (2010); Kunsthaus, Zürich (2009); Camden Arts Centre, London (2009); MŰcsarnok|Kunsthalle, Budapest (2008); Museum of Art, Philadelphia (2006); Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon (2005).

Among Mircea Cantor's group exhibitions, we can mention: *The Place to be*, Maxxi, Roma (2017); *Choices*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2016); *Zero Tolerance*, MoMA PS1, New York (2015); *Une histoire*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2014); *La voce delle immagini*, Palazzo Grassi-François Pinault Foundation, Venezia (2012); *I decided not to save the world*, Tate Modern, London (2011); *Les promesses du passé*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2010); *I believe in miracles*, Collection Lambert, Avignon (2010); *Les Archipels reinventes*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2009); Bienal de São Paulo (2008); *Airs de Paris*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2007); *Notre histoire*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2006); Berlin Biennial (2006); Tirana Biennale (2003).

Pier Paolo Pancotto curates La Fondazione in Rome and, since 2016, the Art Club exhibition programme at Villa Medici. He has curated the *Fortezzuola* cycle of exhibitions at the Museo Pietro Canonica, Rome, 2016-2018; and exhibition projects at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Mairie du 4^e arrondissement, Paris; Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, London; Galleria nazionale d'arte, Tirana; Lateral Art Space, Cluj; Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna, Rome; Museo H. C. Andersen, Rome; Museo Carlo Bilotti, Rome; Nomas Foundation, Rome; and Casa Scatturin, Venice. He also teaches at the LUISS University in Rome. His publications include: *Artiste a Roma nella prima metà del '900* (2006); *Arte contemporanea: dal minimalismo alle ultime tendenze* (2010); *Arte contemporanea. Il nuovo millennio* (2013).

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VILLA MÉDICIS

About the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici

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A national public institution under the authority of the Ministry of Culture, the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici fulfils three complementary missions: to welcome high-level artists, creators and art historians in residence for one-year stays or shorter; to set up a cultural and artistic programme that includes all fields of the arts and creation and is aimed at a broad audience; to conserve, restore, study, and make its architectural and landscape heritage, as well as its art collections, known to the public.

The French Academy in Rome - Villa Medici is directed by Sam Stourdzé.

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