

Interview Magazine : 'Francesco Vezzoli', by Meghan Dailey, May 2013

ART

FRANCESCO VEZZOLI

One of the headlining events of Couture Week in Paris is not a fashion show, but on the measure of sheer glamour, fantasy, and exclusivity, it may outdo even the most lavish runway spectacle. At 8:30 P.M. on January 24, Francesco Vezzoli will open "The 24H Museum," an exhibition that functions as something of a retrospective for the Italian artist—albeit one with the lifespan of a mere 24 hours. "The only words that come to mind are crazy, ambitious, surrealistic," says the 40-year-old Milan-based Vezzoli of his latest grand-scale effort. Perhaps. But this is, of course, the same man who produced an elaborate, star-studded trailer for a movie that doesn't exist—and for whom the ephemerality of situations is exactly the point.

Vezzoli's 24-hour project is sponsored by Prada, a longtime supporter of his works, and takes place in the massive rotunda of the Palais d'Iéna. The late-1930s structure, with its *retour à l'ordre* Greek-columned facade, was conceived as a museum of public works, but is now a multipurpose venue that hosts Miu Miu runway shows (and, incongruously, meetings of the French social and economic advisory council). "The Palais is one of the most beautiful modernist buildings," says Vezzoli. "For a moment, we could bring it back to what it was designed for."

The sculptures that Vezzoli intends to show serve as an homage to his career-long fascination with famous women. In his past productions, he immortalized screen goddess Joan Crawford and super-model Naomi Campbell in portraits with needle-point tears and cast the likes of Catherine Deneuve and Anita Ekberg in provocative video works and live performances. Some of those icons are represented at the Palais, their faces collaged on images of iconic sculptures like Winged Victory and projected inside 16-foot-high boxes throughout the gallery. Eroding the already infrathin line between culture and entertainment, the museum will feel, with every passing hour, more like a disco as the glowing light boxes begin to flash and turn pink and red. "It will be very funny to see a Canova with the face of Deneuve becoming pink," Vezzoli says. Some of his famous past participants will likely be among the guests at the opening dinner and all-night after-party, "where we want one of those DJs who make everyone go crazy," he says. The remaining hours of the proceedings will be less exclusive, with a tour for students, a "pseudo but as official as possible" press conference, and an opening for the city in the afternoon. Then, after the crowds disperse and the light boxes go dark, at the stroke of 8:30 on the night of January 25, it all goes away.