ALMINE RECH

ICÔNES

Apr 2 — Nov 26, 2023 | Punta della Dogana, Pinault Collection, Venezia

From April 2 to November 26, 2023, Punta della Dogana presents the thematic exhibition “Icônes” curated by Emma Lavigne, CEO of Pinault Collection, and Bruno Racine, CEO and Director of Palazzo Grassi — Punta della Dogana. The exhibition mainly presents emblematic works from the Pinault Collection, and proposes a reflection on the theme of the icon and the status of the image in the contemporary world. The word “icon” has two meanings: its Greek etymology defines it as an “image”, while it is used to designate a certain type of religious painting that characterizes in particular Eastern Christianism. The idea of a model, an emblematic figure is more contemporary. The status of the image—its capacity to embody a presence, between appearance and disappearance, shadow and light, to represent a space, to spark emotion, a transcendance—is at the core of this exhibition, conceived specifically for Punta della Dogana and the Venetian context, marked by its tight links with Byzantium.

The exhibition pays particular attention to the relationship between the city of Venice and the icon. Since the end of the Middle Ages, Venetian art has been a synthesis of various influences—notably Byzantine, Gothic, and Flemish—which reflect the role of bridge between East and West played by the Serenissima. Even today, Venice remains a crossroads where multiple horizons meet and hybridize, providing a fertile ground for creation. It is thus a recurring source of inspiration for some of the artists exhibited, such as Danh Vo and James Lee Byars. Some works are all the more anchored in this context as they revive the memory of works exhibited during previous editions of the Venice International Art Biennale, such as the golden threads of Lygia Pape’s *Ttéia* or textual and conceptual illuminations by Joseph Kosuth in 2007 at San Lazzaro degli Armeni, Venice. The art of Orthodox Russia, through the poetics of Tarkovski and his film *Andrei Roublev*, devoted to the 15th century icon painter, is also reflected in the exhibition which questions the ability of images to embody, in the words of the filmmaker, “the idea of the absolute freedom of the spiritual potential of man” and the quest for “harmony in a humanity which had none”. The art of the icon tends to express according to him “the need for a particular look cast on certain spiritual problems”, and to make sensitive what remains in the immeasurable darkness of an invisible world. The filmmaker´s thought, by rooting itself in the substrate of the images, brings into play the question of the future of the invisible and the spiritual in a contemporary world and the exhibition also makes visible the influence of other spiritualities which, from Asia to Africa, from Brazil to the United States, continue to nourish the works of the artists gathered.

The exhibition aims to reveal the icon as a vehicle of passage to another world or other states of consciousness (contemplation, meditation) through a selection of more than eighty works, among which masterpieces from the Pinault Collection, site-specific installations ad unseen works by 30 artists of different generations. The show is punctuated by spaces like places to pause or chapels in this era of saturation and trivialization of images, and invokes, between figuration and abstraction, all the dimensions of the image in the contemporary artistic context—paintings, videos, sounds, installations, performances. Furthermore it highlights new dialogues between emblematic artists from the Pinault Collection such as, among others, David Hammons and Agnes Martin, Danh Vo and Rudolf Stingel, Sherrie Levine and On Kawara, among others.