

Anish Kapoor at Palazzo Strozzi, an invitation to explore the possibilities of the unreal

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The contemporary master's solo exhibition "Untrue Unreal" opens in the capital of the Renaissance. Here the guide to the exhibition, which we visited with the artist.

"Last night I took a walk around the Duomo of Florence with some friends and I realized that it took almost two hundred years to build it. That means twenty generations: an extraordinary sign of trust in culture, the result of knowledge handed down from one generation to the next. What your ancestors were able to do is no longer possible today; today we live in a climate that is rather one of cultural suspicion, and I'm sorry to say this, but I think it is sadly true".

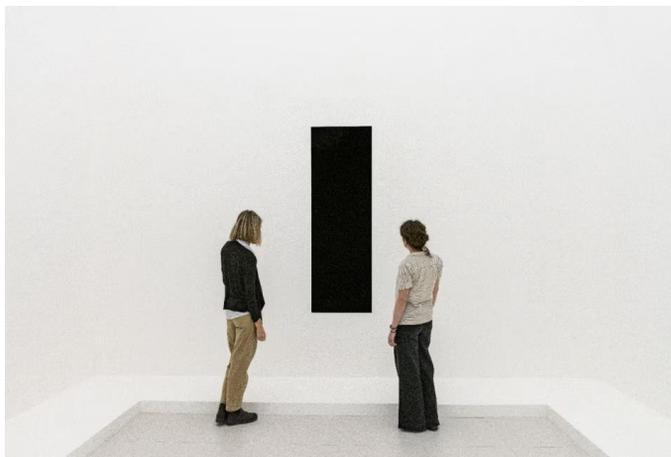
With these words the master of contemporary sculpture Anish Kapoor tells the genesis of the project of the new exhibition conceived with Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, curated by director Arturo Galansino, "Anish Kapoor. Untrue Unreal." Kapoor elucidates a title which puts the focus on the unknown and the ethereal, showing how they are an integral part of the human experience, part of the mysteriousness of our being, and a sort of persistent and perpetual woe.



This uncertainty is the starting point for his work, with the aim of setting in motion research processes rather than conveying messages. "A bad poem is one that vanishes into meaning", a quote from Paul Valéry with which Kapoor explains his vision, referring to the poetics of being, this is the mission of the artist.

In the gray space between the real and the false, the untrue mixes with the unreal, and visitors are called to question their own perception in order to overcome it and immerse themselves in the paradox of Kapoor's works: the fragile solidity of the yellow and red pigment forms of *To Reflect an Intimate Part of the Red* (2007); the mimetic use of Vantablack, the pigment that traps 99,96% of the light that strikes it, in works such as *Non-Object Black* (2015) that play with the materiality of the object, with volumes that vanish as the gaze passes; the transformation of space that is absorbed by the monochrome forms of *Gathering Clouds* (2014); the heavy incorporeality of *Angel* (1990).

This is also the case in Kapoor's famous mirror works, such as *Vertigo* (2006), *Mirror* (2018) and *Newborn* (2019), which seem to disprove the laws of physics by giving life to a dimension made of reflections and deformations that are disorienting and hypnotic for the viewer.



An entire room of the exhibition is then devoted to the confrontation with corporeality and organic matter, in which works such as *First Milk* (2015) and *Today You Will Be in Paradise* (2016), dense visceral masses that seem to writhe and pulsate in a movement of expansion and contraction, completely engage the viewer's senses, as does the large biomorphic sculpture *A Blackish Fluid Excavation* (2018).



The exhibition at Palazzo Strozzi also stems from a challenge with the architecture of the palace, a perfect example of a Renaissance mansion, which respects the strict symmetrical layout and continuity of the rooms. In this structural order, which according to the artist would interfere with the visitor's enjoyment of the works, the choice and placement of the works were two crucial aspects. This issue is foreshadowed by the work that opens the itinerary, *Svayambhu* (2007), a Sanskrit term for "that which generates itself," which refers to Christian acheropite images. A monumental block of wax - which, just looking at it, raises a number of practical questions about the installation of the work - slowly flows on a track, through the large door frame and generating a continuous movement between two adjacent rooms, smoothing and shaping the contours of this extremely pliable material. Similarly, *Endless Column* (1992), a red pigment column - a reference to the columns of Pollaiuolo's courtyard - runs through the main floor of the palace, creating a feeling of solidity and heaviness at the same time.



The dialogue with the building is sublimated by the site-specific work *Void Pavillion VII* (2023) installed in the courtyard: a cubic pavilion characterized by the presence of three black rectangles that, like three windows, open the gaze to an infinite and inscrutable space within the heart of Renaissance rationality.

Void Pavillion VII anticipates at the beginning and amplifies at the end of the exhibition the expansion and shifting of space and time, guiding visitors throughout the exhibition, each step dictated by a thoughtful beat, a request from the artist to delve into the possibility of the obscure and the invisible.