



Fondazione
Arnaldo Pomodoro

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Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro and FENDI

present

ARNALDO POMODORO.

IL GRANDE TEATRO DELLE CIVILTÀ

curated by **Lorenzo Respi** and **Andrea Viliani**

in collaboration with **Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

12 May – 1 October 2023

Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana

Quadrato della Concordia, 3 – Rome EUR

On **12 May 2023** **FENDI** inaugurates the exhibition **Arnaldo Pomodoro. Il Grande Teatro delle Civiltà** [Arnaldo Pomodoro. The Great Theatre of Civilizations] in its own headquarters, the **Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana** in Rome. The exhibition, curated by **Lorenzo Respi** and **Andrea Viliani** in collaboration with **Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**, will be free to visit **until 1 October 2023**.

The collaboration between Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro and FENDI is part of a broader partnership aimed at combining respect for historical heritage with the support and diffusion of contemporary artistic languages and the search for new forms of collaboration based on sustainability and innovation.

Conceived for both the indoor and outdoor spaces of the *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana* in the EUR area – that since 2015 has housed FENDI's Roman headquarters – the exhibition spans over seventy years of the artist's experimentation, taking the form of an **autobiographical "theatre"**, at once real and mental, historical and imaginative, in which are staged **approximately thirty works** created by Pomodoro between the late 1950s and 2021, together with a series of **archival materials** – photographs, documents, sketches, drawings, many of them never exhibited before – that evoke the spirit and ambiance of the artist's studio and archive.

Il Grande Teatro delle Civiltà explores the **interconnection**, in Pomodoro's practice, of **visual and scenic arts** and highlights the relationship between **the planning component** of the work and its **creation**. A storyline from which emerge the possible and multiple allusions to those **archaic**,

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antique, modern, or even just fantastical “civilisations” to which Pomodoro’s work constantly refers, originating shapes and materials that are at once **memory of the past and vision of the future** and that reframe **our knowledge and our imaginaries, our experience of time and space, of history and myth.**

The exhibition begins at the four external corners of the building where the **four sculptures *Forme del mito*** (1983) – ***Il potere (Agamennone)*, *L’ambizione (Clitennestra)*, *La macchina (Egisto)*, and *La profezia (Cassandra)*** – are placed. The sculptures are taken from the scenic machines that were created for the series of theatrical performances inspired by Aeschylus’ *Orestes* by the artist Emilio Isgrò, presented on the ruins of Gibellina’s main square which was later destroyed by the Belice earthquake. Inserting themselves like a backdrop between the *Palazzo*, the natural landscape and the surrounding urban community, the four *Forme del mito* re-draw and give new meaning to the building, transforming the so-called ***Colosseo Quadrato*** – one of the architectural symbols of Modernism and Italian Rationalism – into an open, reinterpretable and re-designable work, therefore not defined once and forever.

In the *Palazzo delle Civiltà Italiana*’s entrance hall appear **two costume-works** created by the artist for two theatrical shows: ***Costume di Didone*** (for *Dido, Queen of Carthage* by Christopher Marlowe, staged in Gibellina in 1986), and ***Costume di Creonte*** (for *Oedipus Rex* by Igor Stravinsky performed in Siena in 1988). Produced with **sculptural materials paired with ephemeral materials** such as raffia and fabric, these costumes recall the iconography and dramaturgy of ancient Greece as well as the antique iconographies and traditional techniques of African and Asian works of art, reactivating the tale of the legendary stories of Dido and Oedipus.

The exhibition continues in **two specular rooms** and a **connecting room**, designed like **two acts of a play** with an ***intermezzo***. In the main spaces we find **two oppositely coloured works** staged symmetrically: ***Le battaglie*** (1995), in black, and ***Movimento in piena aria e nel profondo*** (1996-1997), in white.

The first with its angular, sharp and pointy shapes and through the various materials used (tangles of rope, wedges and bolts) evokes *The Battle of San Romano* by Paolo Uccello, a Renaissance masterpiece. Alongside this are staged two more works that delve deeper into the examination of Pomodoro’s research: the ***Grande tavola della memoria*** (1959-1965), a reflection on bas-relief and on the ancient technique of casting using **cuttlefish bone**, and ***Il cubo*** (1961-1962), a piece that coincides with the start of a new experimentation of the elementary forms of **Euclidean geometry**.

In the second room the work ***Movimento in piena aria e nel profondo***, composed of a double curve referring to the **large celestial and terrestrial spaces**, depicts the sculptural action as “digging into the complexity of things” that solidifies into the awareness of being able to “bend time and space”.

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Next to it is a work that gives conceptual circularity to the exhibition, flipping its end over and starting again from its incipit: **Continuum** (2010), a huge relief entirely filled with the characteristic **marks** of the artist's early works, a sort of "outline" that contains the **codes** and the **inventory** of all his "writing".

In these two rooms, like an exhibition **within the exhibition**, are also presented the **design and documentary materials**, most of which have never been shown before – artist's books, sketches, drawings, models, letters, photographs, catalogues, study materials of the most significant projects – set up within display drawers and racks that visitors can open and consult, so as to recall the atmosphere of the **artist's studio** and the spirit of his **archive**.

Connecting the two rooms, like an **intermezzo** between two theatrical acts, is the **Rotativa di Babilonia** (1991), placed outside but visible from the *Palazzo's* windows, with its circular shape suggesting the idea of cyclical and continuous movement, which takes place both in time and in space. Inside the hallway is exhibited the **Tracce** (1998) series, composed of **twenty-one white, black and rust-coloured calcographic reliefs**.

The itinerary concludes on the third-floor arcade with **Osso di seppia** (2011-2021), symbolic **matrix** of all the artist's works, who actually began his sculptural experimentation by carving into cuttlefish bone. That same shape is also present as an emblematic element in the *Ingresso nel Labirinto* environment, located in the former exhibition space of the artist's foundation in Milan, where FENDI has had its headquarters since 2013.

Il Grande Teatro delle Civiltà is also a starting point for **discovering Pomodoro's other works located in Rome and around the world**, an opportunity to deepen one's knowledge of the artist's experimentation and his relationship with the "eternal city". The exhibition is accompanied by a monographic catalogue published by **Skira** – with an essay by the two curators, numerous critical and bio-bibliographic materials and extensive photographic documentation – which will be available in FENDI boutiques and directly in the exhibition space. It can be explored digitally via a dedicated mini website (<http://arnaldopomodoro.fendi.com/>) where users will also be able to sign up to visit the exhibition.

Arnaldo Pomodoro. Il Grande Teatro delle Civiltà

Curated by Lorenzo Respi and Andrea Viliani in collaboration with Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro
Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana – Quadrato della Concordia 3, Rome EUR

From 12 May to 1 October 2023

Monday to Sunday, from 10:00am to 8:00pm

Closed on 15 August 2023

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Free Entry

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