

MASI Lugano
Museo d'arte
della Svizzera italiana,
Lugano

Via Canova 10
CH – 6900 Lugano

comunicazione@masilugano.ch
+41 (0)58 866 42 40
www.masilugano.ch

Pedro Wirz

Diplomatic Immunity

4 June – 23 July 2023

Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano
Palazzo Reali Venue

PRESS RELEASE
Lugano, 22 May 2023

On from 4th June in Palazzo Reali, the exhibition "Diplomatic Immunity" presents the project by Pedro Wirz that won the 2023 edition of the Bally Artist Award. Born in Pindamonhangaba, Brazil, in 1981 and living in Zurich, the artist won the prestigious award with a work that explores class privilege, hierarchical power and the social positions viewed as archetypal and immutable. In Wirz's installation these take the form of 12 sculptures of different sizes that evoke positions of leadership - a king, a president, a pope, a rabbi, etc. - each of which reflects a particular hierarchy of power, be it economic, religious, political or socio-cultural.

To undercut the power implied by these positions, the sculptures are fashioned from various scrap materials found in the artist's studio. It is an approach inspired by the Merzbau by constructivist artist Kurt Schwitters, and thus the idea of assemblage and precarious sculpture. These accumulations of material also reference capitalism's cycles of continuous growth and entropy, while the precarious aesthetic evokes symbols of power that have fallen into ruin.

The artist's critique of the world's powerful is accentuated by another aspect: namely the way the 12 busts are arranged in the space, calling to mind gatherings like the G7, the Club of Rome or even the Last Supper. The installation leaves visitors just enough space to move around in, with the busts becoming obstacles that have to be carefully sidestepped. The physical presence of the work thus also challenges the dichotomy between competition and cooperation and questions what a "more sustainable" society would really look like, given that this notion is often only considered in economic terms.

"To live more sustainably we have to face up to reality and the challenges involved in coexisting with others. We need to be able to look beyond our own lives, our own wants and egos, beyond the legacy of a family name, or the principles upheld by religious leaders or mythological figures. We need to think not as individuals but as a species, that is, as inhabitants of the earth, earthlings - living beings destined to coexist side by side, respecting one another," explained Pedro Wirz.

The exhibition also includes three wall-mounted bas-reliefs that belong to a series the artist began working on in 2019, exploring the connections between the organic, synthetic and technological realms and how this merging of worlds is altering the environment, in an ongoing battle between extinction and renewal. The transformation of ecosystems due to human (technological) interventions on the natural

landscape is represented in the subject matter and materials that feature in the reliefs, while the rectangular boxes they are presented in evoke the screens of televisions or smartphones, or life-sized coffins.

The artist

Pedro Wirz (1981, Pindamonhangaba, Brazil, lives and works in Zurich) takes inspiration from cultural history, science, craftsmanship and folklore. Recent solo exhibitions: PHILIPPZOLLINGER (Zurich, 2023); Kai Matsumiya (New York, 2022); Kunsthalle Basel (2022); Marc Selwyn (Los Angeles, 2020); Galerie Nagel Draxler (Berlin, 2019); Centre Culturel Suisse (Paris, 2019); Kunsthau Langenthal (2019); LongTang (Zurich, 2019) and Instituto Tomie Ohtake (Sao Paulo, 2017). Wirz's work has also appeared in numerous group shows, in the Centre d'Art Contemporain Geneva (2023); Aargauer Kunsthau (2019); Centre Pasquart (2018); Blank Projects (Cape Town, 2018); Tinguely Museum (Basel, 2016); CCS Bard Hessel Museum of Art (New York, 2015); Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (2013); Dortmunder Kunstverein (2013); Palais de Tokyo (Paris, 2013) and Kunsthalle Basel (2011).

Bally Artist Award

The Bally Foundation, renowned for its passion for contemporary art, established the Bally Artist Award with the aim of supporting emerging artists in Switzerland.

Since 2008 it has been presented to Swiss artists or artists living in Switzerland whose work has a particular focus on the intersection between human know-how and the natural world, and it recently renewed and augmented its partnership with the Museo d'Arte della Svizzera Italiana: the winning work will be purchased by MASI to join its collection, and the artist will benefit from a two-month solo exhibition at MASI's Palazzo Reali venue in the year of their win.

For the 2023 award, the Bally Foundation and the MASI called on seven international experts to nominate the participating artists: Yasmin Afschar (director of Kunsthalle Mainz), Simon Castets (director of strategic initiatives at LUMA, Arles), Julien Fronsacq (chief curator, MAMCO, Geneva), Dominique Koch (winner of the Bally Artist Award in 2022), Sibilla Panzeri (art historian and independent curator in Zurich and Lugano), Sandra Patron (director of CAPC, Bordeaux) and Catherine Wood (program director, Tate Modern, London). The nominees presented projects which were examined by a jury comprising Nicolas Giroto and Vittoria Matarrese, president and director of the Foundation, Tobia Bezzola, director of MASI, Elena Filipovic, director and curator of Kunsthalle Basel, and Diana Segantini, Arab world specialist, independent curator and director of the Segantini Unlimited Foundation. The quality, relevance and diversity of the works presented thrilled the jury and made it difficult to choose a winner.

Press contacts

MASI Lugano

Press office

+41 (0)58 866 42 40

comunicazione@masilugano.ch

For Italy

ddlArts+battage

Alessandra de Antonellis

+39 339 363 7388

alessandra.deantonellis@ddlstudio.net

Margherita Baleni

+39 347 445 2374

margherita.baleni@battage.net

Bally Foundation

Press office for switzerland

Martin Hellrich

+41 (0)79 405 59 09

martin.hellrich@ballyprsuisse.ch

Exhibition venues

LAC

Piazza Bernardino Luini 6

CH – 6900 Lugano

Palazzo Reali

Via Canova 10

CH – 6900 Lugano

Founders



Institutional Partner



Main Partner



Scientific Research Partner



Press images

01.

Pedro Wirz

Diplomatic Immunity (detail)

2023

12 Sculptures

Studio leftovers on plinth

Variable sizes

Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Nagel Draxler
and PHILIPPZOLLINGER gallery



02.

Pedro Wirz

Diplomatic Immunity (detail)

2023

12 Sculptures

Studio leftovers on plinth

Variable sizes

Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Nagel Draxler
and PHILIPPZOLLINGER gallery



03.

Pedro Wirz

Diplomatic Immunity (detail)

2023

12 Sculptures

Studio leftovers on plinth

Variable sizes

Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Nagel Draxler
and PHILIPPZOLLINGER gallery



04.
View of the Studio of Pedro Wirz
2023



05.
Pedro Wirz
Sadnest #8 (Frog)
2022
Wood construction, textile debris, metal
staples, dirt, bitumen, acrylic binder, UV
acrylic shield
80 x 33 x 15 cm
Courtesy dell'artista e Galerie Nagel Draxler.
Photo: Sascha Herrmann



06.
Pedro Wirz
2023
Photo: Studio Pedro Wirz

