



HISTORYNOW. MARC QUINN

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PUBLISHER:	Electa
EDITION:	bilingual Eng / Ita
PAGES:	184
ILLUSTRATIONS:	105 in color
FORMAT:	21.5 x 32 cm
PRICE:	35 euros
IN BOOKSTORE:	April 2022
ISBN:	9788892822344

The Museo Archeologico Nazionale of Venice, for years engaged in the renewal of its exhibition design, **will open its doors to the public from 21 April to 23 October 2022 with a fascinating exhibition of contemporary art** by the London artist Marc Quinn, on the occasion of the 59th International Art Exhibition.

The unusual combination of ancient and contemporary is revealed to the public **already in** the courtyard – the only one of the Procuratie completely built to the original design by Vincenzo Scamozzi – with **a large sculpture by Quinn that stands out among the ancient Roman sarcophagi**, elegant cylindrical altars of Greek provenance, and the imposing statue of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa.

In the interior spaces of the museum, the images of antiquity, which have survived centuries of history and were created to be enjoyed collectively, are flanked by Quinn's works, in which the pictorial gesture meets the endless images that we find every day on the screens of our digital devices. The images of contemporaneity, individually enjoyed in the closed sphere of the mobile phone screen and then made viral by the many shares, like a mosaic of fragments, acquire a new significance in Marc Quinn's works: **his screenshots are drawn from the continuous flow and, through the mediation of art, become enduring testimonies, relocated in the museum space.** With his "HistoryNow" series **Quinn invites us to reflect on the forms and meaning of today's digital communication**, capturing the viewer's attention and focusing it on events and people, for example the heroes of the pandemic or the new social icons. Themes such as human rights, racism, contestation of the symbols of power, humanitarian tragedies, environmental disasters and gender equality emerge: urgencies challenging contemporary life on a daily basis.

Co-curator **Andrea Emelife said** "The future of art is in a social practice; we must consider how art relates to the everyday lives of many and HISTORYNOW shows the universality of the human experience whilst also celebrating the extraordinary lives and times that we live in. In my curation of the show, I have sought to highlight the stories of those within the paintings. Through interviews with Quinn and the subjects, the works come to life in new ways by giving agency to those featured. By assimilating the contemporary language of new media within the paintings with the historical sculptures of the Archaeological Museum, I seek to highlight the enduring legacy of many issues that we find ourselves confronted with today."

Co-curator **Francesca Pini said** "The infosphere is reshaping our lives day by day. Living online is the new world order. Images take possession of us, aided by the ever-increasing efficiency, rapidity, and availability of technology. Hyper-connection, hyper-acceleration, hyperreality. Hyper-history, *hic et nunc*,

in our hands, on our smartphones. No more distance, but immediacy. The homo web-social has been added to the homo faber (who replaced the homo sapiens, according to Henri Bergson and Hannah Arendt), and builds tools and artificial worlds. Through smartphones, communication has become an all-encompassing image assuming an extraordinary plasticity; a new language has been formed with symbols, emoticons, GIFs, and invented words (the invention of which is often an artistic act in itself). Marc Quinn elevates very selected news images that popped up on his mobile phone to the highest level of art. And if the algorithms are trained to recognize emotions in social media, Marc Quinn does not need this training to seize them and, by adding the filter of painting, regenerating the news and removing it from the realm of the perishable.”

The exhibition catalogue, published by Electa and with a graphic design by Studio Ard.works, follows the layout of the exhibition, which unfolds from the exterior of the building and continues through the eight rooms of the museum, which is hosting 49 works from the “**HistoryNow**” series. The paintings, reproduced as full-page plates, are flanked by some details of the works in the museum’s archaeological collection, in a fascinating and estranging combination of tradition and contemporaneity. The volume brings together **critical contributions by Marcella De Paoli, Aindrea Emelife, Francesca Pini** and an interview with the artist by Jefferson Hack.

The project is completed by five conversations-reflections with the artist devoted to the works presented.

Marc Quinn, born 1964, is one of the leading artists of his generation. His sculptures, paintings and drawings explore what it means to be human in the 21st century. His work connects frequently and meaningfully with art history, from modern masters right back to antiquity. Quinn came to prominence in 1991 with his sculpture *Self* (1991), a cast of the artist’s head made from eight pints of his own frozen blood. While much of his early work focused on explorations of self, Quinn soon became fascinated in reflecting the experiences of other people, questioning value, perception and the fault lines of society. Critically acclaimed works include *Alison Lapper Pregnant* (2005), exhibited on the Fourth Plinth of London’s Trafalgar Square; *Siren* (2008), a solid gold sculpture of Kate Moss shown in the British Museum coinciding with the 2008 financial breakdown, posing questions of value and belief systems in society; *Breath* (2012), a colossal replica of *Alison Lapper Pregnant* commissioned for the 2012 London Paralympics opening ceremony; and *Self-conscious Gene* (2019) a 3.5 metre bronze sculpture of ‘Zombie Boy’ Rick Genest, now on permanent display at the Science Museum, London. Over the last decade, Quinn’s work has become increasingly engaged with the media, current affairs and world events. *History Paintings* (2009-present) is his ten-year series of hyperreal oil paintings of pivotal moments in recent history, drawn directly from press photography.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as news cycles accelerated, Quinn created *HISTORYNOW* (2020-present), a series of paintings derived from iPhone screenshots of news stories and Instagram posts.

Since 2015, Quinn has developed several not-for-profit projects, which seek to raise awareness of the ongoing global refugee crisis and raise funds for the International Rescue Committee and further refugee organisations. This includes *100 Heads* (2019-present), a significant series of sculptures, comprising one hundred concrete portrait busts of refugees living today.

Quinn’s work is included in collections around the world, including Tate, London (UK), Metropolitan Museum, New York (USA), Guggenheim, New York (USA), SFMOMA, San Francisco (USA), Fondazione Prada, Milan (Italy), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (Netherlands) and the Centre Pompidou, Paris (France).

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