



Luigi Pecci Centre for Contemporary Art, Prato

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Preview for the press and professionals 14–15 October 2016
Grand Opening 16 October 2016

The Grand Opening of the new Luigi Pecci Centre for Contemporary Art in Prato, scheduled for 16 October 2016, is keenly awaited after the completion of the futuristic enlargement in the form of a spaceship designed by the Rotterdam-based architect Maurice Nio and the redevelopment of the original building by Italo Gamberini. The Pecci Centre will, in fact, be the only public institution for contemporary art in Italy, and one of the few in Europe, to open a new building in the decade 2010-2020.

Founded in 1988 — the first centre in Italy to be built from scratch for the purpose of displaying, collecting, conserving, documenting, and disseminating the most advanced artistic research — the Pecci Centre is about to become an international point of reference for the testing of many contemporary artistic languages. Its mission will be to investigate all disciplines of contemporary culture, including even cinema, music, performing arts, architecture, design, fashion and literature, attempting at the same time to bring art as close as possible to the society.

With this purpose in mind, the new Centre, in addition to over double the exhibition space, will also boast of an archive and specialist library, with a holding of over 50,000 volumes, an open-air theatre, a cinema/auditorium, a performance space inside the galleries, a bookshop, a restaurant and a pub/bistro. It will not be a mere exhibition space but rather the most versatile and transformable space possible, based on experimentation and research. It will focus on dynamic relations with its public, becoming a particularly active place with extended evening opening hours when the exhibitions are accompanied by performances, concerts and screenings, as well as conferences, workshops and courses for adults. In this sense the creation of a research department for establishing the theoretical bases of the various initiatives and broadly developing the educational activities is important, and it will be the first by an Italian public institution.

The opening exhibition, entitled “The End of the World”, curated by the director Fabio Cavallucci with the support of various collaborators and advisors, will occupy the entire exhibition area of the museum, enriched by a packed programme of side events and multi-disciplinary projects. The exhibition does not aim to portray a catastrophic and apocalyptic vision but rather, if anything, to take a look at the present day from a distance, pushing us to view the world from afar and to think about the immeasurable cosmic distances and the very long history of the Earth and the Universe, compared to which our existences are mere inconsistent fragments. The exhibition will wind its way along spaces that open up to provide a sense of silence and cosmic peace and more frenetic and chaotic environments, with works by international artists such as Thomas Hirschhorn, Carlos Garaicoa, Qiu Zhijie and Henrique Oliveira. All the arts will be mixed up in a continuous flow with works even by architects, musicians and theatre professionals as an integral part of the exhibition route.

The reopening of the Pecci Centre, which the Regione Toscana (Tuscany Regional Government) has made regional coordinator of contemporary arts in the region, will also provide an opportunity to host a series of events and parallel exhibitions in the city of Prato. These will include an initiative with large works produced by Tuscan gallery owners in a spectacular building of industrial archaeology, exhibitions dedicated to young artists, works in public spaces, and designs for the recent competition for the Prato Central Park in which some of the best architects and landscape designers in the world participated.

In the run-up to the reopening, under the leadership of Fabio Cavallucci, the Pecci Centre launched a series of initiatives aimed at focusing debate on current events in order to return to the root of “making culture”, through numerous dialogue and sharing tools such as conferences with internationally prominent figures — from Zygmunt Bauman to Luis Sepúlveda and David Grossman; structured and innovative educational activities, historically started by Bruno Munari; a project for mapping emerging creativity in Tuscany; the Forum on Italian



Contemporary Art, the first national Forum to analyse the “art system in Italy” and understand the reasons why it is not competitive at international level, going as far as imagining solutions, making constructive proposals and formulating shared strategies.

In recent months the Pecci Centre then shifted the debate onto the new website in three languages – Italian, English and Chinese – transforming it from a mere information and promotional channel for the museum with areas dedicated to the exhibitions, collections, events and education, into a platform for research and discussions developed around topics that encompass many fields of knowledge. The resource for further knowledge on the site is the Journal, which contains articles, interviews, and contributions from writers, philosophers, scientists, and theoreticians (including the writer Paco Ignacio Taibo II, the physicist and director of the Scuola Normale Superiore Fabio Beltram, and the journalist Wlodek Goldkorn, or Noam Chomsky, Luis Sepúlveda and Pascal Gielen, with forthcoming contributions) who investigate all the complex facets of contemporaneity: an interactive place for participation open to all those who wish to inform the debate in the months ahead with comments, contributions and proposals.

The Journal is also the virtual “construction” space of the opening exhibition and will be enriched from time to time with previews, videos and photos, and interviews with those featured in the exhibition. An experiment that reformulates the very concept of the exclusivity of information, providing content in advance and making it available to everyone, and above all changing it as time goes by on the basis of the participation of the public, the contribution flows and the inputs received. It represents a new way of communicating the Centre’s activities by sharing with all online communities that interact through social media channels on a daily basis.

The Foundation for Contemporary Arts in Tuscany is a tool that has recently been set up, established by the Municipality of Prato and supported by the Regione Toscana, to manage the Pecci Centre. Many partners and sponsors, such as Terna and Chianti Banca, will participate in the Grand Opening.



Luigi Pecci Centre for Contemporary Art, Prato

Sensing the Waves.

The enlargement designed by Maurice Nio and the renovation of the original building

The Luigi Pecci Centre for Contemporary Art in Prato was the first centre in Italy to be built from scratch for the purpose of displaying, collecting, conserving, documenting, and disseminating the most advanced artistic research.

Planned in the Eighties by the entrepreneur Enrico Pecci and donated to the city in memory of his son Luigi, the Centre was built with the support of several founding partners, including the Municipality of Prato, industrial Association, Cassa di Risparmio di Prato, and a large group of private citizens, a rare Italian example of collaboration between public bodies and private patrons. Situated on the outskirts of Prato, a short distance from the A11 motorway exit, in a strategic location for trade, business and regional connections (it is 1 km from the Prato Est tollgate, 3 km from the Prato Centrale railway station, 10 minutes from Florence airport, and 20 minutes from Santa Maria Novella railway station in Florence), the museum was designed by the Florentine architect Italo Gamberini and opened in June 1988.

The city of Prato and the Centre, since the time it was established, have pursued many challenges: from the construction, the first case in Italy, of a building used exclusively for showcasing contemporary arts, to the creation of a lively cultural centre that transforms into a reading and information tool for reality; from the choice to engage in activities strictly related to the contemporary, again the first case in Italy, to the decision to promote the production of art then focusing on its acquisition. The collection of the Pecci Centre represents a living testimony of this process: a mosaic started from scratch – there were no previous assets in the museum's storerooms – which has expanded and transformed over time as a result of the tastes and choices of the different directors who have led the artistic programme. The result is a unique collection in Italy with over 1000 works by leading international artists: from Anish Kapoor to Jan Fabre, Jannis Kounellis to Sol LeWitt, as well as the great Italians of the last century Mario Merz or Michelangelo Pistoletto. A patrimony regrettably sacrificed in the storerooms for a long time due to a lack of exhibition space.

To ensure that these assets are given due recognition, in the early 2000s the Pecci Centre decided to double the exhibition space and, at the same time, renovate the original building by Gamberini, some aspects of which had become critical and obsolete. The enlargement works started in 2006 and focused on the construction of a new wing with strong architectural impact, connected to the original building, whose functions and services were redeveloped and upgraded in the meantime.

The project was entrusted to the Dutch firm NIO architecten and designed by the Chinese architect who trained in Rotterdam, Maurice Nio, who chose a highly evocative title for the new building: Sensing the Waves, suggesting its function as a receptor (and perhaps even transmitter) capable of capturing and disseminating the vibrations of the present time. To provide greater continuity in the public's use and circulation through the space with respect to the previous building, Maurice Nio first of all oriented the central entrance towards the intersection of the main roads, making it immediately visible and recognizable. He then placed all the facilities aimed at visitors on the ground floor, for instance the reception desk, information centre, ticket office, bookshop, and restaurant; finally, on the first floor, he created a new route in the form of a circuit but one that would allow the diversification of flows and movement trajectories.

In relation to the character of the original building, the enlargement of the Centre now, on the eve of the reopening, seems like a futuristic project that encloses the previous building, aesthetically rigid and inspired by the textile workshops of Prato, and at the same time flexible and dreamy, conjuring up the image of a spaceship: the extension surrounds the previous building like a ring, only intersecting with the exhibition route at the ends and in the middle, while the angulation of the exhibition floor continuously varies, creating different atmospheres inside the spaces and adapting to different display possibilities.



The “tower” is a distinct and symbolic element of the new museum: a cross between a horn and an antenna, it both represents a hoisted banner which is easily seen and recognized by visitors and passers by and brings to mind a probe that continuously seeks out new languages, directions and trends, capable of “sensing the waves” and intercepting and exploring all the states that are difficult for humans to perceive and decode.

Once the works are complete the complex will cover a surface area of almost 10,000 square metres, and in addition to the exhibition spaces there will be an archive and a specialist library with a holding of over 50,000 volumes, an open-air theatre with 1,000 seats, a cinema/ auditorium with 140 seats, a performance space with 400, a bookshop, a pub/bistro and a restaurant, in addition to workshops and various meeting rooms.

The Pecci Centre redevelopment project also includes the renovation of the surrounding garden, an experimental space geared towards research on ecological functions by artists and architects, which will be the first eco-sustainable museum garden in Italy, and a square in front of the main entrance to the museum which will also function as a place for socializing where the access logistics are made more fluid, coherent and aesthetically pleasing.

The enlargement project was funded by the Municipality of Prato and the Regione Toscana (through European Funds).



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The Opening Exhibition

The end of the world curated by Fabio Cavallucci

On the occasion of its reopening, the Luigi Pecci Centre for Contemporary Art will present the exhibition *The End of the World*, curated by the director Fabio Cavallucci with the collaboration not only of the museum's in-house team but also a large group of international advisors comprised of Antonia Alampi, Luca Barni, Myriam Ben Salah, Marco Brizzi, Lorenzo Bruni, Jota Castro, Wlodek Goldkorn, Katia Krupennikova, Morad Montazami, Giulia Poli, Luisa Santacesaria, Monika Szewczyk, and Pier Luigi Tazzi.

The exhibition title, *The End of the World*, stems from the consideration that what we have known up until now is obsolete. The exhibition has not been conceived as the representation of an imminent catastrophic future, but rather as a reflection on and awareness of the condition of uncertainty prevailing in our world. The means of interpretation, even conceptual, of the reality we have known are no longer capable of understanding the present. Hence this structural change gives rise to a widespread sense of the end.

The exhibition therefore functions as a sort of exercise in distance, pushing us to view the our present from afar and to think about the immeasurable cosmic distances and the very long history of the Earth and the Universe, compared to which our existences are mere inconsistent fragments. The public will enter the new wing designed by Maurice Nio, a sort of spaceship that has landed from who knows which planet and is ready with its antenna to emit waves or receive "cosmic" messages. Once inside visitors will experience the feeling of being projected a few thousand light-years away from our world and seeing it as buried by geographical ages, through different types of works, often to be passed through and experienced physically, in a rhythm of successive spaces and sounds.

There will be works by internationally acclaimed artists such as Thomas Hirschhorn, the Native American artist Jimmie Durham, Carlos Garaicoa and the Chinese artists Qiu Zhijie and Cai Guo-Qiang, as well as works by young practicing artists such as Henrique Oliveira and Julian Charrière in dialogue with works belonging to the history of art, such as those by Marcel Duchamp, Pablo Picasso and Umberto Boccioni. There will also be many young and still little known artists, many of them coming from geographic areas with strong contrasts and conflicts, such as Eastern Europe, North Africa, Middle East, and South America. Visitors will move through the various rooms experiencing different feelings: from detachment from our planet, so small and insignificant, to melancholy for something that we have loved and lost, up to recognizing a glimpse of the future, which is however already present even if we don't notice it.

All the artistic expressions and languages will be interconnected along the exhibition route: music, theatre, cinema, architecture, and dance will not only constitute side events but they will wind their way through the spaces as integral moments of the exhibition, helping to construct an immersive and engaging narrative. This way, in addition to the artists, there will be many other kinds of personalities, eclectic and visionary, who will enrich the narrative with their contribution: from the famous singer Bjork to the architect Didier Fiuza Faustino, from playwright and actor Pippo Delbono to the electronic musician Joakim. Moreover, there will be a packed series of conferences and debates exploring the various topics, even concerning scientific, philosophical, and literary matters: from the very recent theories of physics to prehistory, from science fiction to ecology and sustainability.

The Pecci Centre is setting up a series of collaborations with educational and scientific institutions ranging from the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa to the Planetarium Museum of Prato, and from the Prehistory Museum to the National Library of Florence.



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The End of the World

Curated by

Fabio Cavallucci

Advisors

Antonia Alampi, Luca Barni, Miriam Ben Salah, Marco Brizzi, Lorenzo Bruni, Jota Castro, Wlodek Golkorn, Katia Krupennikova, Morad Montazami, Giulia Poli, Luisa Santacesaria, Chris Sharp, Monika Szewczyk, Pier Luigi Tazzi

Preview for the press and professionals

October 14-15, 2016

Grand opening

October 16, 2016

Open to the public

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