

***Anish Kapoor. Untrue Unreal***

Florence, Palazzo Strozzi, 7 October 2023 – 4 February 2024

**Celebrated artist Anish Kapoor creates an original dialogue with Palazzo Strozzi in Florence through a major exhibition including an immersive new work for its Renaissance courtyard**

Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi in Florence is pleased to announce ***Anish Kapoor. Untrue Unreal***, a major new exhibition devised and produced with the celebrated artist who has revolutionised the notion of sculpture in contemporary art. Curated by Arturo Galansino, Director General of Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, the show will feature **monumental installations, intimate environments and thought-provoking forms** that will forge an original and captivating dialogue between the art of Anish Kapoor and the architecture and audience of Palazzo Strozzi.

With a **wide range of early, mid-career and recent works**, including a **new architecturally scaled work especially conceived for the Renaissance courtyard of Palazzo Strozzi**, the exhibition offers an opportunity to engage directly with the artist's oeuvre in all its versatility, discord, entropy and ephemerality. Palazzo Strozzi becomes a venue at once concave and convex, whole and yet fragmented, in which visitors are called on to question their senses.

In Anish Kapoor's art, the **unreal** merges with the **untrue**, transforming or negating the common perception of reality. He invites us to explore a world where the boundaries between what is true and false dissolve, opening the doors to the realm of the impossible. One of the distinguishing features is the way Kapoor's **works transcend their materiality**. Pigment, stone, steel, wax and silicone, to name only a few of the materials he works with, are manipulated – carved, polished, saturated and formed – to the point of a dissolution of boundaries between the plastic and the immaterial. Colour in Kapoor's hands is not simply matter and hue, but becomes an immersive phenomenon, containing its own spatial and illusive volume.

Kapoor's works merge empty and full space, absorbing and reflecting surface, geometrical and biomorphic form. Shunning categorisation and distinguishing himself by a unique visual language that embraces **painting, sculpture and architectural forms**, Kapoor explores space and time, the interior and the exterior, urging us to probe in the first person the limits and potential of our relationship with the world around us and to reflect on perceived dualities such as body and mind, nature and artifice. His work sparks **amazement and uneasiness**, encouraging us to question certainties and embrace complexity. In a world where reality seems increasingly elusive and manipulable, Anish Kapoor challenges us to seek truth beyond appearances, inviting us to **explore the territory of the untrue and the unreal**.

## THE EXHIBITION

The starting point of the exhibition is **Void Pavilion VII** (2023), situated in the courtyard of Palazzo Strozzi, the viewer enters a work that contains a profound meditation on space and perspective. Following this, each room of Palazzo Strozzi will take the viewer on a journey through Anish Kapoor's diverse artistic practice where they will experience works that challenge the very notion of form and formlessness, fiction and reality.

The exhibition continues with the iconic work **Svayambhu** (2007), a title that derives from the Sanskrit term denoting self-generating entities, akin to the Christian concept of acheropoieta, images not made by human hands. As this vast block of blood-red wax moves slowly along its track between two rooms of Palazzo Strozzi, it creates a dialectic between void and matter as its formless substance is shaped by the architecture it pushes through.

This work is presented in dialogue with **Endless Column** (1992), a work that references Constantin Brâncuși's iconic modernist sculpture of the same title from 1937. Kapoor's red pigment sculpture penetrates floor and ceiling to create an ethereal architectural physicality that stands as a link between earth and cosmos. On a different scale but equally architectural is Kapoor's **To Reflect an Intimate Part of the Red** (1981), vibrant yellow and red pigment forms that emerge from the gallery floor, fragile, otherworldly yet potently present, this seminal work from Kapoor's early career marked his breakthrough on the international art scene as a profoundly original voice in contemporary art.

In the **Non-Object Black** works – characterized by the use of the highly innovative material Vantablack, capable of absorbing over 99.9% of visible light – Kapoor challenges the very idea of a physical and tangible object, presenting us with an object that dissipates as the gaze moves around it. In these groundbreaking works Kapoor provokes us to question the very notion of Being, offering a reflection not only on the fictional object but on the immateriality that permeates our world. The fullness of the experience of the no-thing is continued in **Gathering Clouds** (2014), concave monochromes that absorb the space around them in their brooding darkness. Kapoor's work offers a new way of seeing and thinking about how we experience 'reality', with his unique use of form and saturation these works are permeated with psychic resonance.

Monumental mirror works such as **Vertigo** (2006), with its inverted reflections, **Mirror** (2018) and **Newborn** (2019), a work that also pays homage to Brâncuși's adventures in form, challenge the traditional notion of boundaries and the dichotomy between subject and object. Optical illusion is a central element of these works, which seem to defy the laws of physics. These large-scale sculptures reflect and distort the surrounding space, enlarging, reducing and multiplying it, creating a sense of unreality and destabilization as they suck the viewer into the nebulous space they emanate.

Distortion shifts from a de-stabilised wholeness to a confrontation with an entropic and abject body, in an entire room dedicated to works in which Kapoor examines a flayed and ravaged interiority. The large sculpture in steel and resin **A Blackish Fluid Excavation** (2018) evokes a gnarled vaginal void, that crosses the space and the senses of the spectator. Kapoor's silicone and paint works appear to us as organic masses pulsating with their own life. The forms twist, expand, and contract, evoking a sense of continuous movement and transformation. At the same time, a strong tactile sensuality emerges from the interplay between

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feelings of softness and solidity, organicity and geometricity, which underlie works with evocative titles such as *First Milk* (2015), *Tongue Memory* (2016), *Today You Will Be in Paradise* (2016), *Mother, Mother* (2016), *Three Days of Mourning* (2016).

In the final room the sculpture *Angel* (1990) exalts an alchemy of materiality. Stones covered in deep blue pigment seem to solidify the air, transforming the very idea of purity into a material element. By inviting viewers to immerse themselves in their illusory depth, Kapoor evokes a sense of mystery that responds to the esoteric ambition of achieving the fusion of opposites.

The exhibition is promoted and organized by Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi. Main Supporter: Fondazione CR Firenze. Main Partner: Intesa Sanpaolo. Supporters: Comune di Firenze, Regione Toscana, Camera di Commercio di Firenze, Comitato dei Partner di Palazzo Strozzi. With the contribution of Città Metropolitana di Firenze. With the support of Maria Manetti Shrem and Fondazione Hillary Merkus Recordati. Si ringrazia Galleria Continua.

## Anish Kapoor

Anish Kapoor is one of the most influential sculptors of his generation. Born in Mumbai, India in 1954, Anish Kapoor has lived and worked in London since studying sculpture at Hornsey College of Art and Chelsea College of Art in the mid-seventies. In recent years dividing his time between studios in London and Venice.

His works are permanently exhibited in the most important collections and museums around the world from the Museum of Modern Art in New York to the Tate in London; the Prada Foundation in Milan and the Guggenheim Museums in Venice, Bilbao and Abu Dhabi. Recent solo exhibitions have been held at Galleria dell'Accademia di Venezia & Palazzo Manfrin, Venice, Italy (2022); Modern Art Oxford, UK (2021); Houghton Hall, Norfolk, UK (2020); Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany (2020); Central Academy of Fine Arts Museum and Imperial Ancestral Temples, Beijing (2019); Fundación Proa, Buenos Aires (2019); Serralves, Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto, Portugal (2018); University Museum of Contemporary Art (MUAC), Mexico City (2016); Chateau de Versailles, France (2015); Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow, (2015); Gropius Bau, Berlin (2013); Sakip Sabanci Muzesi, Istanbul (2013); Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2012).

Anish Kapoor represented Great Britain at the 44th Venice Biennale in 1990 where he was awarded the Premio Duemila Prize. In 1991 he won the Turner Prize and has gone on to receive numerous international awards and honours.

Also renowned for his architecturally scaled works, public projects include: *Cloud Gate* (2004), Millennium Park, Chicago, USA; *Leviathan* (2011) exhibited at Monumenta, Paris, France; *Orbit* (2012), Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London; *Ark Nova*, an inflatable concert hall created for Lucerne Festival, Japan (2013); *Descension* (2014) most recently installed in Brooklyn Bridge Park, New York, USA (2017) and the soon to be completed Traiano and Università Monte St Angelo Metro Stations, Naples, Italy (2002–24).

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**FACT SHEET**

Title	<i>Anish Kapoor. Untrue Unreal</i>
Venue	Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi
Date	7 October 2023 – 4 February 2024
Curated by	Arturo Galansino
Promoted and organized by	Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi
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Hours and admission	<a href="http://www.palazzostrozzi.org">www.palazzostrozzi.org</a>

PHOTO SHEET

<p>1.</p>	<p>Anish Kapoor <i>Svayambhu</i> 2007 Wax and oil-based paint Dimensions variable Photo: Wilfried Petzi ©Anish Kapoor. All Rights Reserved SIAE, 2023</p>	
<p>2.</p>	<p>Anish Kapoor <i>To Reflect an Intimate Part of the Red</i> 1981 Mixed media and pigment Dimensions variable Photograph Oliver Santanaue © Anish Kapoor. All rights reserved SIAE, 2023</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Anish Kapoor <i>Endless Column</i> 1992 Mixed media Dimensions variable Photograph: Phillipp Rittermann ©Anish Kapoor. All Rights Reserved SIAE, 2023</p>	

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4.	<p>Anish Kapoor <i>A Blackish Fluid Excavation</i>, 2018 Steel, resin 150x140x740 cm Photograph: Jacek Kucharczyk ©Anish Kapoor. All Rights Reserved SIAE, 2023</p>	
5.	<p>Anish Kapoor <i>Three Days of Mourning</i>, 2016 Silicone, paint 250x120x70 Photograph: Dave Morgan ©Anish Kapoor. All Rights Reserved SIAE, 2023</p>	
6.	<p>Anish Kapoor <i>Descent into Limbo</i>, 1992 Concrete, stucco and pigment 600 x 600 x 600 cm Photograph: Filipe Braga ©Anish Kapoor. All Rights Reserved SIAE, 2023</p>	

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7..	<p>Anish Kapoor <i>Newborn</i>, 2019 Stainless steel 300x300x300 cm Photograph: Mark Waldhauser ©Anish Kapoor. All Rights Reserved SIAE, 2023</p>	
8.	<p>Anish Kapoor <i>Angel</i> 1990 Slate and pigment Dimensions variable Photograph: George Rehsteiner ©Anish Kapoor. All Rights Reserved SIAE, 2023</p>	