

PRESENT TENSE

03.05.2025 – 31.08.2025

Opening Saturday 03 May 2025 | 16.00 – 23.00

GALLERIA CONTINUA is pleased to present in its San Gimignano space the exhibition *Present Tense* by Arcangelo Sassolino. The exhibition brings together a series of new, never-before-seen works, exploring the theme of matter in constant transformation in an attempt to capture a present that is constantly slipping away. Industrial oil, a central element of the works displayed, becomes liquid sculpture and a metaphor for the constant instability of time and space: a dense, opaque fluid that moves, expands, and contracts, engaging in a continuous dialogue between control and unpredictability.

Arcangelo Sassolino's work emerges from the intersection of art and physics, with a consistent focus on mechanics and technology. Over his 35-year career, he has exhibited in some of the world's most prestigious public and private venues, from the Palais de Tokyo in Paris to the Accademia di Francia in Rome, and from the Peggy Guggenheim Collection to MART. His installation *Diplomazia Astuta*, created for the Malta Pavilion at the 2022 Venice Biennale, is considered one of the most significant works presented by national pavilions in recent years. Sassolino was the only Italian artist invited to participate in the recent Islamic Art Biennale in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he presented the monumental site-specific work *Memory of Becoming*.

Arcangelo Sassolino views "conflict" as one of the central principles of his artistic practice. His work incorporates contrasting industrial materials, mechanical actions that change their state, and concepts like limits, tension, unpredictability, fragility,

and transience. For the artist from Vicenza, sculpture is an unpredictable and autonomous process, free from arbitrariness. The focus shifts to the process itself, which becomes a point of interaction between different materials, forces, and emotions. By exploring the tension between technology and nature and constantly challenging the concept of boundaries, Sassolino aims to release materials from fixed forms and transform them into time. *"For me, art is about shaping the future, and every artist should constantly reinvent themselves, able to let go of what they've just created in order to make space for the new"*.

The works in this exhibition are not simply static objects, but exist in a constant state of becoming, where matter transforms before the viewer's eyes. *"For some time, I've been working with fluids, synthetic oils derived from petroleum, liquid or semi-liquid materials that have remained stable in this form deep within the earth for millions of years. The very nature of the fluid, what makes it a fluid, is in many ways the negation of fixity, of something set once and for all. (...) What I try to capture is the moment of transformation, the instant when something becomes something else"* says the artist. The oil flows continuously across the flat surface of the steel disc, constantly redefining itself, making visible the becoming of matter and the impossibility of freezing a single moment. The present emerges, expands, and then slips away, leaving behind ever changing traces and footprints of an instant already passed. Yet, in its flow, something is lost: some drops fall, separating from the main mass, irreversibly detaching, marking the passage of time and the

inevitability of dispersion.

Sassolino creates an experience in which time is not a fixed measure, but a phenomenon that continuously disintegrates and reconfigures. The tension between gravity and the fluid nature of the oil generates a field of forces where stability is constantly questioned. Every attempt to hold onto the here and now dissolves in its very manifestation, reinforcing the impossibility of possessing the present.

Present Tense thus presents itself as a space of suspension and observation of change, where matter becomes a vehicle for a broader reflection on the ephemeral nature of existence and the eternal challenge of making visible that which, by its very essence, cannot be fixed.

About the artist:

Arcangelo Sassolino was born in 1967 in Vicenza, where he lives and works. His career is marked by solo exhibitions held in prestigious public venues, including Villa Medici in Rome, the Frankfurter Kunstverein in Frankfurt, the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis, MACRO in Rome, and Palais de Tokyo in Paris. Other venues that have hosted his work include Kunstverein in Hannover, The Grand Palais in Paris, the Swiss Institute in New York, MART in Rovereto, the Tinguely Museum in Basel, the Centro di Cultura Contemporanea in Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, the Essl Museum in Vienna, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, FRAC in Rheims, Château de Tokyo / Palais de Fontainebleau in Fontainebleau, Dunkers Kulturhus in Helsingborg, and Kunsthalle Göppingen in Göppingen. At the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022, he participated in a project curated by Keith Sciberras and Jeffrey Uslip for the Malta Pavilion, presenting the installation *Diplomazija Astuta*, conceived as a contemporary reinterpretation of Caravaggio's masterpiece *The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist* (1608). In 2024, at the Basilica Palladiana in Vicenza, Sassolino's work entered into dialogue with two giants of the past: Caravaggio and Antoon van Dyck. In 2025, he created a large rotating disc, 8 meters in diameter, titled *Memory of Becoming*, for the second edition of the Islamic Art Biennale in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, organized by the Diriyah Biennale Art Foundation.

About the gallery:

Founded in 1990 in San Gimignano, Italy, GALLERIA CONTINUA has expanded its locations to Beijing, Les Moulins, Havana, São Paulo, Rome, and Paris. GALLERIA CONTINUA represents the desire for continuity between eras and the ambition to write a contemporary story.

In thirty-five years of activity, thanks to its commitment to revitalizing and breathing new life into forgotten and unconventional spaces, the gallery has developed a strong and unique identity. Located within a former 1950s cinema-theater, GALLERIA CONTINUA San Gimignano has hosted numerous exhibitions over the years, offering artists the opportunity to create memorable site-specific installations and tailor-made exhibition projects for these distinctive and character-rich spaces.

GALLERIA CONTINUA / San Gimignano

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For further information about the exhibition and photographic material:

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