

Press Release | Venice, 28 February 2024

Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia and Venice International Foundation
present

Francesco Vezzoli **MUSEI DELLE LACRIME**

The exhibition marks a new chapter in the history of the Venice International Foundation.

Curated by Donatien Grau

17 April - 24 November 2024
Museo Correr, Venice

Press preview and opening: Tuesday 16 April 2024, 10am-9pm, by invitation only

Fondazione Civici Musei di Venezia and Venice International Foundation present ***Musei delle Lacrime*** (Museums of Tears), a project conceived by **Francesco Vezzoli** (Brescia, 1971), engaging in site with the rooms of the **Museo Correr** in Venice from **April 17 to November 24, 2024**.

The exhibition, curated by **Donatien Grau**, builds on Francesco Vezzoli's ongoing enquiry in experiencing heritage in radical and fundamental ways. Nearly thirty years ago, the artist began embroidering tears onto images of masterpieces, thereby creating his own museum, and confronting the ideology of the museum as an assertion of power. In the Museo Correr, the quintessential modern display of heritage art, he brings it all into a new vision with works spanning over twenty years of art-making, from already historical pieces to nearly a dozen newly-created, especially conceived.

The exhibition marks a new chapter in the vision of the Venice International Foundation, stemming from the initiative of its President, **Luca Bombassei**. As an architect who collects contemporary art, Bombassei embraces the historical mission of the Foundation: the safeguarding and protection of Venetian artistic heritage. He envisions contemporary art as vital to the mission of the Venice International Foundation. For the first time in the organisation's history, VIF has invited a contemporary artist to reimagine a venerated space in Venice.

Luca Bombassei, President of the Venice International Foundation, explains: "*It is with great enthusiasm that we have entrusted Francesco Vezzoli with the commission for a contemporary art project capable of harmoniously interacting with the iconic spaces of then Museo Correr. By focusing the spotlight on the precious treasures that the museum holds, the intervention reinforces the commitment of the Venice International Foundation to promote artistic innovation and enhance the cultural heritage of Venice, a fundamental goal of the foundation since the very beginning of its work.*"

Francesco Vezzoli explains: "*The extraordinary opportunity presented to me by the Venice International Foundation is a challenge that I am profoundly happy to embrace. Immersing oneself in the rooms of the Museo Correr with its masterpieces embedded in the framework designed by Carlo Scarpa, is a true journey into the history of Venice – a history in which modern and heritage do not have to contradict one another, but can actually enrich together our perception of life in*

ground-breaking ways, in which issues of taste and context can be questioned anew. Musei delle Lacrime is conceived as an investigation into the tears lost in the history of art. From Roman frescos to 20th century avant-garde – both present in Venetian art history - the human body has been represented and studied in every possible way. After some extensive research, I realized that you can find all kinds of activities and expressions of feelings, apart from the act of crying. Tears are remarkably absent from the visual universe of art, they are a sign of weakness, which we do not want the public image of art to be. Art can be intimate, like my gesture of embroidery, it can change our lives. That is what museums show, and I am thrilled to continue this journey in Venice, at Museo Correr.”

For **Mariacristina Gribaudo**, President of the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, *“the dialogue that has emerged from Vezzoli’s talk on the extraordinary heritage of the Correr, in particular with the masterpieces of the Quadreria by Cosmè Tura, Jacopo, Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, Antonello da Messina, Vittore Carpaccio, to name but a few, who were themselves guests of honour in Carlo Scarpa’s design, tells us, once again, about the extraordinary life of museums and their ability to be places that always speak the language of the contemporary and topical, in every age. And that for this reason they must be part of the daily life of everyone, of all citizens, of all ages.”*

THE EXHIBITION

Musei della Lacrime draws on Francesco Vezzoli’s contribution to art history: expanding, questioning, challenging the ways heritage is brought to us and the way our contemporary era draws from it looking into the ideological premises of every setting, to address the commonality of human experiences.

The exhibition project, conceived at the invitation of Venice International Foundation, finds its roots in the site of Museo Correr itself, architect and designer Carlo Scarpa’s masterpiece of modernist display designed to host 13th to 17th century paintings and sculptures. Scarpa invented new ways of theatricalizing paintings and thereby created a modern shrine for Venetian heritage. Addressing this ambivalence of modern and historical, Francesco Vezzoli fits into the exhibition display of Museo Correr in dialogue with Scarpa’s approach and paying homage to Venice’s double history of embodiment of heritage as well as of modern recreation; as such, he connects the museum’s collection by creating parallels with other Carlo Scarpa exhibition designs. The exhibition’s installation elements are designed by Filippo Bisagni.

Francesco Vezzoli embroiders his paintings on his own, as a private, intimate experience, turning upside down the categories of masculine and feminine. In this exhibition, he brings it into conversation with an art history defined by rules of masculinity – from the canon to the display – and opens up to a different experience of heritage and of our time.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Francesco Vezzoli, one of Italy's most renowned contemporary artists, has developed a body of work spanning intense allegories on contemporary culture. Using various media, including video installations, embroidery, photography, live performances, and more recently classical sculpture, Vezzoli has gained global recognition. He has participated four times in the Venice Biennale and exhibited in major international events such as the Whitney Biennial and the São Paulo Biennale. His solo exhibitions have been hosted by prestigious institutions such as the New Museum in New York and the Tate Modern in London. Vezzoli has collaborated with illustrious personalities, including Lady Gaga and Natalie Portman, and in 2017 curated the exhibition "TV70: Francesco Vezzoli looks at RAI" at the Fondazione Prada in Milan. In recent years, he has undertaken projects connecting his work to works, historical sites, and Italian monuments, collaborating with institutions such as the Museum and Real Bosco di Capodimonte in Naples and the Archaeological Park of Brescia. In 2019, Francesco Vezzoli held a solo exhibition at the Collection Lambert en Avignon, creating a dialogue between his sculptures and Cy Twombly's works inspired by Roman antiquity. He then exhibited for the first time in an archaeological site with the exhibition "Archaeological Stages," in collaboration with the Fondazione Brescia Musei. In 2021, in the "Francesco Vezzoli in Florence" project, he created two site-specific sculptures: in Piazza della Signoria, the work "PIETÀ", a 20th-century rampant lion crushing a Roman head, and "THE MUSE OF ARCHEOLOGY CRIES" in the Studiolo of Francesco I de' Medici at Palazzo Vecchio, combining a Roman togaed figure with a "metaphysical" bronze head, paying homage to de Chirico. The idea of a new project for the city of Venice emerges as a natural continuation and completion of a long discourse of archaeology, memory, and contemporary invention, further explored in the recent exhibition VITA DVLCIS: Fear and Desire in the Roman Empire at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, in 2023.

Donatien Grau is an editor, scholar, and museum executive. He began collaborating with Francesco Vezzoli in 2009, writing for Francesco Vezzoli's catalogue of his performance with Lady Gaga at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Ever since, they have remained in close conversation, collaborating in particular on "Huysmans critique d'art, sous le regard de Francesco Vezzoli", at the musée d'Orsay where Grau was in charge of contemporary programs. He is now head of contemporary programs at the Louvre in Paris, as well as editor-in-chief and artistic director of the newly founded Alphabet Magazine and chairman of the Pierre Guyotat Estate. His academic work on museums has led to publications such as Living Museums (Hatje Cantz, 2020) and Under Discussion. The Encyclopedic Museum (Getty, 2021).

VENICE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

venicefoundation.org/en/home-en/

Founded in 1996, the Venice International Foundation (VIF) was the first example in Italy of private fundraising for public museums. Acting as a cultural enterprise and a laboratory of ideas, VIF supports historical, artistic, and scientific projects, engaging patrons and enthusiasts of art, history, and the environment to safeguard, acquire, and enhance the historical and artistic heritage of museums. The new structure of the Venice International Foundation embodies its vocation to reinvent itself. It is a framework where ideas circulate freely to formulate intentions and projects for variable time frames. The Venice International Foundation defines a communication and fundraising strategy aimed at ensuring broad participation in its initiatives, to establish a new connection between its supporters and the city, emphasizing the social value of a contribution intended to support a heritage that belongs to everyone. Among the latest projects promoted and realized by the Venice International Foundation in Venice are the restoration of Giambattista Tiepolo's painting "La Nobiltà e la Virtù abbattono l'ignoranza" preserved at Ca' Rezzonico, the recovery of the interiors of the Palazzo Fortuny museum, the restoration of the gilding on the ceiling of Palazzo Ducale, and the

restoration of the mosaic on the dome of the Basilica di San Marco. **Luca Bombassei** has been the President of the Venice International Foundation since 2020. Thanks to his visionary leadership, looking into the realms of architecture, design, and contemporary art, VIF increasingly engages in dialogue with new interdisciplinary areas. An architect by training and a talented professional, Bombassei brings with him a notable academic and professional background. He lives and works between Milan and Venice, leaving an indelible mark through his projects in both cities. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Innovation District Kilometro Rosso in Bergamo, where he has been leading the project coordination since 2005. His approach to design and architecture is characterized by a unique vision of spaces, transforming them into true narrative stages, and surfaces that become magical and surreal expressions. An innovative aesthetic that challenges the boundaries of reality, enhanced by his constant dialogue between contemporary art and the historical architectures that surround him.

MUSEO CORRER

correr.visitmuve.it/en/home/

The Museo Correr is part of the network of the 11 Musei Civici di Venezia. Thanks to the multiplicity and richness of its collections, the museum preserves and illustrates the civilisation, millenary history and art of Venice: an enthralling itinerary-story that starts from the Napoleonic Wing at the end of St. Mark's Square, formerly the heart of the 19th-century Palazzo Reale and now the solemn entrance to the Museum, and develops over two floors of the Procuratie Nuove. Born from the collection that the Venetian patrician Teodoro Correr left to the city in 1830, then uninterruptedly and generously enriched; the Royal Palace of Venice, with the sumptuous rooms of the Napoleonic Wing and the recently "rediscovered" and restored flats of the Royal Rooms; Antonio Canova, with the works of the great sculptor most intimately linked to the city; History and Civilisation of Venice: The State, the Institutions, the City, the Arts of the Serenissima; the Correr Picture Gallery and Art Collections, illustrating the path and influences of art between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance with masterpieces by the great masters: Paolo and Lorenzo Veneziano, Cosmè Tura, Jacopo, Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, Antonello da Messina, Vittore Carpaccio to name but a few. A rich and articulated itinerary that, thanks to the "Area Marciana" integrated tour mode including a visit to the Doge's Palace, is enriched and completed in the adjacent National Archaeological Museum and the monumental rooms of the Marciana National Library.