

THE STRENGTH OF PEOPLE - Fears and hopes in Europe today

Introduction to the theme of 26th International Sculpture Competition – Peano Foundation, written by Ivana Mulatero, art historian and curator of art projects

"War is liked by those who do not know it" wrote the humanist and philosopher Erasmus of Rotterdam 500 years ago. For over thirty years I have read and listened to lies about war, whether the motivation - or more often the excuse - for a war was to defeat terrorism or remove a dictator, or to bring freedom and democracy, I always found myself in front of me in its only truth: the victims...".
Gino Strada, surgeon and founder of EMERGENCY

Peano Foundation announces 2022 edition of its International Sculpture Competition, continuing to outline the topical character of the same initiative, which takes inspiration from facts and events and the globalized society in which we are all called to live and to be witnesses.

The theme of the 26th edition takes off from the events that occurred on the night between February 23rd and 24th 2022, the moment in which Russia began the invasion of Ukraine with subsequent EU sanctions, the condemnation of the West and the events that are documented on social networks. To these dramatic facts, the Sculpture Competition wants to place itself at the service of a reflection on the themes of conflict - both political, social, ethnic, religious - and the freedom of peoples, relaunching attention precisely on the complement of the way the competition has always hinged.

Professor Manfredi Di Nardo, formerly on the Board of Directors of the Peano Foundation and author of the statements of the past editions of the competition, had the opportunity to specify that "the prospects of end and death are in contrast with the central purpose of the Award, indicated by his own Italian title "Sculptura da Vivere" (sculpture to live/to be lived), the promotion of art, not as an exhausted aesthetic product, but as an impulse to life ... ", an impulse that can be translated into works - mindful of a long and robust genealogy of pictorial, sculptural, graphic, photographic and installation interventions that have shown and denounced the barbarities in every century - which can make us reflect on yet another disastrous European war with lucid disenchantment, and together with a lot of human participation, as Rubens, Goya, Delacroix, Daumier, Picasso, Dix, Baselitz, Kentridge were able to do and Abramović.

The impulse to life is at the center of every human dynamic. And the truth, ancient and modern, is that before the speeches of political leaders, Prime Ministers and European elites, there is the strength of the people, and it is the same strength of the people that pushes speeches - and governments and not vice versa - and that it drags the crowds to express dissent in the streets and to fuel a resistance to the perpetuation of barbarism, confirming how important the strength of public opinion is in democracies.

The seed of strength is in the reason that the eighteenth-century philosopher, Johann Gottfried Herder, identified not as an innate faculty, according to the ideal, arid and abstract characteristics advocated by the Enlightenment, but as an art that is acquired slowly over time starting from childhood and in tune with the harmonious development of all human forces, from sentiment to fantasy and imagination. Mature fruits of these theorizations can be, for example, the announcement by John Lennon and Yoko Ono, in 1973, of the birth of Nutopia, a conceptual country without borders, without walls, without passports, whose constitution is the text of the song Imagine : *"Imagine there's no countries | It isn't hard to do | Nothing to kill or die for"*. Also emblematic is The Revolution We Are (1971), an imposing photograph by Joseph Beuys, where the image of the artist advancing towards the viewer expresses the concept that art is the true revolutionary force, that each with his own talent can be the architect of change.

Starting from these reflections and also drawing inspiration from other artists, works or artistic movements, the participants of Peano Foundation Sculpture Competition are invited to outline a project on the theme "The strength of people - Fears and hopes in Europe today ", through which, through synthesis and paradoxes, allegories and symbols, personal interpretations and expressive methods can emerge that consider the reasons for conflicts, the appearance of the refusals of all nationalism, the models of the rights to be defended.