

# MIRCEA CANTOR

PRIX MARCEL DUCHAMP 2011

3 OCTOBER 2012 – 7 JANUARY 2013

“The danger for all contemporary artists is to think purely in terms of images instead of relying on their imagination and their retina”, says Mircea Cantor. Since 1999, the artist has created a series of minimal, poetical and metaphysical works that draw on various media: video, photography, drawing, sculpture and fixtures. The artist refers to “the need for uncertainty” in his art. His aim is to create works that can be viewed and interpreted in many different ways. His porous and political creations attempt to reflect the modern world and its human contradictions.

At the same time, the artist stages myths and elements of different cultural traditions without any hint of nostalgia but conscious of how the symbols of the past survive in the present. Mircea Cantor’s aim is to produce universal works. The artist, who was born in Romania in 1977, does not claim to belong to any one country or region but to “live and work on the planet”. “It is essential today not to talk global by playing the multinationals card but to talk universal, which is contrary to global. This is just what will destroy globalization”, says the artist.

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## DONT' JUDGE, FILTER, SHOOT, 2012

This work is a monumental rose window comprising perforated screens assembled in groups of six and produced on the occasion of the exhibition. Gold rifle bullets are arranged on the screen edges. As is often the case in the work of Mircea Cantor, materials and shapes assume many meanings.

The screen or filter is a reference to our judgment and discernment and to its fallibility. It is also, to quote the art critic François Quintin, "an object that usage positions at the cusp between earth and sky". It therefore becomes a meta-physical object. In Romanian, the words take on another meaning in the popular language: it refers to old. The assembly of screens in groups of six recalls the shape of the recently discovered graphite crystal graphene, a six-sided resistant crystal with very high conductivity.

The precious or non-precious, modern or timeless, gold or concrete bullets, suggest violence, its intensity and its lightning speed.

The work is a meeting point between forms, materials and thoughts that diverge or converge. This complexity cannot be narrowed down to a single clear and finite meaning or reduced to a single message. Instead, it seeks to reflect reality as it exists. However, Mircea Cantor does not try and copy this reality or to mimic its complexity but to respond to it, to start with what it already is, to transform it, cross beyond it and to propose other images. To quote Mircea Cantor: "Artists must sublimate their relationship with the present. I clearly distinguish between art, which has this alchemical capacity, and art which merely illustrates or comments on a world context. (...) What is important is to have a clear perception of what is the artist's duty, of the direction his work should take, of his tools, of how refined should his work be and where it should stop".

The title sound like a rallying cry, a possible definition of how the artist works: rather than pass judgment, we should filter (select) and extract (act).

## SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI, 2012

In this work (a ritual ? a ceremony ?), a young and mysterious Asian woman, bare-footed and dressed in a long pleated dress, seems to emerge from a distant mythological past long before the invention of religions. Around her gather a human circle of faceless beggars, prostrate on the ground, their arms extended, the palms of their hands bent open and receiving a long fuse that soon lights, linking them to one another. The flame passes from hand to hand trailing its dim light and consuming the fuse with increasingly speed. The title of the work immediately recalls the coronation of the popes: a monk appears before the pope three times, burns a tow wick at his feet of the pope and utters the words "**Sancte Pater, sic transit gloria mundi**" ("Holy Father, so passes the glory of the world"). However, the artist here refers more to man's constant hope for better times that never come, to life cycles and to the fundamentally non historical condition of the humble and meek. This asceticism and tension are enhanced by the sound played on a simandra, a wooden instrument used as a call to prayer, played by an orthodox monk. The work adheres to the classical tradition of the vanities and remind us of the ephemerality of life and of the inevitability of death.

The marks of a performance appear on the wall: the artist has lit dynamite fuses which formed the phrase **Don't judge, filter, shoot**.

## WIND ORCHESTRA, 2012

A child blows on a knife. This simple and repeated movement demonstrates the potential superiority of blowing on the object and hence of life over death. Poetry is created from almost nothing, from a deliberate scarcity, from a formal parsimony often present in the artist's works. The "poor theatre" developed by the Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski in the 1960s springs to mind: a style of theatre that is centered on the body and on the relationship with the spectator, abandoning costumes, sets and music, everything which, according to Grotowski, is not essential to the theatre.

## EPIC FOUNTAIN, 2012

These three columns, each of which stand over three meters high, comprise gold safety pins. They form a double spiral representing human DNA, a pattern which often reoccurs in the artist's works. In 2008, Mircea Cantor presented his first **DNA kiss**, a wall drawing showing lipstick kisses delivered by 12 women born under different signs of the Zodiac. For Mircea Cantor, DNA represents aspiration, transferring to new world.

There is an opposition between the rich and precious character of the gold and the banality of the safety pins. By changing materials, the artist transcends common objects. In that sense, he is an alchemist.

In different way, he transforms human DNA: this essential and microscopic molecule, which symbolizes genetic inheritance, is present in all living organisms. In this work, human DNA takes on a gigantic shape that is outside the body. This dual transformation from the banal and the commonplace transforms life, biological life and daily life, into a work of art to be viewed, contemplated and reflected on.

The fountain does not discharge water but gushes with signs of life. As the title reads, it is an epic fountain in the same vein as an epic poem that deals with greatness, heroism, ambition and wonderment. This is not the epic poem of a single life as if often the case in epic poems, but of the whole of humanity, of humanity in in a state of change and mutation and for whom the discovery of the genome is the artist's starting point.

# THE MARCEL DUCHAMP PRIZE

The Marcel Duchamp prize was created in 2000 by the ADIAF (**Association pour la diffusion internationale de l'art français**), a NGO that groups some 300 art collectors and enthusiasts. The prize seeks to develop and promote French art worldwide. From its inception, the prize has been supported by such leading institutions as the Centre Pompidou, the Musée national d'art moderne and, since 2005, by the FIAC (**Foire internationale d'art contemporain**). The prize has already been awarded to over 50 artists, graduates and nominees regarded as the most innovative of their generation.

The international jury includes French and foreign experts (curators, art critics and collectors), who are authorities and opinion leaders in the world of contemporary art.

[www.adiaf.com](http://www.adiaf.com)



## INTERNATIONAL JURY 2011

**Carolyn Christov Barkagiev**  
(United States, Italy)

Curator and art critic, artistic director of la Documenta 13 de Kassel (2012)

**Rosa de la Cruz** (United States)

Collector

**Gilles Fuchs** (France)

President of ADIAF, collector

**Zoe Gray** (Netherlands)

Curator at the Witte de With in Rotterdam

**Jacqueline Matisse-Monnier**  
(France, United States)

Artist

**Alfred Pacquement** (France)

Director of the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, jury president

**Olympio Da Veiga Pereira** (Brazil)

Collector

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## INFORMATIONS

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### EXHIBITION OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

3 October 2012 to 7 January 2013

Espace 315, level 1

Every day except Tuesdays

11am to 9 pm

Ticket office closes at 8 pm

### ADMISSIONS

**Entrance with the "Museum  
and exhibitions" pass**

13€, concessions 10€

Valid for same day and single entry  
to the Museum, all exhibitions and  
panoramic viewing balcony.

Free for under 18 year-olds and for  
Annual Pass holders.

### On-line ticket purchases

**and printing**

(full price only)

[www.centrepompidou.fr/billetterie](http://www.centrepompidou.fr/billetterie)

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