



DICASTERIUM
DE CULTURA ET EDUCATIONE

IL PREFETTO

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I would like to extend my appreciation to the academic authorities of Boston College, especially to the President John T. Butler S.J., to the President Emeritus William P. Leahy S.J. and the Provost David Quigley. I would like to acknowledge the invaluable support and commitment of James F. Keenan S.J. and Bryan Fleming of the Centre for Global Engagement. I thank the curators, Nuno Crespo and Sheila Gallagher (Co-curator of Exercises in Empathy: Accompaniment), together with their respective teams; the artists, who are true masters of this inner journey; to all those who have worked with dedication and rigour on the production and promotion of this exhibition; to the academic community as a whole; and to all the guests who honour us with their presence today.

I am sorry that I cannot be present in Boston at this time. I am delighted that ArtCut has been welcomed in a city which has such a significant history – a cradle of democracy – and that continues to be a major cultural and academic centre globally. This exhibition bears testimony to Boston's enduring legacy as a city - a port city - a place of intercultural encounter and intellectual exchange.

I am particularly impressed by the title you have chosen for your exhibition, "Accompaniment." The word has a particular resonance within the Jesuit tradition, but it is also one of the most profound expressions of human empathy. Empathy, our sympathy for, our care for, our attention to the other, is best expressed by our willingness to be with them, to walk with them, to support them, to be close to them. It also has a sense of respecting their autonomy, respecting their path, their journey, but accompanying them, supporting them, and helping them on that journey.

To accompany another is to share his or her joys and sorrows, to open our hearts. It is to become vulnerable in the truest sense. It is also a great acknowledgement of the rich diversity of people we meet in our way of life. Without judgment, we seek to understand them, to know them, to engage with them, to learn from them. Our accompaniment is also a way of enriching our own lives as we open our horizons to a multiplicity of other experiences and ways of living.

Empathy, at its very root, already names an outward movement: there is no way to feel with another without first dislodging ourselves a little from our own centre. That is why empathy, which gives its name to the entire Triennial, and accompaniment, which specifies this Boston edition, are one and the same movement. This departure, however, is not a simple spatial displacement nor an escape from one's own identity: it is, like every authentic pilgrimage of the spirit, a movement that sets out from ourselves and returns to ourselves, although it never leaves us the same. One goes out of oneself to return

different, expanded by what the other has allowed us to see, more capable of hosting the truth.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time
(T.S. Eliot, from "Little Gidding," *Four Quartets*)

Authentic works of art announce new versions and possibilities of reality. In this itinerary, there is an insight that Saint Augustine formulated more than sixteen hundred years ago and that remains surprisingly relevant today: "do not go outside, return to yourself; in the inner human being dwells truth". For Augustine, however, entering into one's own interiority was never a point of arrival, but rather the threshold of transcendence: it is precisely in the deepest intimacy of oneself where human beings discover that they do not belong entirely to themselves, that there is something — Someone — more inner than their own intimacy and, at the same time, beyond all their limits.

The inner departure spoken of by this Triennial moves along that same line: the deeper one descends into oneself, the more one discovers that this centre is not a closed refuge, but an open threshold toward the other and toward the future

I would like to conclude with a reference that dialogues deeply with the spirit of this exhibition and the entire Triennial. In his first encyclical, *Magna Humanitas*, Pope Leo XIV invites us to preserve a magnificent humanity inhabited by God, promoting truth, human dignity, social justice, and peace. I believe that contemporary art participates in precisely that calling: recognizing in the other — and in ourselves — that magnificent, fragile, and at the same time grandiose humanity that deserves to be seen, felt, and protected in all its complexity

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