

Leggere di nuovo is a journey we are taking on the site of Conciliazione 5, inquiring into the contemporary forms of readings through the work of artists I deeply admire. Each project is made specifically for that space. Each of them represents a step within a path we are taking together.

In my previous speech about Georges Rouy's work, author of the first exhibition of the cycle, I spoke of the text that is at once readable and unreadable, that is at once interior and public. George Rouy's work presented us with this text in front of us.

This time I am so thrilled that the artist we have invited is Pan Daijing, whose intensity is supplemented with a constant layering. I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart His Eminence, Cardinal Tolentino de Mendonça for his constant trust and for constantly inviting us to reflect on what we do, how we do it, to be precise, and at the same time, to make sure that there is a space to make the works of art that would not be possible anywhere else. My gratitude goes beyond words. I would like to thank Cristiano Grisogoni, whose stewardship in the process is steadfast, and to thank alongside him Chiara Adinolfi, Angelica Ferreira and Alice Casciaro. It is such a pleasure to work with you every time, and I always say that the Decastery has a remarkable dream team.

And of course, I would like to thank Pan Daijing. Pan is an artist who puts herself at immense risk in every work she makes. Entrusting me and us with this journey is a privilege for which I am very grateful to her. I have long admired Pan's work. Her work encompasses many forms of art, without limiting herself to any of them. I would actually say that Pan's art is art. It is life as an artist, as a quest, as a process, as a destiny, Pan's journey has been a constant process of learning about oneself and about the world, an inquiry into life as a metaphysical structure.

The level of precision at which Pan works, the way to shift the perspective onto what we are making is crucial to her work. I do not want to unveil too much of Pan's work for Conciliazione 5, but Pan's decision was to say: "What if Conciliazione 5 were not a box in which to present a work, but was actually the work ? What if, in this year we are dedicated to reading, Conciliazione 5 were the book and the exhibition space were the book ? What if our experience of the work were the experience of reading a book? That is an intimate personal encounter in a public space in which we recognize a form of humanity that is both highly individual and profoundly human - that is not only individual. And what if we could make a work that is architectural, sculptural, includes video and music **and is an experiential reality related to the world around it**? Creating a complete work of sorts. When thinking about this work, I think of Proust's famous phrase : « every reader is as he reads the very reader of himself » ; but not himself as an exclusive individual, himself as a bridge to humanity. And that is also the role of the author : the author is not dead, as Roland Barthes said, but he is not alone anymore. He is an eye onto us, the street, life.

We have had countless conversations as to the making of this work, as to every material that would make for it. We've gone through dozens of processes and attempts that have required so much work to reach the simplicity and the evidence and the layering of what we will be able to see now. Last time I quoted Augustine who talked about reading as an encounter across the veils into mystery - the mystery that is profoundly human but profoundly transcendent as well. You may remember the quote : (Confessions, III, 5), «incessu humilem, successu excelsam, et velatam mysteriis ». « Enter through a low access and living the highest vaults, veiled with mysteries ». Such is the power of art and of reading as human experiences. If we forget about the highest vaults, art loses its purpose.

Pan does not shy away from jumping towards the highest vaults. Encountering one's humanity is also at the center of Pan's work. Going through the mysteries and living with them and through them is such a central aspect of her work. At the same time, the experience of mystery is a very direct one, a very profound one, a very human one. This encounter with humanity, with intensity, with the artist and the author, who is not simply an individual separate from others, but actually a bridge to something greater, is what this work is. Working from the glass and the architecture of the space not as a case to present art, but as a reality to experience in its own right, and whose physicality is an inherent part of the making of art, she manifests how the process of reading is at once very intimate and public. Taking into account the location of Conciliazione 5 as a window onto the street, she dwells on the space to at the same time question and develop our perception of what there is. In her work, meaning is both experienced in a very intense manner and is the object of a long journey. She adds an element that will change across time and will be the witness and the statement of time.

Reading then comes out as an interior and public reality at once - the very situation of Conciliazione 5. In order to read one needs to be physically present to the mental process of discovering a new world ; one needs to confront the darkness around us to cut through and experience the light of the text. By entering the inner space of reading, one encounters the eyes of another human being – the artist –; thus a mise en abyme of reading, eye to eye. This is Offset – an invitation to look somewhere else, right at the center.

I would like to add another note. This work brings together so many elements of Pan's journey. A work that converses with architecture, a work with video - this is a very rare instance in which she appears - a work with sound because Pan has been working with and from opera. A sculptural work. Several times in the day and into the night, if you get close to the window of Via della Conciliazione, you will hear one of her opera compositions that we will get to experience there. So all of this to say that this is an extremely ambitious work, but also a very direct one – one that reminds us to listen with the eyes. And on this note, I will ask Pan a few questions.