



DICASTERIUM
DE CULTURA ET EDUCATIONE

The Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See
presents

CONCILIAZIONE 5
YAN PEI-MING. OLTRE IL MURO – REGINA COELI, ROMA

Curated by **Cristiana Perrella**

The new contemporary art space of the Dicastery on Via della Conciliazione, the street leading to St. Peter's Basilica, opens with a work composed of 27 portraits by the great Chinese artist dedicated to inmates and staff of the Regina Coeli prison in Rome.

The exhibition is part of the Jubilee of Artists and the World of Culture program
(Rome, February 15-18, 2025)

February 15 – May 15, 2025

With the solo exhibition of French-Chinese artist Yan Pei-Ming, *Oltre il muro – Regina Coeli, Roma, Conciliazione 5*, the new contemporary art space of the Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Vatican, opens in Rome on Saturday, February 15. Located along the street leading to St. Peter's Basilica, the space—a street-facing venue restored based on a project by Studio COR Architetti—is part of the Curia's buildings and will host an annual program entirely dedicated to contemporary artistic languages. The 2025 curation, for the Holy Year, is entrusted to **Cristiana Perrella**.

In full coherence with the mandate of **Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça**, Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education since 2022, *Conciliazione 5* aims to focus its program on the relationship between creative inspiration and spirituality, promoting the sharing of universal values.

Conceived as a **window gallery**, visible 24/7, *Conciliazione 5* is an ever-open window on art and its ability to engage with major contemporary themes, a place where artists' work can generate new questions and thoughts, opening up the possibility of significant transformation both culturally and spiritually.

Focusing on the concept of **Hope**, the theme of **the 2025 Jubilee**, Cristiana Perrella's program will feature four artists throughout the year, each invited to create a work for the Via della Conciliazione space while also presenting their work in relation to a different location in Rome. The program launches, as part of the **Jubilee of Artists and the World of Culture**, with *Oltre il muro – Regina Coeli, Roma*, a project by Chinese artist **Yan Pei-Ming** (Shanghai, 1960), made possible through collaboration with the **Ministry of Justice – Department of Prison Administration**. The work *Oltre il muro – Regina Coeli, Roma* consists of 27 large-scale watercolor portraits (*Oltre il muro – Regina Coeli, Roma, 2025*), specifically created to give a face to those who live and work in **Regina Coeli**, Rome's oldest and most well-known prison, located in a 17th-century complex on Via della Lungara, just a few hundred meters from the Vatican.

Curator Cristiana Perrella introduces the artist: "*Yan Pei-Ming is one of the most powerful painters of our time, capable of immediately engaging the viewer. Through portraiture, he has reflected on the representation*

of power. He has painted political leaders, popes, film icons, and revisited portraits of past masters, such as Velázquez's Innocent X. This is why I wanted him to depict the inmates and staff of Regina Coeli, a community often perceived as marginal, unidentified, invisible."

The artist shares: *"My work is always oriented towards human beings; they are the center of everything, the fundamental element of my art. If I were asked to create an abstract painting, I don't think I could: I am interested in people. I am a painter of our time, and portraying the isolated society of a prison seems to me one of the most symbolic acts of unveiling, and a great real possibility of bringing them hope."*

Regina Coeli is sadly notorious for its severe issues of **overcrowding and poor living conditions**: here, **Hope**, the theme of the **2025 Jubilee**, is a difficult sentiment to conceive. Thousands of people pass by its facade in the historic center every day, never wondering what lies beyond that wall.

Prisons are an issue rarely discussed in public debate, with little willingness to listen. Through his work, **Yan Pei-Ming makes the invisible visible** behind Regina Coeli's walls. Based on photographic sessions carried out with photographer **Daniele Molajoli**, Yan Pei-Ming has portrayed inmates, prison guards, volunteers, a doctor, and the chaplain—individuals who remain unseen but exist, each with their own story, captured with the expressive intensity and character of the artist's rapid brushstroke.

Portraiture, in the history of art, has traditionally conferred dignity on its subjects. Yan Pei-Ming's painting restores **dignity and social recognition** to the imprisoned and to those who work within the prison, often in unimaginably difficult conditions.

Even **Pope Francis**, in *Spes non confundit*, the Bull of Indiction of the **2025 Jubilee**, calls for **more dignified conditions** for prisoners, as only then can they *"look to the future with hope and renewed commitment to life."*

The reflection on prisons aligns with Pope Francis' apostolate, which inspired the **Holy See Pavilion at the Giudecca Prison** presented by the Dicastery at the **60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia in 2024**, as well as **Marinella Senatore's intervention at Rebibbia Prison**, also curated by Cristiana Perrella, for the Pope's visit to open the second Holy Door. On that occasion, the artist created *Io Contengo Moltitudini*, a luminous installation inspired by Southern Italian festive lights, featuring phrases written by Rebibbia inmates during a series of workshops. Standing six meters tall, this artwork became **a symbol of hope and active participation**, fostering dialogue between inmates and the broader community and remaining visible exclusively to the prison population until **February 18, 2025**.

Conciliazione 5 is part of the **Jubilee of Artists and the World of Culture**, offering the public **not only a visual experience but also a deep reflection on Hope and the value of human dignity**.

Cristiana Perrella's **2025 program** will also commission three additional contemporary art projects by international artists, who will successively address the theme of **Hope**, engaging with other spaces and nearby institutions. The next intervention, following Yan Pei-Ming's, is entrusted to **Adrian Paci**, who will work in dialogue with the **Arcispedale of Santo Spirito in Saxia**.

FOR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESS

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