

Con i miei occhi / With My Eyes

With My Eyes / With My Eyes

Edited by Bruno Racine, Chiara Parisi

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"Assuming the responsibility involved in looking with one's own eyes does not let us to observe history locked in a center or secluded zone of asserted neutrality that is nothing more than the preservation of a comfort zone. Watching exposes us to risk (which is rarely comfortable), proposes contexts of itinerancy and interaction (which force us to deconstruct so many automatisms), brings us closer, quoting Rimbaud, to "unheard of and unnameable things". "

From the essay When did we see you? by Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça

Forged under the artistic direction of Irma Boom, the catalog offers an in-depth look at the work done by curators Bruno Racine and Chiara Parisi for the Holy See Pavilion of the LX Venice Biennale, at the Venice Giudecca Women's Prison House, and documents the active dialogue that took place between the eight artists involved in the project (Maurizio Cattelan, Claire Fontaine, Bintou Dembélé, Simone Fattal, Sonia Gomes, Corita Kent, Marco Perego and Zoe Saldana, and Claire Tabouret) and the women prisoners who inhabit this place.

The volume opens with a preface by Pope Francis and hosts a contribution by Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, When did we see you? It then continues with a rich curatorial text that dissects the project by drawing on the testimonies of the artists involved, Olivian Cha and Nellie Scott (Corita Art Center, Los Angeles), female inmates and prison staff. "By choosing a working prison," the curators commented, "we wanted to go beyond an artistic proposal that would reach only the international contemporary art audience; our goal was to engage in a rich and complex human experience in which the excluded of society were the main characters.

A way to demonstrate factually how art can change lives, change the way visitors look at this apparently impenetrable universe and the way female inmates look at themselves..

The proposed title, *With My Eyes*, suggests this reflection, a conversion of the gaze to which art invites us and to which it gives its full dimension." A previously unpublished conversation between Hans Ulbrich Obrist and Julia Kristeva, on the other hand, addresses issues of art as "contamination of meaning and senses and triumph of the subjective experience of the world, but also of epiphany as the vanishing point of the encounter with art. Complementing the catalog, a rich iconographic apparatus includes photographs by Marco Cremascoli, who captures the exhibition sites and works on display., and photographs by Juergen Teller, who will document Pope Francis's historic visit to the Holy See Pavilion; the testimony of this event will be enriched by the text that the Pope himself will read during the April 28 audience from the Detention House.