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## OLAFUR ELIASSON, ANISH KAPOOR, JUAN MUÑOZ, MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO *Reflejo / Reflexión*

September - November 2021

*Why do you persist, incessant mirror?  
Why do you duplicate, mysterious brother, the movement of my hand?  
Why in the shadow the sudden reflection? (...)*

J.L. Borges, *Al espejo*

***Reflejo | Reflexión*** presents works by Olafur Eliasson, Anish Kapoor, Juan Muñoz and Michelangelo Pistoletto. These four artists approach the idea of the viewer's reflection in front of a mirror through different artistic perspectives. These perspectives embrace formal and functional, philosophical, and psychological levels showing a way of thinking about otherness. The mirror extends the space, and it is multiplied mimesis of the Universe. In the reflection, the artist observes himself and projects his own gaze and his place in space. The works presented in this exhibition raise questions about self-image.



Michelangelo Pistoletto, *La Giuria*, 2007.

### **Olafur Eliasson**

Eliasson's practice revolves around three aspects: his concern for the environment, his research on geometry, and the investigation on human perception.

Consisting of eight circular and elliptical forms made of reflective glass, Olafur Eliasson's *Eight circle rotation* (2008) maps the appearance of a disc at eight different points in its lateral rotation. When viewed frontally, the disc appears to be a full circle. However, as it rotates on its horizontal axis, the frontal view becomes increasingly foreshortened until the face of the disc becomes almost entirely horizontal, aligning with its axis.

*Mirror door (participant)*, 2008 and *Mirror door (performer)*, 2008, consist of large mirrors panels leaned against the wall and illuminated with a single spotlight. The circular silhouette of the spotlight cascades on the floor around the lower right corner of the mirror, inviting the viewer to

move to the right and left to perceive the light's shifting alignment with its reflection. Thus, as the visitor circulates around the work, it becomes a portal of sorts back into the very room in which he or she finds herself, its reflection opening onto others nearby as well as the immediate surroundings.

### **Anish Kapoor**

Anish Kapoor's work explores space, forms, and matter at different scales. He often presents opposing dualities such as real/imaginary, interior/exterior, presence/absence, and known/unknown. For many years, Kapoor has worked with concave and convex mirrors of all kinds and mirrored surfaces that transform reality.

*Horizon (Red)*, 2016 is a concave mirror divided into a polished surface with a matte maroon, red coating that evidences the artist's interest in the interior void.

The concavity induces and invites interiority. In his mirror sculptures, the reflected form is turned inside out, inverted, and the materials are not painted but instead impregnated with color, negating the idea of an exterior surface. The concave mirror affects the space. The viewer's reflection is reversed and comes back to the notion that the object is not completely material and can thus create a larger, more profound, silent space. For Kapoor the mirror and the pigment have a physical reality, a presence, and at the same time, it is a kind of fiction or illusion that can contain other meanings.

### **Juan Muñoz**

Muñoz's works create an encounter that alternates between self-recognition and the reflection of the other in the unspoken territory of meaning. His work is full of confrontations and visual games. He deals with the double and the duality of opposites, always playing with the symbolic, with the different meanings of things.

The mirror, a recurrent instrument throughout art history, also appears frequently in Juan Muñoz's artwork as in *Allo specchio*, 1997, and *Chino mirándose a un espejo redondo*, 1999. The mirror is a way of expressing otherness: the spectator is reflected in the work and becomes part of it, without the figure altering or coming out of self-absorption.<sup>1</sup>

### **Michelangelo Pistoletto**

Michelangelo Pistoletto's Mirror Paintings redefine the concept of perspective, involving the viewer in the painting. The mirrored surface is instrumental to Pistoletto's practice. The reflective plane of his

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<sup>1</sup> Ref: Juan Muñoz. *Permitaseme una imagen*. (ed) Turner/Museo Reina Sofía, 2009.



paintings draws the viewer and their environment into the work, altering the fiction of the painted image as a frozen moment.

*La Giuria* represents eight figures seated in a row with their backs to the viewer. Two women and six men, one of them in profile, subtly peeking out into the space behind him. The viewer observes himself looking at these static and seated people. The image becomes a magnificent metaphor related to the idea of judgment, examination, and control, as the title has many possible interpretations. The jury could be awarding a prize or sitting in judgment in a room; their deliberations can lead to gratification or condemnation. We experience the very situation of judging and being judged as unsettlingly ambiguous, and the imposing dimensions and unusual position of the mirror serve to accentuate the sense of subjection involved. "This unsettling openness to interpretation is what makes *La Giuria* so powerful. It is astonishing how Pistoletto can return to his usual medium of expression and yet make it work in a different way, as loaded with meaning as anything he has done so far: a true "reinvention of the medium", according to art critic and historian Rosalind Krauss.



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