

BLACK MIRROR – MAT COLLISHAW at Galleria Borghese

Curated by Anna Coliva and Valentina Ciarallo.

From 8 October, 2014 to 11 January, 2015, the Special Superintendence for the Historical, Artistic and Ethnoanthropological Heritage and the City of Rome's Museums, directed by Daniela Porro and the Galleria Borghese, directed by Anna Coliva, present the exhibition Black Mirror by Mat Collishaw at the Galleria Borghese.

The Galleria Borghese museum is renowned the world over. In a new and ambitious exhibition, Mat Collishaw – Black Mirror, four works interact with the collection of the masterpieces displayed in the museum, merging contemporary art with its historical collection.

Three paintings by Caravaggio (the Saint Jerome, the Madonna dei Palafrenieri and the David with the Head of Goliath) appear and disappear behind the surfaces of large mirrors framed in black Murano glass. The figures seem alive and appear to be posing for a painting; they breathe, they close their eyes and move in front of us. They are ordinary people, about to be transformed into religious icons, like ghosts trapped in an undefined space between the real world and the realm of painting.

The fourth work on the museum's ground floor offers a contemporary interpretation of The Massacre of the Innocents by Ippolito Scarsella. Here the depiction of frenzied violence is emphasised and aggressively staged in the form of a three-dimensional Zoetrope – a contemporary version of a Victorian-age optical toy. The Zoetrope amplifies this cornucopia of ferocity by presenting a large number of characters in a swaying mass of kaleidoscopic brutality, where horrible acts take place, all trapped in a purgatory of frantic and endless violence.

The exhibition was organised by 1/9 unosunove, a private contemporary art gallery that opened in Rome in 2005, founded by Fabio Ianniello. It handles the production of exhibitions within the gallery space, located in Palazzo Santa Croce, an elegant 17th-century building in the historic centre of Rome. It also oversees important outside events in institutional and museum spaces, promoting the artists with whom it has collaborated over the years.

The British Council, the exhibition partner, expressed its support through a documentary film about the exhibition, which is currently being made. The film, produced by Cecile Leroy for Person Films, is conceived as more than just a documentary: a fascinating journey of reflection made by the artist, who presents his world and his work; all told through the eyes of Elisa Fuksas, a talented rising star on Italian cinema scene.

The exhibition is one of the initiatives of the Semester of the Italian Presidency of the European Union.