

GAGOSIAN



Four unmissable art exhibits in Rome

From Italian Arte Povera superstars to Tracey Emin: in May the Eternal City is all about great modern and contemporary shows

Maria Shollenbarger



Giuseppe Penone: Gesti Universali on show at the Galleria Borghese © S Pellion/Galleria Borghese

Alex Israel surfs his way to Rome

“The gallery has always struck me as the perfect space for showing sculpture. It’s also kind of shaped like a board,” says Alex Israel of the cavernous oval volume that is Gagosian’s Rome outpost, a former bank just north of the Trevi Fountain. His upcoming exhibition, which opens on 12 May, is one of the city’s most anticipated: he spoke to HTSI ahead of its installation about FINS, a sculpture series of monumental surfboard fins, fashioned from acrylic plastic at a specialist atelier on the outskirts of the city.



Self-Portrait (Surf Shop), 2016, by Alex Israel © Jeff McLane



Artist Alex Israel © Jack Pierson

Israel has form with surf culture in the arc of his work, which tends to the thematically discursive: “I started to touch on [surf culture] as a sort of cypher for California culture really early on. And then everything I do comes out of the previous thing; it’s a constant narrative,” he says, citing numerous precedents to these works, among them his wave paintings series and SPF-18, the 2017 feature film he directed about teen surf culture in his hometown of Los Angeles.



Cut-Out Fins (in Four Parts), 2022, by Alex Israel © Carl Henrik Tillberg



Waves, 2023, by Alex Israel © Martin Wong

Giuseppe Penone's wow factor at the Galleria Borghese

The elemental force of Giuseppe Penone's sculptures made him a hero of Italy's 20th-century *arte povera* movement: carved in wood or cast in bronze, they are raw, dynamic interrogations of, and odes to, nature and matter.



Pensieri di Foglie, 2017, by Giuseppe Penone © S Pellion/Galleria Borghese



The exhibition in the Sala degli Imperatori © S Pellion/Galleria Borghese

Until the end of May, you can admire more than 30 of them in a spectacular dialogue with another master of his own era, the early Baroque sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Giuseppe Penone: *Gesti Universali* sees Penone's works, dating from the 1970s to the early 2000s, spread across several rooms and two gardens at the Galleria Borghese, which houses some of Bernini's best-known work. In the rooms dedicated to Bernini's Aeneas, Anchises and Ascanius (1619) and Apollo and Daphne (1622-25), Penone's monumental renderings create jarring juxtapositions; the effect of the divergent interpretations of physical fragility and mortality, separated by 400 years, is extraordinary.



The Villa's Sala di Apollo e Dafne © S Pellion/Galleria Borghese

Mounds of bay leaves, hollow tree trunks, slim skeletal branches – some real, carved or wood, others cast in various metals – make the conventional walk through this most Roman of galleries a surreal, unforgettable experience. Giuseppe Penone: *Gesti Universali* is showing at the Galleria Borghese until 28 May, galleriaborghese.beniculturali.it

In praise of Pistoletto

Across town and a stone's throw from the Piazza Navona, the arte povera movement's founding father is having his own retrospective, in one of Rome's smaller venues – and a personal favourite of mine – the Chiostro del Bramante. Michelangelo Pistoletto, who turns 90 this year, forged a career in the 1960s with his famous mirror paintings series, which draw the observer into the artwork itself.



Terzo Paradiso, 2003-2023, by Michelangelo Pistoletto © Courtesy Cittadellarte/Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella. Photograph by DART – Chiostro del Bramante



Venere degli Stracci, 1967, by Michelangelo Pistoletto © Courtesy Cittadellarte/Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella

The show, which opened in mid-March, is called *Infinity: Contemporary Art Without Limits* – one of three Italian exhibitions dedicated to the artist this year (the second is currently on at Milan’s Palazzo Reale; a third will open in October at Castello di Rivoli, near Turin).



L'Etrusco e la Strada Romana, 1976-2023, by Michelangelo Pistoletto © Adriano Mura, courtesy of Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella, Italy

It brings together more than 50 works, spanning from those 1960s origins to the present day. Expect abundances of neon, glass and steel in various thought-provoking combinations, as well as the prosaic jetsam of everyday life, as with his famous *Venere degli Stracci* (“Venus of the Rags”), which marries the elegance of an early-19th-century marble – in this case, Bertel Thorvaldsen’s *Venus with the Apple* (Musée du Louvre) – with a great pile of cast-off textiles. *Infinity: Contemporary Art Without Limits* is showing at Chiostro del Bramante until 15 October, chiostrodelbramante.it

Margate's finest at Galleria Lorcan O'Neill

If you've read about Tracey Emin recently, it was almost certainly in the context of her hometown of Margate, where alongside her eponymous Foundation she recently inaugurated TKE Studios and TEAR, the Tracey Emin Artist Residency.



I Saw You Loving Me, 2023, by Tracey Emin © Courtesy of Galleria Lorcan O'Neill



You Made a Hole Inside Me, 2022, by Tracey Emin © Courtesy of Galleria Lorcan O'Neill

But to mark the first exhibition of her own work since she was treated for cancer in 2020, she has chosen Rome, and the centro storico venue of her gallerist and friend Lorcan O'Neill. The works gathered for *You Should Have Saved Me*, which opens on 13 May, are all new; most of them – gouaches on paper and paintings – were produced expressly for the show. The studies of the female form, among which are many nude self-portraits, are extraordinarily personal works, radiating both formal heft and profound feeling. They confront, provoke and move the viewer with their frankness and vulnerability – naked, in every sense of the word. *You Should Have Saved Me* is showing at Galleria Lorcan O'Neill until 9 September, lorcanoneill.com