

FOLON THE ETHICS OF POETRY

Between civil commitment, condemnation and hope in man

Curated by Stéphanie Angelroth, Micol Forti, and Marilena Pasquali

Press Conference
Thursday 5th May 2022 – 11:30 a.m.

Vatican Museums
Modern and Contemporary Art Collection, Torre Borgia Rooms

Opening to the public 6th May – 27th August 2022

Admission included in the Vatican Museums ticket

On Friday, 6th May 2022 a new exhibition promoted by the Vatican Museums, *FOLON. THE ETHICS OF POETRY. Between civil commitment, condemnation and hope in man*, will open to the public.

The exhibition will be held in the Torre Borgia Rooms, located in the Modern and Contemporary Art Collection of the Vatican Museums, and will be open to the public for the first time, along with the “Stork Room” with its valuable Medieval decorations, set in the Tower of Pope Innocent III.

The event has been made possible thanks to the collaboration between the Vatican Museums and the Folon Foundation, following the donation of two artworks by the Belgian artist Jean-Michel Folon (1934 – 2005) which will become part of the Vatican collections at the end of the exhibition: *About the Creation* – a magnificent series of eight graphic works on the Book of Genesis (1989-90) – and the bronze sculpture *Guardian Angel* (2005), one of the last creations of the artist.

‘The Creation series confirms that Folon was an artist endowed with a special sensitivity with regards to the sacred, and at the same time had a sincere interest in reworking universal themes inspired by the Holy Scriptures, filtered through his gaze, which was always imbued with poetry’, Barbara Jatta, Director of the Vatican Museums, emphasises.

The work of illustrator, painter, and sculptor Jean-Michel Folon is well known and beloved throughout the world: his figure in a blue hat and coat and his landscapes poised between dream and fantasy are the ingredients of his profound and sophisticated, intense and visionary poetics.

Yet not everyone knows that Folon dedicated much of his work to themes around civic engagement and the injustice, and abuse of power that inhabit our world. This is the fundamental subject chosen by the Vatican Museums and the Folon Foundation for this extraordinary exhibition: a selection of eighty drawings and watercolours, many previously unpublished, which range from his early protest works to the great watercolours of the 1980s and 1990s and the enigmatic sculptures of his last, highly prolific period in the early 2000s.

In his engagement, Humanity was the standard, supporting a world sensitive to the lot of the weakest, in favour of civil rights, against all wars, and respecting the environment. These were themes to which the artist dedicated much of his career, still dramatically topical.

The exhibition is curated by Stéphanie Angelroth, Director of the Folon Foundation; Micol Forti, Curator of the Modern and Contemporary Art Collection of the Vatican Museums; Marilena Pasquali, art historian and member of the Scientific Committee of the Folon Foundation.

The artist goes beyond condemnation to envision the possibility of overcoming injustice and suffering, an essential struggle within his work. He resists the temptation of resignation and disengagement, stubbornly believing in Humanity. In Folon's view, there is no shadow without light, or, at least, without a hope of light.

'By shedding light, reaching out his hand to lead us into an unknown, dreamlike landscape, Folon has humbly but persistently offered us this hope', writes Stéphanie Angelroth, Director of the Folon Foundation.

The exhibition is divided into sections and, to aid visitors, the architect Roberto Pulitani, who arranged the display, has paired colours with the themes: petroleum blue, like smog, for The Man and the City, bright green for The Man and the Nature, blood red for The Man and the War, sky blue like the horizons of utopia for The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, pearl grey for The Rooms of Hope. Lastly, displayed on the walls along the way to the medieval rooms, there will be some of the most famous Posters made by Folon for major humanitarian campaigns and cultural events.

At the centre of the exhibition, some of Folon's best known artworks: the 19 watercolours he created in 1988 for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, original works presented here in their entirety, alongside the texts of the articles of the Declaration in various languages.

On May 6th the Study Day *Folon. The Ethics of Poetry* will be held at the Academia Belgica in Rome (via Omero 8).

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Opening hours

From Monday to Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. (admission until 4:00 p.m.)

Closed on Sundays and public holidays

Info: www.museivaticani.va