



ASSOCIAZIONE
GENESI

Press release

Associazione Genesi

presents

SPECULUM DE L'AUTRE FEMME

curated by Iliaria Bernardi

Brussels, European Parliament

March 4-6, 2025

OPENING: March 5, 2025, h. 2.45 p.m.

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Associazione Genesi presents an exhibition at the European Parliament, curated by Iliaria Bernardi, dedicated to women's rights, comprising 12 works from the Associazione's contemporary art collection. Twelve well-known international artists encourage visitors to reflect on important themes linked to human rights, interpreting them from a woman's perspective.

The title of the event, *Speculum. De l'autre femme*, refers to the eponymous book by Luce Irigaray (Bernissart, 1930), psychoanalyst and philosopher of Belgian origin, but French by adoption, published in 1974 and one of the cornerstones of European women's thinking. It is thanks to the Franco-Belgian identity of the author of this volume that the European Parliament can ideally connect its two seats: Strasbourg (France) and Brussels (Belgium).

The title, *Speculum*, is a reference to the concave mirror that is used in gynecology to look inside a woman's body. As Luce Irigaray tells us, throughout the history of Western thought women have never had a site, a placement, a representation that wasn't arranged according to male parameters: it is thus necessary to found a new myth of the origin that will fully take into account and finally do justice to female otherness, *the other woman* cited in the title. **The aim of the book, borrowed from the exhibition at the European Parliament, is to finally give women a way to find their voice so that they can talk about themselves and the images used to represent them, no longer as a reflection of the male model of reference, but as female otherness finally free to affirm with pride the intrinsic diversity of their nature and, consequently, their rights.**

The works exhibited encourage a reflection on six of the most important themes linked to human rights, interpreting them from a female point of view. *The Memory of a People, Multicultural Identity, Victims of Power, The Color of a Person's Skin, The Female Condition, The Safeguarding of the Environment.*



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We begin with *The Memory of a People*, which explores how the tradition and history of every community are to be considered a collective memory to be preserved because it is a fundamental identifying element.

Anna Boghiguan (Cairo, Egypt, of Armenian origin, 1946), in *Back to the Roots*, 2019, uses multiple figures drawn with encaustic characterized by an Expressionist element and saturated colors to emphasize the importance of remembering one's roots, which must always remain the essence of our being in the world.

Malgorzata Mirga-Tas (Zakopane, Poland, 1978), in *Chave jawle wasio thud* (Children Coming For Milk), 2023, refers to everyday scenes, inspired by actual photographs, in order to keep the memory alive of the habits and customs of the Romani people she comes from.

The theme of *Multicultural Identity* instead explores how traditions and the history of every community are to be considered a collective memory to be preserved as a fundamental identifying element.

Otobong Nkanga (Kano, Niger, 1974) with *In a Place Yet Unknown*, 2017, presents a tapestry that is constantly changing because of the ink that gradually seeps into its patterns, outlining a metaphor with the ongoing processes of transformation of every society that, albeit apparently supported by stable values, is actually changing constantly and capable of generating from decadence new life forms.

Silvia Rosi (Scandiano, Reggio Emilia, Italy, 1992), in *Self Portrait as my Mother on the Phone* and *Self Portrait as my Father on the Phone*, 2019, traces back over her own personal story, drawing from the legacy of her family that migrated to Italy from Togo, and her resulting dual identity—Italian and Togolese.

The theme *Victims of Power* recalls the violence perpetrated or tolerated, in some parts of the world, by the governments themselves against their citizens, who become the victims of restrictions, censure, genocide, war, exploitation, and are often forced to flee to other countries to escape such abuse.

Shirin Neshat (Qazvin, Iran, 1957) in *Stories of Martyrdom – (From Women of Allah)*, 1994, analyzes the female dimension in Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1978-1979. The few skin areas left visible by the chador are covered with pages of texts in Farsi, whose contents range from religious subjects to profane ones, eventually exploring the spheres of intimacy, sexuality, and feminism.

The video *Il peut pleurer du ciel*, 2024, by **Binta Diaw** (Milan, 1995), harkens back to the migrations of black people over the course of time between Africa and Europe, whether voluntarily or forced, but in any case caused by social, economic, and civil situations that are at times unsustainable.

The theme *The Color of a Person's Skin* includes works by black and brown artists born in the United States who tell stories linked to the prejudices and injustices that took place in their countries with regards to people of color.

Muholi Muholi Room 107 Day Inn Hotel, Burlington, Vermont, 2017, by **Zanele Muholi** (Umlazi, Durban, South Africa, 1972) is part of the photographic series of 365 self-portraits titled *Somnyama Ngonyama* in which the artist portrays himself with a proud gaze in various places in the United States also to convince himself of their legitimacy and show himself to be a black non-binary person, in spite of the, unfortunately, widespread prejudice based on the color of a person's skin and their sexual orientation.

Betye Saar (Los Angeles, CA, United States, 1926) in *Honey*, 2001, recalls the custom known as the "Skin Game," which spread throughout the plantations where there were slaves, but still exists today. This is why to describe each other African Americans use adjectives related to the color of their lighter or darker skin.



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The theme *The Female Condition* sheds light on the role of the woman in contexts, both public and private, in which male chauvinism still exists.

Monica Bonvicini (Venice, 1965) in *Home is Where You Leave Your Belt*, 2019, uses a piece of furniture and a ball of men's black belts to suggest the idea of a multitude of men who, upon entering the domestic space, have removed their trousers, to suggest male predominance and the potential abuse and violence against women.

Face to the Bricks, 2020, by **Zoë Buckman** (Hackney, London, UK, 1985), instead, with the use of materials that would appear to be discordant – hard materials like the metal from a chain to which a boxing glove is attached, and soft materials like fabrics –, refers to gender-related violence, and underlies not only the possibility of women being both 'soft' and 'hard,' but the need to be so as well.

Lastly, *The Safeguarding of the Environment* explores the damage wreaked by human activity upon the ecosystem and the necessity to preserve the balance between the human being and nature via sustainable growth.

En Route To The South, Learning To Be Nomadic, 2015-2017, by **Elena Mazzi** (Reggio Emilia, Italy, 1984) concerns nomadic beekeeping to stress the importance of sustainable agriculture and the safeguarding of animal species that risk extinction, like bees, aimed at helping the new generations to live.

Tala Madani (Tehran, Iran, 1981) in *Shit Shot Seagull*, 2020, instead portrays a seagull covered in excrement as it flies—an allusion to pollution, the environmental imbalances caused by man, and cruelty against animals.

The exhibition thus gives women a voice as concerns major themes linked to human rights, thereby reinstating them in the official history of the world from which they have been excluded for thousands of years.

Exhibition under the Patronage of

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Associazione Genesi, founded in 2020 at the behest of Letizia Moratti, is committed to defending human rights via the valorization of various cultures and the environment. The goal of the Association is to contribute, through contemporary art, to the creation of citizenship that is more responsible and socially active. For this reason, the Associazione Genesi created the Collezione Genesi, selecting works by artists from around the world and of different generations, who reflect on the most urgent, complex, and often dramatic cultural, environmental, social, and political issues of our day and age. The Associazione is also the Founder—together with Università Cattolica, Mapei, WeBuild, and Associazione Always Africa—of the E4Impact Foundation for the development of entrepreneurship in Africa. Participants include Intesa Sanpaolo, ENI, Montello, Carvico, CONFAPI, Coldiretti, Filiera Italia, as well Diana Bracco and Michele Carpinelli as individual participants. E4Impact offers training programs in impact entrepreneurship in 20 African countries, in pursuit of a threefold goal: to train new entrepreneurs for a strong social impact; to collaborate with African universities in order to offer entrepreneurial training aimed at action; to favor the encounter between Italian and African companies oriented toward sustainability.

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