

PRESS RELEASE

ALFREDO JAAR

Thursday 9 December 2004, 7.00 p.m. Galleria Lia Rumma Milan, Via Solferino, 44

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Gallery opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday, from 11.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. and from 3.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.

The Lia Rumma Gallery in Milan is pleased to announce the opening of the first exhibition in Italy by the Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar.

Born in 1956 in Santiago, Chile, Jaar trained as an architect and director of photography before moving to New York in 1982. He has never been afraid of using his work to explore the most crucial, pressing and dramatic issues of contemporary life.

With his rigorously analytical approach, Jaar is renowned for a series of demanding projects which stemmed from the need to examine the context in which he works in order to reveal those contradictory aspects which normally remain ignored or repressed.

These projects eventually end up as installations whose communicative effectiveness relies on the combination of different components: architectural or theatrical elements incorporate materials of various kinds including the frequent use of photographs, light boxes and texts. The artist has also used light in many of his works as an element which has a strong impact and powerful symbolic value.

Another important aspect of his work is represented by his public installations.

Some of his most famous works include *Inchiesta sulla Felicità*, made in 1977 regarding Chile under Pinochet, *Rushes* related to the gold hunters in the Amazon, *The Rwanda Project (The eyes of Gutete Emerita)* about the genocide in Rwanda, *Lights of the City*, made in Montreal and intended to underline the social gap and the indifference that exist between people who nevertheless share the same urban space, and *Lament of the Images* which deals with the issue of media communication in the global era. It was successfully presented at Kassel's Documenta 11. Recently, Jaar has created a series of spaces devoted to art, mainly of an ephemeral nature, as though to emphasise the lack of art in our everyday lives and to re-state its importance.

To mark his first exhibition in Italy, Jaar explores the figure of Antonio Gramsci, one of the intellectuals and political thinkers whose legacy has most profoundly influenced culture in the twentieth century, and not only in Italy. Gramsci's works, written mainly in prison, have enjoyed widespread acclaim and interest world-wide, including South America.

His project involves reconstructing Gramsci's prison cell and a series of light boxes with photographs taken in Rome. All the photographs depict situations characterised by a divide. In a less metaphorical and more direct way, the cell refers to a state of profound separation and distancing. The directly facing reflecting walls reflect the prison bars to infinity, giving the impression of multiplication and proliferation. The iron grille of the gallery windows behind the cell further emphasise this impression.

Jaar believes in a correlation between ethics and aesthetics and in the active and socially responsible role of the artist. His installation represents an invitation to salvage the ties and values of society which are implied and described in Gramsci's work.