

Basim Magdy

THE STARS WERE ALIGNED FOR A CENTURY OF NEW BEGINNINGS

At MAXXI the first solo exhibition in Italy of Deutsche Bank's "Artist of the Year" 2016.

15 September – 30 October 2016

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«We are just naive enough to reenact the same mistakes
that were made so many times before»
(Basim Magdy)

Rome, 14 September 2016

Starting September 15, **MAXXI, together with Deutsche Bank**, is presenting the **first solo exhibition in Italy** devoted to **Basim Magdy**, who was honoured **Deutsche Bank's "Artist of the Year" 2016**, an annual award for emerging or mid-career artists who have distinguished themselves for their creativity and the significance of their work.

The exhibition, entitled ***The Stars Were Aligned for a Century of New Beginnings***, was inaugurated last April at the Deutsche Bank Kunsthalle in Berlin and, after MAXXI, it will move to the Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago.

The Basim Magdy exhibition at MAXXI is part of ***Expanding the Horizon***, a new initiative promoted by the museum to further develop its global ambitions and explore a new form of public space generated by the collaboration between the museum and other institutions and private collections.

Over 30 works, including **films, projections, photographs, paintings and installations** from 2006 to 2016, comprise the exhibition, co-curated by **Britta Färber**, Chief Curator of Deutsche Bank and **Anne Palopoli**, Curator of MAXXI.

As **Giovanna Melandri** *President Fondazione MAXXI* says: "We are delighted to host the exhibition of Basim Magdy not only for the quality and the contemporary nature of his work, perfect for the spaces of a museum such as this, an open workshop, a forum for the arts, but also because it is tangible evidence of our collaboration with an exceptional partner such as Deutsche Bank with its long tradition of supporting and promoting the arts. Institutions, businesses and collector have in fact a fundamental role at MAXXI, providing crucial support as we meet our cultural challenges."

"We are sincerely pleased to present, in collaboration with MAXXI, Basim Magdy's first major solo exhibition in Italy. Through his work, he is able to make people look ahead - say **Friedhelm Huette** *Global Head of Art, Deutsche Bank* - Magdy belongs to the growing number of artists who have been influenced by the Internet and network thinking, and who are now developing visions of the future that clearly diverge from the materialist twentieth century belief in progress. We have found in MAXXI the perfect partner to promote current art tendencies and forward-looking positions, in a common and constant search of reflection and inspiration".

However *The Stars Were Aligned for a Century of New Beginnings* initially sounds optimistic, Basim Magdy plays ironically and humorously with the constantly changing cycle of hopes, utopias, and defeats.

While the artist, who was born in 1977 in Assiut (Egypt), and now lives in Basel and Cairo, invites visitors to take a journey into the future, he is primarily concerned with the present. His work, consisting of slide projections, photographs, works on paper and installations combine into a stream of images that reflects the fluid boundaries between reality and virtuality.

“Collective Failure,” says the artist, “has the same relevance as it did in the nineteenth century and as it will in the twenty-second. There is nothing special about our time or what we're witnessing today. We are just naive enough to reenact the same mistakes that were made so many times before.”

Among the works on display is *The Future of Your Head* (2008), a sculpture incorporating a two-way mirror with a message formed out of sparkling Christmas lights, suggests that we can leave behind our self-reflective causal thinking and our anthropocentric worldview.

The significant trilogy of films produced in 2014 (*The Everyday Ritual of Solitude Hatching Monkeys – The Many Colors of the Sky Radiate Forgetfulness – The Dent*) shows, in post-apocalyptic scenarios, that societies are bankrupt, entangled in absurd rituals of preserving the past or megalomaniac projects.

The works on paper, distinguished by their psychedelic colours, show groups of researchers roam between futuristic buildings and radio stations as in *Miniature Existence* (2009), or well-dressed people celebrate the collective failure of a world in which human civilization seems to have come to an end as in *A recollection of Past Errors Manifested as a Crustacean* (2013).

At the centre of the exhibition is Magdy's large-scale 64-part photographic work *An Apology of a Love Story that Crashed into a Whale*. Commissioned for this show, the work impressively illustrates Magdy's handling of photography and text.

However, the installations, films, photographs and drawings of this Egyptian artist emanate a strange tragicomic joy; what makes them so unreal is the use of hypnotic music, acid colours, the old-fashioned flavour of the texts, with which he creates suggested narratives that leave conclusions open. What he tries to do with his work is to propose more open alternatives, free from hierarchies and ideologies.

The way in which he combines text and images, the poetic and sometimes absurd form of his works reveal his view of reality, which invites us to think laterally, accepting contradictions and rejecting dogmas.

Basim Magdy constantly reflects on the movement of images and information, and questions the manner in which we ourselves store and share our memories, a fact that somehow sets our future in predetermined structures. He uses his personal vision of the future as an opportunity to criticise the present, and his surreal humour puts us face to face with what we often reject: the uncertain and uncontrollable.

Basim Magdy

In recent years, Basim Magdy has participated in numerous international group exhibitions, including the Sharjah and Istanbul biennials in 2013 and the Montreal and Biennale MEDIACITY Seoul biennials in 2014. His work was on view at the highly acclaimed exhibitions “Surround Audience: New Museum Triennial 2015” and “Ocean of Images. New Photography 2015” at MoMA in New York.

The press kit and images of the exhibition can be downloaded from the Reserved Area of the Fondazione MAXXI's website at <http://www.fondazionemaxxi.it/area-riservata/> by typing in the password **areariservatamaxxi**

MAXXI – National Museum of XXI Century Arts

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Opening hours: 11 am to 7 pm (Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sun) | 11 am to 10 pm (Saturday) | closed on Mondays.
Free admission for art and architecture students from Tuesday to Friday.

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