

MEDIA RELATIONS

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ENEL CONTEMPORANEA 2009: AN INSTALLATION BY AMERICAN ARTIST DOUG AITKEN ON THE TIBER ISLAND IN ROME

- *The work of art will be on display from October 23rd to November 23rd. Subsequently, it will be donated to the MACRO museum within the framework of a new partnership between Enel and the museum.*
- *Enel Contemporanea is an Enel initiative to promote a series of energy-themed public art projects through installations by artists of international renown, curated by Francesco Bonami*

Rome, October 22nd 2009 – The American artist **Doug Aitken**, winner of the Golden Lion Award at the Venice Biennial in 1999, is the **featured artist of the third Enel Contemporanea**, a public art initiative promoted by Enel and curated by Francesco Bonami. Aitkin's major installation **in Rome on the tip of the Tiber Island** will be on display **from 23 October to 23 November 2009** (www.enelcontemporanea.it). Afterwards, **Enel is donating the installation to the MACRO - Museum of contemporary arts in Rome**, within the framework of a new partnership between Enel and the museum.

"Contemporary art is one way of understanding the society in which we live. As a company that is keenly aware of the context in which it operates, Enel has been promoting contemporary art events for several years now", **said Enel Chairman Piero Gnudi**. "Work by today's artists offers a glimpse of the challenges that we face in the future regarding energy and the environment. We launched the Enel Contemporanea initiative to try and understand – and help others understand – these new challenges through art, while at the same time offering a tangible expression of our corporate culture."

"Doug Aitken's installation and our partnership with Enel Contemporanea are perfect symbols of the new energy that drives the MACRO, a museum that aims to journey to the outer reaches of art, breaking through its own four walls to become increasingly accessible to the surrounding city and the public as an 'expansive' venue for images and a centre for all that is contemporary in Rome", **said Luca Massimo Barbero, Director of MACRO**.

Frontier – the title of Doug Aitken's project – is an open-air video installation in which the artist deploys a stunning crescendo of sounds and images to depict a **visionary journey through the modern world and blur the boundaries between fiction and reality**. The narrative work, featuring famous American painter Ed Ruscha, takes place over the course of a single day. The installation's images issue from multiple screens set within a minimalist, roofless, white, architectural structure, which is punctuated by numerous small windows that emanate a glow of energy. This modern-day "micro-Coliseum" elicits a powerful emotional and multi-sensory response from a video shot in Rome, Los Angeles, Israel and South Africa – a story of everywhere and, at the same

time, of nowhere. **The installation in the Tiber Island is open to the public from October 23rd to November 23rd from 6:00 pm to 11:30 pm. Entrance is free.**

The partnership between Enel and the MACRO (*Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma*) is a new development for the third edition of Enel Contemporanea. The partnership is set to create beneficial synergies for the public and private promotion of contemporary art. Following its recent sponsorship of the 53rd International Art Exhibition, Enel is further consolidating its commitment to art, while at the same time reaffirming its corporate objective of investing in the cultural infrastructure that breathes life into the community – Rome in this case. Enel strongly believes that dynamic organizations with a finger on the nation's pulse are one of the essential drivers of social advancement in any country.

As part of a partnership with MACRO that is set to continue throughout 2010, at the end of its temporary exhibition on the Tiber Island, **Enel is donating Doug Aitken's video installation to become part of the museum's permanent collection.** Furthermore, in conjunction with the new installation on the Tiber Island (from October 23rd to November 23rd 2009), **the MACRO museum is hosting a show dedicated to three years of Enel Contemporanea (2007 to 2009)**, featuring photographs, behind-the-scenes videos, and details of the works produced in previous years: the neon lights and coloured figures of *assume vivid astro focus*, and some of the letters from the work by Patrick Tuttofuoco exhibited in 2007 in Piazza del Popolo, forming the word "Roma", the city that has provided the backdrop to the project since its inception.

For Enel Contemporanea 2009, Doug Aitken has created a work of powerful emotional impact for a site at tip of the Tiber Island. A magical and legendary location in the heart of Rome and the only natural island on the Tiber, *Isola Tiberina* sits on the stretch of the river that separates the famous quarter of Trastevere from the area that includes Piazza Navona and Campo de' Fiori.

Conceived by the artist as an **ideal Energy Room** in which the world created by his images explodes before the viewers' eyes, the installation is based on a series of videos and images that completely envelope the spectator, from above, inside and outside a dedicated architectural structure.

Through the openings on its surface, the architectural structure offers glimpses of fragments of the video showing inside. The story revolves around the journey of a solitary individual played by American painter Ed Ruscha as he travels through a deserted landscape. In the opening scene, the protagonist sits in a darkened movie theatre. He then leaves to begin his walkabout through a near-abandoned city, experiencing a series of initially seemingly insignificant encounters and situations that become gradually more intense, reflecting a profound change that is taking place. The change is symbolized by the final scene, in which Ruscha finds himself surrounded by a crowd of protestors. Suddenly, we return to the initial darkness. Once again, to his astonishment, the solitary protagonist finds himself inside the cinema where the story began.

It is no accident that Enel Contemporanea commissioned Doug Aitken, one of the most innovative contemporary visual artists of the new millennium, for its 2009 edition. Aitken is known and appreciated around the world for narrative installations that combine still images, sound and video. Adopting an incisive, future-oriented approach, Aitken has explored many fields of expression, from video to environmental architecture, using a particularly innovative and far-reaching lexicon that makes him an ideal partner for a company like Enel, which has a strong commitment to research and innovation.

Now in its third edition, Enel Contemporanea is an initiative promoted by the largest electricity supplier in Italy (and Europe's second-largest listed utility company) that involves every year the creation of a series of public art projects on the theme of energy. These projects are commissioned from artists of international renown and curated by Francesco Bonami (www.enelcontemporanea.it).

Previous editions of Enel Contemporanea have featured projects by six internationally-renowned artists: in **2008**, American artist Jeffrey Inaba installed an eco-sustainable waiting room, powered by solar panels, at the Umberto I Polyclinic hospital of Rome (a permanent work); a playful itinerary of images, neon and videos by "assume vivid astro focus" was installed among the ancient ruins of Largo Argentina, in Rome; and a secret garden was created by the A12 group in the Venice lagoon to mark the 11th International Architecture Show at the Venice Biennale. In **2007**, in Rome, Enel Contemporanea presented a large installation/work-in-progress by Italian artist Patrick Tuttofuoco in Piazza del Popolo, as well as an interactive fountain, designed by the Danish artist Jeppe Hein in the Garbatella district, and an evocative lunar eclipse by English artist Angela Bulloch, which was installed above the Ara Pacis.

*Winner of the Golden Lion Award at the Venice Biennale in 1999, **Doug Aitken** (Redondo Beach, California, USA, 1968) is internationally renowned for his works in light, sound and images, such as the video entitled Sleepwalkers, which was projected over the entire façade of MoMA in 2007. Aitken has participated in one-man and group shows at leading art institutions around the globe. Among others, his works have been exhibited in New York at MoMA and the Whitney Museum of American Art, at the Serpentine Gallery in London, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the Musée D'Art Moderne in Paris. Doug Aitken lives and works in Los Angeles (<http://www.dougaitkenworkshop.com/>)*

*A former director of the Venice Biennale (2003), **Francesco Bonami** is currently the curator of the 75th Whitney Biennial of American Art, which will be held at the New York museum in 2010. He is also art director of the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo per l'Arte in Turin, art director of Pitti Immagine Discovery, in Florence, and, since 2008, curator of Enel Contemporanea. He also curated, in collaboration with Alison Gingeras, the inaugural exhibit of the François Pinault collection at the new Punta della Dogana art center and Palazzo Grassi, in Venice. Mondadori recently published his latest book, "Dopotutto non è brutto" (March 2008); "Lo Potevo Fare Anch'io" (2007), an overview of contemporary art, is now in its ninth reprinting. Together with Luca Mastroantonio, he co-authored "Irrazionalpopolare" (pub. by Struzzi di Einaudi). He lives and works in New York.*

The **MACRO** – Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma – is a top-tier museum that has staged group and solo shows by many major international contemporary artists. MACRO has two sites, one in Via Reggio Emilia, currently undergoing an expansion (New MACRO) designed by Odile Decq, and one in Testaccio (MACRO Future). Thanks to the variety of its spaces, the museum offers a broad cross-section of cultural activities as it fulfils its remit of presenting the diversity of the contemporary scene. MACRO reopened on 16 May 2009 under the direction of Luca Massimo Barbero (www.macro.roma.museum).

ENEL is Italy's largest power company and Europe's second-largest utility by installed capacity. Enel produces and sells electricity and gas across Europe, North America and Latin America. Following the acquisition of the Spanish utility Endesa, Enel now has a presence in 23 countries with more than 95,000 MW of generating capacity, serving over 60 million electricity and gas customers. Listed on the Milan stock exchange since 1999, Enel has more shareholders than any other Italian company, with some 1.3 million investors.

ENEL CONTEMPORANEA 2009 (THIRD EDITION):

*A series of public art projects dedicated to different forms of energy.
Curator: Francesco Bonami.*

DOUG AITKEN

Frontier

23 October – 23 November 2009

Rome, Tiber Island (Ponte Fabricio)

Then at the MACRO, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma

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