

The digital world within the mind. Lucca hosts Rachel Lee Hovnanian's exhibition

The Church of San Cristoforo hosts the multimedia installation created by the American artist. The exhibition will be on from August 7 to September 6. Admission is free.

Friday August 7 at 7 pm in the splendid setting of the Church of San Cristoforo in Lucca's historic centre (Via Fillungo), the exhibition titled "Dinner for two" created by the American artist Rachel Lee Hovnanian will open its doors. The exhibition, curated by Annalisa Bugliani and Alessandro Romanini, consists of an articulated multimedia installation conceived by the American artist to stimulate reflections on the "zeitgeist" concept and on the current state of human relations. Above all, the work celebrates the power of art to awaken consciences and to act as a stimulus and as a guiding force during the dark times of civilization. Based on an intensely humanistic approach and conceived with acute and eerie foresight in 2012, the "Dinner for Two" installation illustrates to the viewer the consequences of the alienation produced by compulsive use of the technological devices, enhanced during this historical juncture by the recent social distancing imposed by the pandemic. The installation housed in the central nave of the 9th century church is presented based on a site-specific dynamic that allows it to adapt to the exhibition space, as demonstrated in the artist's recent exhibition hosted at the Southampton Art Center in New York in 2020.

A sumptuously set table, the archetypal symbol of conviviality and a fulcrum of human interactions, hosts two diners in the form of digital video, who, despite the ritual sharing of the meal, are immersed in a silent isolation interrupted only by the notification sounds of their smartphones. "Since the start of her artistic career – explain the two curators Annalisa Bugliani and Alessandro Romanini –, Rachel Lee Hovnanian's work has focused in a militant way on the ramifications caused by technological means of communication, on the structural fragility of society, undermined by an unbridled hedonism and by the pervasive narcissism characteristic of our media-driven civilization; phenomena that has exploded in a macroscopic manner with the recent pandemic and the social distancing that has been imposed". The exhibition illustrates these dynamics and helps us reflect on the phenomena amplified by the technological development of mass media and social networks, already

highlighted in prophetic texts such as David Riesman's "The Lonely Crowd" published in 1950 and analysed in ground-breaking essays like Marshal McLuhan's "The medium is the message" published in 1967 or that published a year later by the French philosopher Guy Debord titled "The Society of the Spectacle", which highlights the ability of the technological media to exert a very powerful lure on people, hypnotising us into a "narcissistic stupor". "The American artist stimulates an active attitude in visitors, freed from the passive contemplation characteristic of mass media, once again bringing into focus – the two curators conclude –, the power of art and culture, to guide us in the winters of the spirit and the separation of bodies".

Rachel Lee Hovnanian's exhibition, "Dinner for two", will be on from August 7 to September 6 in the Church of San Cristoforo in Via Fillungo, in Lucca. Opening hours are Tuesday to Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm and from 6 pm to 11 pm. Admission is free. Visitors must comply with current anti-Covid rules such as maintaining physical distances and the use of masks.

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BIO – Rachel Lee Hovnanian

Born in West Virginia and raised in Houston, Texas, Rachel Lee Hovnanian is a New York-based artist whose multidisciplinary approach explores the intricacies of modern feminism, the ideals of perfection and the effects of media on the collective consciousness. She attended the University of Texas, Austin, where she received a Bachelor of Fine Arts. During her artistic career, Rachel Lee Hovnanian has participated in solo and group exhibitions in the United States, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Her works can be found in many private, corporate and museum collections. www.rachelleehovnanian.com

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