

International Artist Bosco Sodi Presents Public Sculpture Event in Washington Square Park, New York

MAY 23, 2021



(NEW YORK, NY) May 18, 2021 - Studio Bosco Sodi and Kasmin are pleased to announce *Tabula Rasa*, a public artwork and performance by international artist Bosco Sodi (b. Mexico City, 1970). Enacted over a single day on May 23, 2021, *Tabula Rasa* will begin at dawn in Washington Square Park, New York, with the installation of 439 small-scale clay spheres.

On view from 9am–1pm, the artwork will begin a second phase at 1pm, when New Yorkers passing through Washington Square Park will be invited to take home a single clay sphere from the installation, a gesture which allows each person to become a part of the performance. At sunset, once each of the works has been claimed by the participating public, the performance will come to a close.

The clay spheres comprising the artwork will be handmade by the artist, symbolizing one day of the COVID-19 pandemic's duration. Bringing indigenous Mexican agricultural practices to the United States, the spheres are vessels for new life, containing within them three types of seed—corn, squash, and bean—which sustain and nourish one another, finding an equilibrium that provides

balanced sustenance. A potent metaphor for the necessity of cooperation and mutual assistance in times of need, these symbiotic plants encourage reflection on our own interdependence and reliance on both one another and also, crucially, on the natural world we inhabit.

Those who take the spheres home will be able to plant them in soil, activating another phase of the work during which the seeds will germinate and continue on into the cycle of life and death. Loaded with symbolism concerning new beginnings, transformation, and creative possibility, Sodi's *Tabula Rasa* is an offering, a gesture that acts to bring together the diverse individuals that make up the city's community as New York embarks on a second year of uncertainty and disruption.



Continuing Sodi's engagement in publicly-sited sculpture and representative of his abiding interest in organic processes beyond human control, *Tabula Rasa* translates from Latin to "clean slate"—an opportunity to start over without prejudice. Sodi's belief that "Life will always prevail" is fundamental to *Tabula Rasa*, which is both a public artwork and a performance by the public, timed to coincide with the last frosts of winter as the city emerges into spring.

This is the artist's second installation in Washington Square Park. *Tabula Rasa* is envisaged as a second chapter to *Muro*, a work by Sodi presented in the same location in New York in 2017, which was later exhibited outside London's National Theatre as part of the city's annual Art Night celebrations in 2018. For the piece, Sodi invited the public to dismantle an 8-meter long wall, constructed with 1,600 unique clay timbers that Sodi fired by hand at his studio in Oaxaca, México, with the help of local craftsman. The act of deconstructing this temporary wall, made and installed by Mexicans, rebuked the concurrent moves to limit border crossing into the United States and symbolized the breaking down of barriers between the two countries.

Clay's ancient resonance and material simplicity appeal to Sodi, whose ongoing dialogue with nature and landscape has been shaped by his interests in Japanese aesthetics and Abstract Expressionism. This elemental material, formed of water, air, fire, and earth, contains within it the very essence of life. Its ephemerality, the ability to be completed reshaped by its atmosphere, speaks to both adaptability and perseverance. The discovery of clay as one of the elementary materials for humankind's utilitarian and creative production constitutes in itself the revelation of a primary object. Historically, the development of the use of clay has been key in the cognitive transformation of the *homo sapiens*, giving rise to a system of construction of practical tools and habitable buildings. Its simple and modest quality has given rise to artistic and spiritual representations in ancient civilizations, and in particular, pre-Columbian cultures in Mexico. Sodi's ongoing championing of clay as a fine art medium places him in the lineage of Arte Povera, Preindustrial Minimalism, and Land Art—post-war movements which emphasized, respectively, radically simple materials and an integral relationship between art and earth.

Sodi has exhibited his work internationally and throughout the United States. His works are in significant public and private collections including: Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C; Harvard Art Museums, Boston; JUMEX Collection, México; Museum Voorlinden, Netherlands; Contemporary Art Foundation, Japan; Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgium; The National Gallery of

Victoria, Australia; The Scottish National Gallery of Art, Edinburgh, Scotland; The Museum of Modern Art, Gunma, Japan; and Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig, Germany.



In late 2020, Pioneer Works presented an exhibition of Sodi's titled *Perfect Bodies*, an installation of large-scale clay spheres in a disused autobody lot in Red Hook, NY. Sodi is the subject of upcoming solo exhibitions at the Dallas Museum of Art, TX, in 2021, and at USF Contemporary Art Museum, Tampa, FL, in 2022. Previous notable exhibitions include *Perfect Bodies*, Pioneer Works, New York (2020); *Ergo Sum*, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain (2020); *Topographies*, Mexican Cultural Institute, Washington D.C. (2019); *Del Fuego*, Museum of Visual Arts (MAVI), *Santiago* (2018); *Por los siglos de los siglos*, Museo Nacional de Arte, México City (2017); *ELEMENTAL*, Museo Anahuacalli, México City (2017); *Museum of Stones*, The Noguchi Museum, New York (2015); Croacia, Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM), Valencia; and *Pangea*, Bronx Museum, New York (2010).

Sodi is also the founder of Fundación Casa Wabi, an art center in Oaxaca, México dedicated to promoting the exchange of ideas between international artists of different disciplines. Designed by Japanese architect Tadao Ando, the foundation develops opportunities for art education with local communities.

Images: Photography by John Rohrer. Courtesy Studio Bosco Sodi.

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