

ESPACIO FUNDACIÓN TELEFÓNICA PRESENTS THE RETROSPECTIVE 'JAUME PLENSA. INNER MATTER', A REFLECTION ON THE HUMAN CONDITION

- The exhibition covers more than 30 years of Jaume Plensa's career, from the early 1990s to the present day, with sculptural pieces such as *Glückauf?*, *La Neige Rouge*, *Invisibles* and the female faces of *Rui Rui's Words* or *Maria*. Through them, the artist explores concepts such as identity, the human condition and communication.
- In 2024, Plensa created *Iris*, a symbol of the power of communication and human connection; a work that aims to be the legacy of Telefónica's Centenary. The monumental piece can be visited at the company's headquarters and has become part of the Telefónica Art Collection. A model of this sculpture can be seen at the beginning of the exhibition.
- Jaume Plensa is one of the most important voices in the current art scene, one of the most renowned sculptors and a pioneer in interventions in the public space. His work can be found in more than fourteen countries around the world. He has received numerous awards, including the National Award for Plastic Arts (Spain) and the Velázquez Award for Plastic Arts (Spain).

Madrid, 15 October 2024. After more than two decades since the last solo show dedicated to Jaume Plensa in Madrid, Espacio Fundación Telefónica presents an exhibition that gathers fifteen works by the artist. 'Jaume Plensa. Inner Matter' can be seen on the 3rd floor, from 17 October 2024 to 4 May 2025.

The exhibition covers more than 30 years of the Catalan artist's career, from the early 1990s to the present day, and explores from different perspectives the profound reflection on the human condition that runs through his entire body of work. By means of abstract and conceptual expressions in his early works, to more figurative and sensual representations in his most recent proposals, the selection of fifteen pieces delves into recurring themes of his artistic universe such as identity, the fragility of the human condition, the ephemeral, spirituality, silence, communication and language.

The documentary film *¿Puedes oírme?* [Can you hear me?] (2020) by Pedro Ballesteros, about his creative process, his personality and his work philosophy, together with a mural photograph of his studio entitled *Landscape of Jaume Plensa* (2018) and the model of *Iris* (2024), give the first welcoming touches to the exhibition. They are followed by *Self-Portrait, (72 kg)* (1993) and the three etchings *Self-Portrait I, II and III* (1998), in which the artist gathers data on his body weight and physical build at a specific moment in his life, thereby generating a metaphor about identity, physical presence and the relationship between the body and the environment.

Concepts that he also explores in the sculptural series *Silence* (2016) where, through seven female faces arranged on wooden beams, he evokes the diversity and similarities of human identity, and asks us to reflect on who we are as individuals and as part of a wider community.

Continuing with the notions of body and identity, we find *Love Sounds* (1998), an installation made up of five alabaster booths in which Plensa recreates the sound of his blood flow, encouraging visitors to discover the sound of their own body; and *Invisibles* (2016), where he represents the metamorphosis of the human being with three unfinished faces, made of steel mesh, which appear suspended in the air, pierced by light and stopped in time. These faces are joined by the iconic female sculptures with closed eyes, *Maria* (2018) and *Rui Rui's Words* (2021), where the artist delves into the beauty and inner world of the human being, in a call for contemplation and introspection.

In the early 1980s, his interest in volume and space led him to explore the technique of iron casting, creating sculptures with cuts and folds. Later, in 1986, he added new materials such as glass and resin, while incorporating new combinations of lights and sounds. One of the constants in Plensa's career is precisely the prominence of the materials and their work, which he endows with new meanings to turn them into instruments capable of transforming the space around them. For him, the material becomes a vehicle; according to him, the real materials of sculpture are ideas. An example of this is *La Neige Rouge* (1991), where cast iron is transformed into light and energy, freeing itself from all heaviness and opacity, to connect directly with the viewer in a new spatial relationship between the two of them.

This transformative quality that he lends to materials is echoed in another fundamental element of his artistic repertoire: water. Along with his deep connection to the notions of life, change and movement, Plensa uses water as a narrative vehicle in works such as *Freud's Children* (2001-2002), a series of sculptures that he spreads throughout the room, as if they were islands scattered in the ocean. Each consists of fragmented hands or faces in contact with water, through which the artist evokes the fractured human psyche, misery and trauma, but also the healing and purifying power that emanates from water. Together with it, sound and light often become other essential elements in his work. In *The Secret Heart* (2014), a heart painted in white bronze stands as an homage to the text *Das Geheimherz der Uhr* [The secret heart of the clock] by Elias Canetti. Plensa accompanies the installation with a clock featuring the voices of a multitude of men and women from the city of Augsburg, following the actual passing of seconds, minutes and hours.

Language, communication and the use of the word are other themes that run through Plensa's artistic universe. Examples of this can be found in *Glückauf?* (2004), a succession of curtains of letters that literally recreate the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights and that invite the visitor to walk through them, while enveloping them and transforming the abstract notion of language into a tangible, tactile work of great poetic beauty; as well as *Il suono del sangue parla la stessa lingua* (2004), where the artist also focuses on the importance of language and words as symbols of human connection. In this case, a combination of light, colour and sound comes to life through a red cloud projection in which different letters of the world's alphabets intermingle and fade away.

With his work *Lilliput* (2012-2020), Plensa once again explores language and repetition — this time in the form of chaos — through a network of nine figures and letters made of bronze with stainless steel, rope and paint, which reveal the interior space, where words have an open meaning and are still thoughts. Another of his most recent pieces that deals with this theme of

language is *Iris* (2024), a symbol of the power of communication and human connection; a work created and produced by Jaume Plensa, as a legacy of Telefónica's Centenary, which can be seen in Telefónica District (the company's headquarters) and whose model can be admired in the exhibition. Meanwhile, silence, understood as a key human need, is also expressed here in pieces such as *Who are You? I-VIII* (2016), where eight small bronze figures cover the organs representing the senses, to offer a call to introspection and contemplation in this noisy world.

Recognised as one of the most important voices on the current art scene, Plensa has received numerous awards, including the National Prize for Plastic Arts (Spain), the Velázquez Prize for Plastic Arts (Spain) and the Chevalier Medal of the Order of Arts and Letters awarded by the French Ministry of Culture.

He is known for his monumental sculptures and his innovative use of materials such as iron, glass, stainless steel, alabaster and resin. His work forms part of some of the most prestigious international collections and is regularly exhibited in museums and public spaces around the world. The Palacio de Velázquez, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and the Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno have hosted some of the artist's previous exhibitions in Spain.

ACTIVITIES PARALLEL TO THE EXHIBITION

GENERAL PUBLIC:

- Guided tours for individuals on Wednesdays and Fridays at 12:00 and 17:00, and on Saturdays at 12:00, by prior reservation on the Espacio Fundación Telefónica website.
- Guided tours for groups by appointment (limited capacity) with prior booking by e-mail.
- Guided tours for groups with special needs (limited capacity) with prior booking by email and also through the ACERCA CULTURA platform <https://www.apropacultura.org/es/madrid>

FAMILIES:

Workshops for families with children from 6 to 12 years old on Saturdays and/or Sundays from 11:30 to 13:30, from January 2025.

SCHOOLS:

Guided tours from Tuesday to Friday, from 10:00 for schoolchildren of all educational stages.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

All our exhibitions have a series of resources to support the visit and the contents of the exhibition: the **exhibition guide**, which has an easy-to-read version, both available for download in the exhibition hall itself and at <https://espacio.fundaciontelefonica.com/descargas/> as well as the **audio guide** to the exhibition, in Spanish and English, accessible from any mobile device with an internet connection.

More information about the parallel programme to the exhibition, resources and activity bookings can be found at: <https://espacio.fundaciontelefonica.com/>