

Maria Cristina Finucci
Help, The Age of Plastic

Wasteland three years on: Fondazione Terzo Pilastro-Italia e Mediterraneo brings the exhibition to the Isle of Mozia

Isle of Mozia (Trapani)
Opening: 24 September 2016
25 September 2016 – 8 January 2017

**Promoted and produced by Fondazione Terzo Pilastro – Italia e Mediterraneo
in collaboration with Fondazione Whitaker**

From 25 September to 8 January, the **monumental installation** *Help, The age of Plastic*, conceived by the artist **Maria Cristina Finucci**, will be exhibited on the Isle of Mozia, which lies off the western coast of Sicily in the Stagnone Lagoon of Marsala (in the province of Trapani). The work consists of more than five million used coloured plastic bottle tops that have been manually assembled and placed in metal cages to create a set of three-dimensional rectangular letters spelling out the word HELP. The letters, each of which is four metres high, are plotted across approximately 1,500 square metres of ground. Set in the archaeological site of the island, the installation makes an immediate visual and conceptual impact that invites the spectator to draw parallels between the ancient Phoenician ruins on which it is overlaid and the far more pervasive and polluting relics of our contemporary society.

The installation is being promoted and produced by **Fondazione Terzo Pilastro – Italia e Mediterraneo** with the collaboration of **Fondazione Whitaker** as part of ***Wasteland - The Garbage Patch State***, a project directed by **Paola Pardini**, which began in 2013 and has been evolving ever since with the involvement of international bodies, companies, charitable and cultural associations and universities. **Università Roma Tre** and, especially, **Università degli Studi di Palermo** have both been instrumental to the setting up of the Mozia installation by mustering a human chain of committed volunteers to gather the plastic materials on a vast scale.

Maria Cristina Finucci uses the expressive and radical language of art to raise civil society's awareness of the "Garbage Patch", the vast islands of plastic floating on the oceans of the planet. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the US calculates that these floating islands of refuse, which are 90% made up of discarded plastic, will eventually occupy a "land mass" of around 16 million square kilometres. **On 11 April 2013 in Paris**, at the **UNESCO** Headquarters, the artist symbolically **inaugurated the "Garbage Patch State"** as a full-fledged country with its own national flag, constitution, laws and embassies. The proclamation of statehood is both the final objective of the artist's project and its most innovative creative element. Finucci's intention is to give material form to a fleeting phenomenon, namely the corrosion of the plastic by the sea and its disintegration into the water in the form of micro-particulates. The installation seeks to fix an image of the Garbage Patch and galvanize public opinion by using matter, space and time to point to the existence of this "state", which would otherwise remain invisible to the eye. Only in this way, can we begin to come to terms with the threat that this phenomenon poses.

"Linking art with the landscape, archaeology, and, especially, with the most momentous questions that occupy the thoughts of the general public, is by no means a simple enterprise. This is precisely why Fondazione Terzo Pilastro, which has long strived to find answers to the vexing questions surrounding these issues, finds itself in perfect accord with the artistic proposal that Maria Cristina Finucci has made with her *Wasteland* project," declared Professor Emmanuele F. M. Emanuele, President of Fondazione Terzo Pilastro – Italia e Mediterraneo, adding: **"Finucci's project is more than a simple protest, it is also a concrete act aimed at preventing the Garbage Patch from**

continuing to grow and destroy the ecosystem on which our civilization is founded. Not only does Fondazione Terzo Pilastro echo her cry for “HELP”, but it has also for many years advocated for the resolute defence of every aspect of the beauty, history and culture of the Mediterranean Basin. Personally, I feel deeply involved in this project, which dovetails with the principles of ethical behaviour in which I have been brought up to believe since my childhood in this very territory.”

Art installations treating of this very contemporary emergency have been exhibited in various cities of the world: in Paris, in the central pavilion of UNESCO (2013) and again at the World Climate Conference (2015); in Venice, at the Art Biennale (2013 and 2014); in Madrid (2014); in Rome, at the Museum of Twenty-First Century Art (Maxxi) (2014); in New York, at the UN Headquarters (2014); and in Milan, at the Universal Exposition (Expo) of 2015.

Help, The Age of Plastic is accompanied by a publication, edited by Giuseppe Barbieri and Silvia Burini and published by Terraferma containing critical texts as well as images of the work on the Isle of Mozia.

Maria Cristina Finucci is an architect and artist. She is the creator of *Wasteland - The Garbage Patch State*.

Paola Pardini is director of the *Wasteland - The Garbage Patch State* project.

www.garbagepatchstate.org

Fondazione Terzo Pilastro – Italia e Mediterraneo

Fondazione Terzo Pilastro – Italia e Mediterraneo is a private non-profit institution that promotes and supports projects and initiatives in the fields of health, scientific research, assistance to vulnerable sectors of society, education and training, and art and culture. It sponsors and organises exhibitions, conferences and international events in furtherance of intercultural dialogue between the peoples of the Mediterranean and between the global North and South. Fondazione Terzo Pilastro – Italia e Mediterraneo’s motivating idea is that the traditional focus on the development and social betterment of the local territory needs to be broadened to encompass a global vision of the most urgent issues of the contemporary world, regarding which it wants to serve as a hub of creative ideas and proposals.

www.fondazioneterzopilastro.it

Fondazione Whitaker

Fondazione Giuseppe Whitaker (the Giuseppe Whitaker Foundation), which enjoys the patronage of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, was set up in 1975 to promote cultural activities in Sicily, with particular reference to the study of Phoenician culture, and to preserve the historical and artistic treasures of the island of Mozia and those of Villa Malfitano, a house that is a museum in its own right. Mozia, which covers 40 hectares in the Marsala Lagoon (*Stagnone*), is also home to an archaeological museum recently expanded with EU funds.

www.fondazionewhitaker.it

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