

Press Release

The Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi is pleased to announce the solo exhibition by international artist Maria-Veronica Leon, TASAAMU/Tolerance, The Perpetual Sense of Tolerance and Peace, from October 13th to November 7th 2019 which is in alignment with the university's strategy to establish the values and principles advocated by the U.A.E.'s wise leadership. After her success at the "56 Biennale di Venezia" and MACRO, Museum of Contemporary Art in Rome, the artist, who lived and worked in Paris from 1998 to 2013, and now is based in U.A.E., will showcase a new body of artworks in relation to tolerance, including as well selected artworks from "56 Biennale di Venezia" in synchronization with this subject. TASAAMU/Tolerance aims to celebrate the Year of Tolerance in a contemporary artistic way that incites minds to assimilate the different dimensions of this concept.

Inspired by the greatest women and men leaders of Peace and Tolerance in History, whose lives and missions helped their societies to understand human rights and make them a reality, the exhibition explores the historical transcendence of tolerance and its multiple appropriations in diverse cultures and societies through different generations. The artist says: "Being for the first time in 2019 in United Arab Emirates the Year of Tolerance, a unique historical moment for its History, I go first to the universal source of this progressive state of mind, foregrounding the light of one of the greatest writers on tolerance in History, the universal call for the understanding of this virtue, Voltaire and his prodigious 18 century book: "Treatise on Toleration", to create a corpus of artworks dedicated to the review, assimilation and rising of this ambitious aim in United Arab Emirates, tolerance". This journey take us to our new generations and times, where the U.A.E. leaders are making this concept alive through their continuous efforts to create a contemporary State that is open and tolerant. The presence of Voltaire and Sheikh Zayed in the work of the artist as universal leaders for tolerance and hosts personalities of TASAAMU/Tolerance reinforce the dialogue between Western and Eastern World, contributing to one of the fundamental objectives of Sorbonne University: bridging civilizations.

The multidisciplinary artist plays with scale and functions, transforming electronic and material objects into what she calls: "techno structures and landscapes" and "explosive galaxies or cyber dissolutions collages". Multiple techniques: drawings, collages, portraits, paintings, art videos, digital photography and audio-visual installations create a prolific avant-garde scenario. The exhibition itinerary starts, -since the artist considers diseased and disable people as the most tolerant of tolerants-, with the First Room: Mother Teresa's Room, the visitors come to terms with a portrait of Mother Teresa of Calcutta displayed in an installation with her patients in an "hospital room"; a gallery of patients in different medias; medical devices, pills and hospital appliances related to the process of healing. Second Room: Mahatma Gandhi's Room, a notable installation of Mahatma Gandhi' office, in which amidst his office furniture, his portrait and his bureau, from which we see a slideshow projection of chapters of his life, -images that comes from today's Gandhi Museum commemorative exhibition in New Delhi for his 150-birth anniversary-, reflecting the tolerant and pacific actions with which he got India's Independence. This room is a reference as well of the important presence of Indian population in U.A.E. The Third Room, Sheikh Zayed's Room projects the strong presence of the Father of the Nation and his vision of the U.A.E. future through his portrait and the spirit of the new Emiratis generations, contemporary symbols of development, knowledge and progress are displayed in different artworks; women having important roles in society, a vision that give a great taste of the contemporary tendencies and practices of the economy; solar energy and cyber-structures, technology and nature giving appointment each other to represent the diversity of the U.A.E. The Fourth Room, The Artist's Room is about tolerance seen through the eyes of an artist/philosopher, who reviews Art History inspired by "Les Enfants Terribles" by Philip Glass, and identifies intolerance related to innumerable artists and their artistic and personal practices, those that have been astonishing the world, like Van Gogh's cut ear. Maria-Veronica focuses on these characters and their usual ruptures of the codes, models and convictions, representing deafness and blindness in front of the irreverent voices, excessive and abusive exigencies of technology and the system, and breaking informatics equipment like TVs, phones, computers, she shows her "techno-assemblages", "techno structures and landscapes" and "explosive galaxies or cyber dissolutions collages", video and voices join the show.

You may find yourself jumping back and forth among works, parsing similarities but mostly fine differences of scale, material and technical, the shift between these rooms and presences bring up the idea, as Maria-Veronica says, of a "Virtual Congress of Minds working for Peace and Tolerance through History". One looks into one presence, the other into another, and our gaze is guided to alternate between these four rooms in astonishment. Facing us, we find mirrors as part of the Dynamics of Tolerance"; in these works, we also see the "gaze" of the artist: abstract landscapes in a suggestion of realities and fantastic interpretations, in which we navigate through Tolerance, allowing us to raise many questions now that United Arab Emirates has become a multicultural platform. There is footage to be watched, audio to be listened to, texts to be read and documentary evidence to be sifted through before you start to discover the point, and that point is emphatically humanist. The artist dedicates this project to her father, all youth, students, U.A.E. residents and citizens who are evolving in this important historical moment of the U.A.E. and contributing to the development of the U.A.E., consecrating workshops to the students of Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi.