



Comune di Roma



Museo dell'Ara Pacis

Press release

## A WORK FOR THE ARA PACIS

### MIMMO PALADINO MUSIC BY BRIAN ENO

*Two great protagonists of contemporary art and music  
together again in Rome for a site-specific event designed for the Ara Pacis Museum  
managed by Achille Bonito Oliva, James Putnam e Federica Pirani*

*Rome March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008*

**From March 11<sup>th</sup> to May 11<sup>th</sup> 2008, the first site-specific event organised for the Ara Pacis Museum, the exhibition/event "A work for the Ara Pacis. Mimmo Paladino | Music by Brian Eno"** – managed by *Achille Bonito Oliva, James Putnam and Federica Pirani*, under the auspices of *Comune di Roma, Assessorato alle Politiche Culturali Sovraintendenza ai Beni Culturali* and organised by *Zètema Progetto Cultura* in line with *Valentina Bonomo's* project – will be an opportunity for the two unquestioned protagonists of contemporary culture to meet again and work together after almost 10 years since their first joint project at the London Round House in 1999.

The idea for "A Work for the Ara Pacis" is to create a **single installation reconciling two different forms of art – Paladino's figurative art and Eno's music – and have it specifically designed for the Ara Pacis Museum.**

The project is further completed by the catalogue for the event edited by *Gli Ori, Prato*, and also titled: "A Work for the Ara Pacis. Mimmo Paladino | Music by Brian Eno". More than 160 pages (in English and in Italian alike) of critical essays and pictures, including some extraordinary photographs taken by **Ferdinando Scianna**, who personally documented and followed every step of the exhibition. The critical essays include *Ara Artis* by Achille Bonito Oliva and *Paladino/Eno at Ara Pacis* by James Putnam. Besides, Federica Pirani's interview with the Italian artist gave life to *A conversation with Mimmo Paladino*. The following also contributed to the catalogue: Ferdinando Scianna with *Necessity and beauty*, Valentina Bonomo with *Development of a project*,

Paolo Zaccagnini with *Eno: the music of the mind* – a touching and personal portrait of the artist, whom he had the chance to meet and interview several times – and Michael Bracewell with *A brief introduction to Brian Eno's generative music*. The catalogue ends with a detailed section on the two artists, biographies, résumés, bibliography.

*«The most interesting aspect of this exhibition at Ara Pacis, - explains **Federica Pirani in Conversazione con Mimmo Paladino** - apart of course from the ineludable relationship with the site and the symbolic and historic significance of the archaeological monument, is the overall scale of the intervention. The different works can be contemplated individually. Each one, in fact, displays a particular aptitude for occupying its space and for catching the light. When considered together, however, they form the elements of a dialogue, of an initiatory itinerary towards the most sacred place, the niche below the Ara, the "secret chamber". Appearing on the walls here, as if they have emerged in the wake of a shamanistic ritual, are archetypal signs and figures that need to be deciphered and interpreted. The whole work is conceived, then, as a single, complex installation that interacts with the spaces filled with the music of Brian Eno.»*

**Mimmo Paladino** – who participated in 1980 in the Venice Biennale under the section "Aperto '80" of Achille Bonito Oliva, one of the ultimate exponents of the Transavantgarde, chosen in 2003 to represent Italian art during the six month of Italian rotating presidency in Brussels, author and director of the feature film "El Quijote" in 2005 – and **Brian Eno** - a self-described non-musician, who coined the term "Generative Music" a precursor of the New Age, as well as a video-artist, polinstrumentalist, sculptor, painter and philosopher of music - have given life to **a unique work designed specifically for the Ara Pacis Museum**, which after only 2 years from its opening (21<sup>th</sup> April 2006) **has become one of the hits of the Eternal City**.

But that's not all. The Ara Pacis Museum is the first contemporary work of art that has ever been built in the historic centre of Rome since the 1940s. And for this reason, which adds to its strategic position and the allure of such a combination of old and new, it is the ideal place to celebrate first-rate contemporary art, as testified by the excellent work of Brian Eno and Mimmo Paladino.

*«A short circuit of complementary sensibility is triggered between Mimmo Paladino and Brian Eno, – says **Achille Bonito Oliva in his essay Ara Artis** - with the former bringing with him the whole Western tradition, ranging from Lombard, Gothic and Baroque sculpture to the historic avant-garde movements, and the latter in turn contributing a sensibility associated with the history of concrete music, which starts with Cage and is steeped in an oriental tradition of sound. In this way it seems that the interweaving between East and West has the capacity to liquify the image in music, and that in turn sound is concretized in iconography.»*

In the Ara Pacis Museum, **Mimmo Paladino** "marks" the surface and offers a new viewpoint to the beholder, from which to **compare Richard Meier's architecture and the monumentality of the Ara pacis, so rich of contamination**. This is especially true for the huge round sculpture, a ring of steel, which surrounds the Ara Pacis and will be also visible from the Lungotevere. *«Like the 'o' of Giotto, but three dimensional, - goes on Achille Bonito Oliva - Paladino's sculpture faces up, in terms of proportion, harmony and symmetry, to the whole Ara Pacis construction, serving as an introduction to the intertwining of expressive idioms and the interdisciplinary duet between Mimmo Paladino and Brian Eno that takes place on the floor below.»*

The highlight of the installation is actually in the exhibition hall underneath Ara Pacis monument, where visitors will have the chance to be involved and wrapped up in a ravishing scenario, marked by **light and shade, black and white** – except for a **red light** shed by the frescoes on the walls of the central hall, right underneath Ara Pacis monument – **sound and silence**. It is right here that **Brian Eno aims to create a music environment with no lyrics, no melody, no rhythm and no repetitions**. *«One of its most intriguing and appealing aspects - as reinforced by*

**James Putnam in his essay *Paladino/Eno at Ara Pacis* - is that you don't know what it's going to be and it will be different every time you hear it.»**

Sculptures, frescoes, engravings and other works of art by Mimmo Paladino. New sound and music composed by Brian Eno right for this event, played by portable radios and loudspeakers designed by the musician himself.

*«Although bringing together the two very diverse talents of Mimmo Paladino and Brian Eno to create a project for Ara Pacis might seem an unusual idea, these artists are not worlds apart. – says James Putnam - Apart from being born in the same year (1948) and studying fine art during the 1960s, by the end of the 1970s they were both experimenting with works made up from a combination of repeated elements or motifs. Most significantly they can both see a relationship between visual art and the art of sounds. Eno has compared his music to sculpture, as something tangible in space that can be shaped with a repeatable temporal dimension. And Paladino believes that the creation of music from the harmony of tones is parallel to the creation of art from the harmony of forms.»*

Brian Eno's music and sounds, rather than giving voice to Paladino's sculptures and works, are fully independent from them, albeit very close. Contrary to traditional compositions, where all the sounds follow a pre-designed schedule, Eno works on music levels which are constantly moving in space, disconnected one from another. *«His objective - goes on Putnam - has been to create a piece of music that animates Paladino's sculpture, releasing something buried deep within it and evoking an aura of endless continuity and coherence throughout the installation.»*

Both Eno and Paladino start from the assumption that their works need de-structuring by reiterating the typical modules of their creative inspiration. **By dilating and compressing individual sounds and tunes, and putting together different fragments, the two artists reach a total harmony: "A Work for the Ara Pacis".**

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