

Jannis Kounellis

Jannis Kounellis was born in 1936 in Piraeus, Greece. He studied at Athens University before leaving his native country for Italy in 1956. In Rome, he attended courses at the Academy of Arts, notably those taught by the Italian painter and poet Toti Scialoja.

In the 1950s, Jannis Kounellis produced his first paintings. In 1959-61, he represented letters, signs and numbers on unusual materials such as wood and newsprint. Gradually, he developed the use of simple, industrial materials: iron, cotton, coal, wood, fire, jute, etc. These elements, often linked to the world of work, were contrastingly used according to their physical or semantic opposites. Through his works, materials or opposing notions are brought into tension: soft and hard, tar and steel, industrial and agrarian, steel and jute. From the 1970s onwards, the artist added a theatrical and musical dimension to his work and designed several opera sets. Using organic, mineral or animal substances, he created true dramatic stagings. Produced on a monumental scale, these installations fully immerse the viewer, making them an actor in the event. He is considered one of the key figures of Arte Povera.

Kounellis first took part in the Venice Biennale in 1972. The same year saw a solo exhibition in several European museums - at the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London and the Caja de Pensiones in Madrid. In 1980, he exhibited at the Musée National d'Art Moderne de la Ville in Paris; the CAPC in Bordeaux devoted a major exhibition to him in 1985, and the following year the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago presented a major exhibition of his works.

His work can be found in several major museums in Europe, Asia and America. During the early years of the 21st century, Kounellis held a series of exhibitions in Europe, such as at the Monnaie de Paris in 2016, as well as in Russia, Mexico and China, where he created spectacular site-specific installations at every opportunity. Jannis Kounellis died on 16 February 2017, in Rome.

Solo shows (selection)

2024

La stanza vede. Disegni 1973-1990, Museo Novecento, Florence, Italy

2023

Jannis Kounellis in Six Acts, Fundacion Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico

2022

Jannis Kounellis in Six Acts, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, United States

Galerie Lelong & Co.

Paris – New York

2019

Les Manteaux, Galerie Lelong & Co., Paris, France

Jannis Kounellis, Fondazione Prada, Venice, Italy

2018

In Memoriam, HEART - Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Herning, Denmark

Boîtes, Galerie Lelong & Co., Paris, France

2017

In Be'er Sheva, Negev Museum of Art, Beersheba, Israel

2016

Jannis Kounellis, Monnaie de Paris, Paris, France

Jannis Kounellis, Centro Arti Visive Pescheria, Pesaro, Italy

Relámpagos sobre México, Museo Espacio, Aguascalientes, Mexico

2015

Jannis Kounellis, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Étienne, Saint-Etienne, France

2014

Jannis Kounellis, Galerie Lelong, Paris, France

Jannis Kounellis, Salone degli Incanti | Ex Pescheria, Trieste, Italy

2013

Heritage Hunters, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Middlesbrough, United Kingdom

Jannis Kounellis, Parasol unit, London, United Kingdom

2012

Jannis Kounellis, Blain|Southern, Berlin, Germany

Jannis Kounellis, Kunstmuseum Kloster unserer lieben Frauen, Magdeburg, Germany

Jannis Kounellis, Museum am Dom, Würzburg, Germany

Jannis Kounellis, Museum Kurhaus, Kleve, Germany

Jannis Kounellis, Museum of Cycladic Art, Athens, Greece

Galerie Lelong & Co.

Paris – New York

Jannis Kounellis, Hillsboro Fine Art, Dublin, Ireland

Jannis Kounellis-S.T., National Center For Contemporary Art, Nizhny Novgorod, Russian Federation

2011

Jannis Kounellis, Translating China Today Art Museum, Beijing, China

Kounellis - feu / contre-feu - Klein, Galerie Lelong, Paris, France

Danza Della Morte, Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin, Germany

Senza Titolo, Kewenig Galerie, Cologne, Germany

Jannis Kounellis, Bernier/Eliades Gallery, Athens, Greece

Jannis Kounellis. S.T., National Centre for Contemporary Arts, Moscow, Russian Federation

2010

Freedom or Death, HEART - Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Herning, Denmark

Jannis Kounellis, La Fundacion Marcelino Botin, Santander, Spain

Jannis Kounellis, Ambika P3, London, United Kingdom

2009

Jannis Kounellis, Galerie Lelong, Zürich, Switzerland

2008

Jannis Kounellis, Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany

2007

Jannis Kounellis, Galerie Lelong, Paris, France

Mostra personale, Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro, Milan, Italy

Jannis Kounellis, Kunstmuseum, Vaduz, Liechtenstein

2006

Jannis Kounellis, Museo D'Arte Contemporanea Donna Regina, Naples, Italy

Works 1958-2005, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Galerie Lelong & Co.

Paris – New York

2005

Jannis Kounellis, Modern Art Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom

2004

Jannis Kounellis, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece

2003

Jannis Kounellis, Kunstraum, Innsbruck, Austria

Jannis Kounellis, Ars Aevi Forum, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Jannis Kounellis, Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Herning, Denmark

Jannis Kounellis, Galerie Lelong, Paris, France

Works on Paper, Michael Werner Kunsthandel, Cologne, Germany

2002

Jannis Kounellis, Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, Belgium

Blick auf Piranesi, Städel Museum, Frankfurt, Germany

2001

Jannis Kounellis, Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato, Italy

Jannis Kounellis, Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales, Montevideo, Uruguay

1998

Jannis Kounellis, Rizziero Arte, Pescara, Italy

Senza titolo, Fondazione Volume!, Rome, Italy

1997

Die Front, das Denken, der Sturm, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany

Kounellis, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain

1993

Jannis Kounellis, Galerie Lelong, Paris, France

1992

La Stanza Vede, Fundación Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, Spain

Galerie Lelong & Co.

Paris – New York

1991

Frammenti di memoria, Kestnergesellschaft, Hannover, Germany

La stanza vede, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague, Netherlands

Via del Mare, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Frammenti di memoria, Kunstmuseum, Winterthur, Switzerland

La Stanza Vede - The Room Sees, Elements From Drawing 1970-1990, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, United Kingdom

1989

Jannis Kounellis Castello di Rivoli, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin, Italy

1988

Kounellis, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montreal, Canada

Kounellis, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Nagoya, Japan

1987

Jannis Kounellis, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, United States

1986

Jannis Kounellis, Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo, Norway

1985

Oeuvres nouvelles, CAPC - Musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux, France

1984

Jannis Kounellis, Museen Haus Lange / Haus Esters, Krefeld, Germany

1982

Jannis Kounellis, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, United Kingdom

1980

Jannis Kounellis, ARC, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France

1977

Jannis Kounellis, Kunstmuseum, Luzern, Switzerland

Galerie Lelong & Co.

Paris – New York

Group shows (selection)

2024

By Way Of: Material and Motion in the Guggenheim Collection, Musée Solomon-R.-Guggenheim, New York, United States

Biennials (selection)

2015

Biennale di Venezia - 56th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy

2013

1st Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi, India

The Second Mediterranean Biennale / Sakhnin, Mediterranean Biennale in Sakhnin Arab Heritage Museum of Sakhnin, Sakhnin, Israel

2011

4th Guangzhou Triennial - Back to Basics - The Museum Per Se, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China

2008

16th Biennale of Sydney: Forms that Turn, Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

2006

Internazionale XII Biennale di Scultura di Carrara, Carrara, Italy

1995

4. International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey

1989

2. International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey

1988

7th Biennale of Sydney: From the Southern Cross: A View of World Art c1940 - 1988, Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

Galerie Lelong & Co.

Paris – New York

XLIII Esposizione internazionale d'Arte. La Biennale di Venezia. Il luogo degli artisti, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy

1987

19° Bienal de Sao Paulo, Bienal de Sao Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

1986

XIa Quadriennale di Roma, Rome, Italy

1985

XIII BIENNALE DE PARIS, Biennale de Paris, Paris, France

1984

41. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy

1982

Documenta 7, Kassel, Germany

1978

La Biennale di Venezia 1978. From Nature to Art, from Art to Nature, Venice, Italy

1977

Documenta 6, Kassel, Germany

1976

La Biennale di Venezia 1976, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy

1973

X Quadriennale Nazionale d'Arte. La ricerca estetica dal 1960 al 1970, Rome, Italy

X Quadriennale Nazionale d'Arte. Situazione dell'Arte non figurativa, Rome, Italy

1972

Documenta 5, Kassel, Germany

1970

10th Tokyo Biennale - Between Man and Matter, Tokyo International Biennial, Tokyo, Japan

1969

Vie Biennale de Paris, Paris, France

Public collections (selection)

Essl Museum - Kunst der Gegenwart, Klosterneuburg, Austria

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent, Belgium

Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada

Museet for Samtidskunst / Museum of Contemporary Art, Roskilde, Denmark

Kiasma - Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland

CAPC - Musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux, France

Carré d'art - Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes, Nîmes, France

Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain (MAMCS), Strasbourg, France

Musée de Grenoble, Grenoble, France

Musée National d'Art Moderne - MNAM, Paris, France

Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, Germany

Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany

Kunsthalle Weishaupt, Ulm, Germany

Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, Germany

Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany

Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg, Germany

Museum Brandhorst, Munich, Germany

Städtisches Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany

National Museum of Contemporary Art - EMST, Athens, Greece

Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin, Italy

Galerie Lelong & Co.

Paris – New York

Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, Italy

Museo D'Arte Contemporanea Donna Regina (MADRE), Naples, Italy

MUSPAC - Museo Sperimentale d'Arte Contemporanea, L'Aquila, Italy

Nomas Foundation, Rome, Italy

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz, Liechtenstein

Osten Museum of Drawing, Skopje, Macedonia

NIMk - Netherlands Media Art Institute, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Museu Serralves, Porto, Portugal

Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea (CGAC), Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Museo Guggenheim de Arte Moderno y Contemporáneo, Bilbao, Spain

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain

Hallen für neue Kunst, Schaffhausen, Switzerland

Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Winterthur, Switzerland

Reginart Collections, Geneva, Switzerland

Tate Britain, London, United Kingdom

Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, United Kingdom

Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum of Art - Malibu, United States

MOCA Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, United States

Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, United States

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, United States