



WOLFSONIAN

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DEMOCRACY BY FRANCESCO VEZZOLI OPENS AT THE WOLFSONIAN–FIU OCTOBER 24, 2008

MIAMI BEACH, FL (September 24, 2008)—How are we manipulated by strategies of political communication? How do issues such as fame and the power of the media play into this dynamic, and what is the role of democracy? Inspired by the 2008 U.S. Presidential elections, artist Francesco Vezzoli (Italian, b. 1971) explores these issues and how they're expressed through contemporary visual language in his installation *Democracy*, on view at The Wolfsonian–FIU October 24–December 7, 2008 and sponsored by Gallery Yvon Lambert, Paris. The presentation at The Wolfsonian is in connection with the current exhibit, *Thoughts on Democracy*, part of the *Celebrating America* year of exhibits.

Democracy is based on a fictional election campaign with two hypothetical candidates. A video project, the installation consists of two election ads played concurrently, featuring the theoretical candidates, who have different political visions. The candidates are played by media superstars, both poised to become the quintessential twenty-first century leader: Hollywood actress Sharon Stone and French philosopher and author Bernard-Henri Lévy.

The ads were produced in collaboration with teams of political experts, one led by Mark McKinnon, George W. Bush's media advisor in 2004, and the other by Jim Mulhall, part of Bill Clinton's creative team in 1996.

The ads, with their on-point, extremely precise, and seductive messages, highlight the candidates' popularity, confidence, and their seductive capacity to use the media to bolster their images.

"*Democracy* is a provocative look at the powerful roles of media, visual language, and celebrity culture, and as such is very much in keeping with the themes that The Wolfsonian's collection addresses," notes Cathy Leff, The Wolfsonian's director. "What Francesco Vezzoli has done in this installation is to comment on and reflect back to us a view of our current election and the media frenzy that it's generating. The fact that this noted artist has collaborated with former presidential advisors makes this fictional representation all the more intriguing."

Democracy was first presented in June 2007 during the opening of the Italian Pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale. It follows the artist's earlier parody of contemporary Hollywood, *Trailer for a remake of Gore Vidal's Caligula*, presented at the 51st Venice Biennale and at the 2006 Whitney Biennial.

About the Artist

Francesco Vezzoli's work includes video installations, petit-point embroidery, and photography, mixing heterogeneous languages and genres to bring together pop icons, auteur cinema, art history, social, and personal issues. He has had solo shows in museums and institutions worldwide including Fondazione Prada, Milan; Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin; New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; and Tate Modern, London. His video projects and needleworks have also been presented at several biennials including the 2006 Whitney Biennial, the 49th, 51st, and 52nd Venice Biennials, and the 26th Sao Paulo Biennial; and in group shows at venues including Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; The Studio Museum in Harlem; Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, Paris; and Migros Museum, Zurich.

About The Wolfsonian–Florida International University

The Wolfsonian is a museum, library, and research center that uses objects to illustrate the persuasive power of art and design, to explore what it means to be modern, and to tell the story of social, historical, and technological changes that have transformed our world. The collections comprise approximately 120,000 objects from the period of 1885 to 1945—the height of the Industrial Revolution to the end of the Second World War—in a variety of media including furniture; industrial-design objects; works in glass, ceramics, and metal; rare books; periodicals; ephemera; works on paper; paintings; textiles; and medals.

The Wolfsonian is located at 1001 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach, Fla. Admission is \$7 adults; \$5 seniors, students, and children six-12; free for Wolfsonian members, State University System of Florida staff and students with ID, children under six, and Miami Beach residents with ID. The museum is open Monday, Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday from noon-6pm; Thursday and Friday from noon-9pm; and is closed on Wednesday. Contact us at 305.531.1001 or visit us online at www.wolfsonian.org.

The Wolfsonian receives ongoing support from the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts; Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program, Cultural Arts Council; Crispin Porter + Bogusky; Continental Airlines, the preferred airline of The Wolfsonian; the Arthur F. and Alice E. Adams Foundation; and Pistils & Petals.

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