

DESIGN & INTERIORS

Pope Francis to the world's creatives: 'You have the ability to dream new versions of the world'

Pope Francis addressed creatives during a special event at the Sistine Chapel on 23 June 2023

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Pope Francis Leaving the Sistine Chapel after his address, with Bjarke Ingels on the left

On Friday 23 June 2023, Pope Francis invited creatives from different disciplines to the Vatican's Sistine Chapel on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Vatican Museums' Modern & Contemporary Collections. The group included Brazilian musician Caetano Veloso, British film director Ken Loach, British-Indian artist Anish Kapoor as well as designers and architects such as Daniel Arsham, Stefano Boeri, Michele De Lucchi, Jean Nouvel and Bjarke Ingels.

'Your art propels us forward': Pope Francis addresses the world's creatives



Pope Francis addressing artists and creatives in the Sistine Chapel
(Image credit: Vatican Media via Vatican Pool/Getty Images)

‘Artists take seriously the richness of human existence, of our lives and the life of the world, including its contradictions and its tragic aspects,’ said Pope Francis. ‘This richness risks disappearing from the view of the many specialised disciplines that respond to immediate needs, but find it difficult to view life as a polyhedron, a complex and multifaceted reality. Artists remind us that the dimension in which we move, even unconsciously, is always that of the Spirit. Your art is like a sail swelling with the wind of the Spirit and propelling us forward.’

He describes the relationship between the Catholic Church and the arts as ‘a special friendship’, nodding to the history of patronage that has seen the Vatican work with artists on a regular, collaborative basis – as the Sistine Chapel itself testifies, its frescoes created by a team of Renaissance artists including Michelangelo, Botticelli, Perugino and more.



Pope Francis with Ross Lovegrove

(Image credit: Vatican Media via Vatican Pool/Getty Images)

This new address by Pope Francis aims at strengthening the Vatican's commitment to the arts, and to urge creatives to act as catalysts for changes in society, stressing that their contributions are essential to defend human life and the poor. 'They have no voice to make themselves heard,' he says. 'You can choose to become the interpreters of their silent plea.'

'Openness and newness. That is what you bring, as artists, by cultivating your own originality. In your creations, you always put something of yourself, as unique beings like the rest of us, but for the sake of creating something even greater. With your talents, you bring to light something exceptional; you enrich the world with something new,' continues the speech. 'As artists, you have the ability to dream new versions of the world, to introduce novelty into history.'

'[It was] a privilege to be in the Sistine Chapel, under the vault on which Michelangelo recapitulated humanity and its events,' architect Michele De Lucchi told Wallpaper*. 'We all feel united, in the search for a common destiny, drawn upwards, into infinity. As he said goodbye, he urged us to think of the poor and to pray for him. After the audience, I remained alone for a few minutes in the silence of the Sistine Chapel. There is the torment of the many problems that grip humanity, but there is also that breath of greatness, that yearning for infinitude.'

Other creatives took to their social media channels to express their sentiment about being present at the unprecedented address. 'It was a humbling and inspiring life moment for me,' wrote American artist and designer Daniel Arsham. 'Although I am not and have never been religious, I felt alive. Art is a way to see the unseen, to reveal things just below our everyday consciousness, and artists are that vehicle. I feel blessed to be an artist and to create and speak in a voice that does not require language or time.'