

When an artist like Helidon Xhixha of global repute exhibits his monumental artworks in a solo exhibition presented by Firetti Contemporary, it has to be something more than just art. For Helidon is a huge supporter of spreading awareness about global warming and the melting of polar glaciers, in short environment protection is a key note in all his work.

The first opening show in this venue titled Imprint, will showcase three monumental sculptures: Earth, Pillar of Fortitude and Ice-

berg and will run until May 22. Read on to know more...

How did you get drawn to sculpting?

My father was the one who inspired me in becoming an artist. He was an artist himself, a painter, and he used to bring me to his studio where I watched him for hours blending colours and gradually bringing life on to the canvas. This is what I love about sculpting, bringing a medium to life in a tri-dimensional volume. I was born to be a monumental artist as I always considered art with a sense of greatness and vastness as it is the

ultimate expression of the human mind and soul.

Environmental issues are the basis of your work... how did this concept come about?

In my works I cover many different social aspects and topics, these often reflect realities of our times and issues I encounter in my everyday life. My concern towards global warming is firstly due to the fact that I'm a father and therefore the future of this planet is my great concern. Iceberg is a project I developed for the 2015 Venice Biennale. I wanted to impact the public with the notion of melt-down, inviting

CALL OF THE EARTH

by Manjula Ramakrishnan

SCULPTOR
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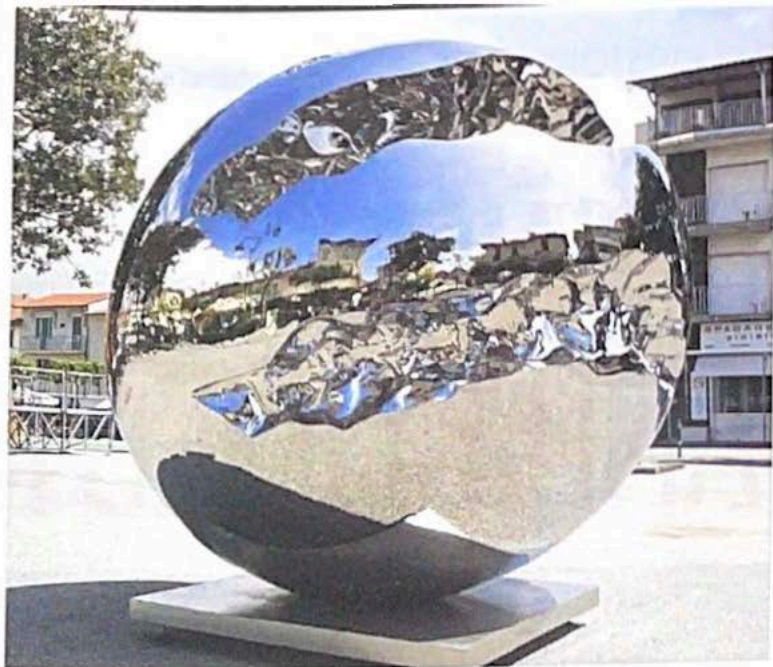


The sculpture titled Pillar of Fortitude has a special message behind it that the artist Helidon Xhixha has yet to reveal.

everyone to imagine how Venice itself could be overwhelmed all too swiftly by a catastrophic flood. The impact of Iceberg, moving through the Canal Grande definitely prompted thoughts about a world adrift from its moorings.

Can you tell us more about the three structures on exhibit — Earth, Iceberg and Pillar of Fortitude?

Iceberg is a sculpture in marine grade stainless steel, which is mirror polished, perfectly welded and waterproofed; it is structured to float on water in such a way that it follows the movement of the currents and wind allowing for a continuous variation of luminous projections that the mirrored steel produces. Earth is a sphere made in mirror polished stainless steel. The sculpture provokes thoughts on the impact of climate change, a global problem that will affect every individual on each of the seven continents of the world. The installation Earth works in conjunction with Iceberg reminding us of the continued damage we inflict upon the planet. The Pillar of Fortitude has a special message behind it that will be revealed in the near future.



The Earth sculpture is aimed to provoke thoughts on the impact of climate change.

What is the process of sculpting from start to finish?

I always draft a series of drawings as I explore the concepts I'm working on. I give great emphasis on the relationship between the effects of light onto my pieces. When I start moulding the sculpture to my perfection, I ensure that the lights reflecting off of it are positioned in the correct manner. I use steel as my medium because it's a material that rejects immobility and projects form to infinity, allowing sculpture to conquer a fourth dimension, difficult to reach with traditional materials.

What are your preferred materials for your sculptures and why?

In the first years of my career, I experimented with sculpting various materials like Murano glass, marble and iron. But once I discovered steel, it was love at first sight. Stainless steel fascinates me for its power to reflect and transmit positive energy. It makes my sculptures come to life as they constantly reflect the colours and the movements of their surroundings.

Do you have a signature technique that is entirely Helidon's?

Using stainless steel as the foundation of my artwork has helped me find my identity as a contemporary artist and my technique of folding it, turning it inside out and marking it, became my sign of recognition.

Iceberg is a unique floating installation. What were the challenges faced in creating and exhibiting this in different venues?

Moving large scale artworks is something I'm used to, being a monumental artist, but in the case of Iceberg the challenge is mostly making sure the sculpture is balanced on the water and floats without capsizing. This process requires a lot of work beneath the iceberg as it is placed over the water and this is done by a team of two scuba divers.

How further can environmental issues be highlighted through art?

Art has a great power to inspire the viewers and therefore it's an important vehicle to initiate change and communicate current issues that our society is facing. Today we see so many young artists focused on sustainable art and the reaction we see in our society is incredible.