

Jean-Maria Appriou. CANTO INFINITO

(Florence, Palazzo Strozzi, Project Space, 22 May-23 August 2026)

A selection of new works created specifically for the Project Space at Palazzo Strozzi by one of the most original voices in contemporary sculpture, in a layered and multifaceted reflection on art history, myth, and literature.

From 22 May to 23 August 2026, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi presents *CANTO INFINITO*, a solo exhibition by **Jean-Marie Appriou**, hosted in the **Project Space of Palazzo Strozzi**, the venue dedicated to the site-specific projects by artists from the younger generations. Curated by Arturo Galansino, the exhibition brings together a group of new works specifically conceived for Palazzo Strozzi, offering insight into Appriou's artistic practice, a distinctive voice of his generation in the redefinition of the idea of sculpture in contemporary art.

The work by Jean-Marie Appriou (France, 1986) is characterized by an experimental engagement with materials such as aluminum, bronze, glass, clay, and wax. Through a **highly tactile approach**, he shapes figures that inhabit an ambiguous territory between the human, the animal, and the vegetal. Appriou's sculptures draw on references ranging **from archaic mythologies to science fiction and contemporary culture**. Horses, serpents, marine creatures, and hybrid beings populate a symbolic universe in which forms appear suspended between earth and water, darkness and light, permanence and change. Often monumental in scale, these figures nevertheless establish an intimate relationship with the viewer, conveying a sense of proximity that heightens their enigmatic and sometimes unsettling presence.

The title of the exhibition ***CANTO INFINITO*** ("infinite song") evokes the idea of a continuous flow without beginning or end, suggesting a dimension in which time, matter, and imagination remain in constant transformation. Rather than referring to a single narrative, the title opens onto a field of resonances, where sculpture unfolds as an ongoing act of creation. Conceived as an initiatory journey articulated through a sequence of passages, the exhibition subtly draws on the legacy of the *Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri—not as an illustrative model, but as a cultural and symbolic horizon. As in Dante's poem, *CANTO INFINITO* suggests a **movement through different realms and states of being**, where transformation, threshold, and metamorphosis become structuring principles. Appriou's work also engages with a **broad constellation of literary and mythological sources**, which emerge not as fixed references but as presences embodied in sculptural matter and

integrated into a spatial sequence. His figures do not illustrate stories but suggest moments of passage and transition.

Offering an immersive experience, *CANTO INFINITO* unfolds as a sequence of encounters rather than a linear narrative. Sculpture becomes a space where material retains the trace of its making and meaning remains in motion. Without imposing a single interpretative key, the exhibition invites visitors to move through a world in which oppositions—body and spirit, past and future, visible and invisible—are held in dynamic tension, offering an experience that is both sensorial and contemplative.

“With *CON CANTO INFINITO*, Jean-Marie Appriou transforms the Project Space at Palazzo Strozzi into a realm of imagination and reflection, where materials, myths, and visions intertwine in an open dialogue with the present,” says **Arturo Galansino**, Director General of Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi. “We are especially pleased to present in Florence the work of one of the most original voices in contemporary international art—an artist capable of bringing together archetypal references with an extraordinary formal sensibility. This project reaffirms Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi’s commitment to supporting contemporary artistic research through the production of collaborations that foster new perspectives for dialogue between artists, audiences, and the exhibition space.”

Jean-Marie Appriou. CANTO INFINITO is promoted and organized by Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, Florence. Public supporters: Comune di Firenze, Regione Toscana, Città Metropolitana di Firenze, Camera di Commercio di Firenze. Private supporters: Fondazione CR Firenze, Intesa Sanpaolo, Fondazione Hillary Merkus Recordati, Comitato dei Partner di Palazzo Strozzi.

Biography

Jean-Marie Appriou was born in 1986 in Brest, France. He lives and works in Paris. He graduated from École régionale des beaux-arts de Rennes in 2010. His solo shows include TANK Museum, Shanghai, PRC (2025); *La cinquième essence*, MO.CO. - La Panacée, Montpellier, FR (2025); *Whale Song, Now + There*, Boston, Boston U.S. (2024); *Jean-Marie Appriou and Exonaut Horizon*, Perrotin, Paris, FR (2024); *La Constellation du Louvre*, Musée du Louvre, Paris, FR (2023); *The Traveler*, Langhe, Neviglie, IT (2023); *Gemini*, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Vienna, AUS (2023); MASSIMODECARLO, Hong Kong (2023); MASSIMODECARLO, London, UK; Villa Medici, Rome, I (2022); *The Horses*, organized by Public Art Fund, Doris C. Freedman Plaza, New York, NY, US (2019–2020); *Seabed*, Le Consortium, Dijon, FR (2019–2020); and *Open Space #1*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, FR (2018). Appriou participated in *Là où les eaux se mêlent*, Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, FR (2019) with a major installation titled *Roncier*. His institutional group exhibitions include Amsterdam Sculpture Biennale, ARTZUID, Amsterdam, NL (2025); *The Air is Subtle Yet it Moves*, AMA House, Athens, GRS (2025); *Last Night I Dreamt of Manderley*, Alison Jacques Gallery, London, UK (2025); *I Sought My Soul*, St. Elisabeth Kirche, Berlin, DE (2025); *A Drawing A Day*, MASSIMODECARLO Seoul Studio, Seoul ROK (2024); *Van Gogh and The Stars*, Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles, Arles, FR (2024); *Eccentric. The Aesthetics of Freedom*, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, DE (2024); *White sea olive groves*, Malta Biennial, Valletta, MLTA (2024); CAB OPENING PUBLIC PROGRAMS, Chicago Architecture Biennial, Chicago (2023); Jing'an Sculpture Park, Shanghai, Shanghai (2023); *Childhood*, Centre Pompidou, Metz (2022); *Another banana for the dream-fish*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR (2018); *Neuer Norden Zürich, KiöR Kunst im öffentlichen Raum*, Zurich, CH (2018); *Deux sens du décoratif*, Centre d'art Contemporain, Brest, FR (2018); *Voyage d'Hiver*, Château de Versailles, Versailles, FR (2017); *Robots. Work. Our Future*, Vienna Biennale, Vienna, AT (2017); *MEDUSA*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, FR (2017); *L'Usage des Formes*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR (2015); and *La solitude*, Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, NO (2014).

FACT SHEET

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Venue	Florence, Palazzo Strozzi, Project Space
Dates	22 May – 23 August 2026
Curated by	Arturo Galansino
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THE EXHIBITION

Among the most important and original voices in contemporary sculpture, Jean-Marie Appriou presents *CANTO INFINITO*, an exhibition project composed of a series of new works conceived for the Project Space at Palazzo Strozzi. Through a deeply tactile practice, Appriou's works give form to human figures, animals, and hybrid creatures that seem to emerge from a state of continuous metamorphosis, connecting body and spirit, matter and idea, the sacred and the profane. Horses, serpents, vessels, fires, and intertwined bodies inhabit spaces in which seemingly irreconcilable opposites coexist in constant tension: the human and the monstrous, the spiritual and the earthly, darkness and light. Nothing appears stable or definitive. The title of the project evokes a continuous and circular narrative that generates an open system of relationships and interpretative possibilities: an experience that is at once immersive and contemplative, in which sculpture, literature, and mythology intertwine within a broader reflection on the history of art, without a fixed beginning or end. As in the Divine Comedy, the journey becomes a metaphor for passage and knowledge, while also serving as a means to question the present, its anxieties, and its potential for transformation.

The Mills of Perception, 2026, patinated bronze
Courtesy the artist and MASSIMODECARLO

In an ideal dialogue with the celebrated doors by Lorenzo Ghiberti and Auguste Rodin, Appriou reflects on the idea of the threshold between Paradise and Hell as a space of passage and transformation: a monumental gate that recalls a *torii*, the traditional Japanese gateway, into which nine rotating cylinders have been inserted, resembling Tibetan prayer wheels. On one side unfolds an Edenic world structured in three registers: sky, earth, and sea. Paradise does not appear as a harmonious and definitive space, but rather as a fragile and unstable universe. On the opposite side emerges a Hell inspired by medieval cosmology and the Gothic imagery of gargoyles and chimeras, populated by figures such as the Devil in the form of a cormorant or lord of the flies, King Minos, the Minotaur, Leviathan, and Behemoth. Above, a vessel recalls the funerary boats described in the Egyptian *Book of Gates*, destined to traverse the underworld, carrying within it four figures central to the artist's imagination: Dante Alighieri, John Milton, Mary Shelley, and William Blake

Apophis, 2026, stainless steel; ***Mandjet***, 2026, bronze
Courtesy the artist and MASSIMODECARLO

In this final room, Appriou transforms a domestic radiator into a sculpture of flow and passage. Inspired by the figure of Apophis, the serpent of chaos in Egyptian mythology, the work evokes an

invisible current circulating through the heart of matter. Traversed by a metaphorical stream, the work becomes the symbol of an initiatory threshold, recalling the mythological rivers that every transformation must cross. Between intimate memory and cosmological imagination, the sculpture condenses the four elements — earth, water, fire, and air — turning the everyday into a territory of metamorphosis and invisible circulation. Suspended in space, *Mandjet* is a sculptural chandelier in bronze, that takes the form of a solar barque inspired by Egyptian mythology. In dialogue with *Apophis*, the work evokes the sun's nocturnal journey through the subterranean realms, during which it is ceaselessly threatened by the forces of chaos before being reborn at dawn. By diverting a functional object toward a cosmological dimension, Appriou transforms light into a symbolic presence, making the chandelier a device of passage between the domestic world, myth, and cosmos.

The Key, 2026, patinated bronze;
LASCIATE OGNE SPERANZA VOI CH'INTRATE, 2026, patinated bronze
Courtesy the artist and MASSIMODECARLO

At the center of the room unfolds *The Key*, a stove-sculpture depicting the intertwined figures of an angel and a dragon. Drawing on apocalyptic imagery, medieval iconography, and alchemical symbolism, the work does not stage a binary opposition but a continuous movement of transformation. Inspired by the logic of the Möbius strip, the sculpture dissolves distinctions between the celestial and the terrestrial, the sacred and the profane, the body and the spirit. Through the symbol of fire, conceived as a force of metamorphosis, the work transforms conflict into a perpetual cycle of mutation and reversal. As the symbolic hearth of the exhibition, it embodies the project's central reflection on passage, ambivalence, and the unity of opposites. Within this room, Appriou also conceives a bronze fireplace plaque as a condensed image, both ornamental and narrative. Extending the tradition of historical fireplace plates, the work approaches the hearth as a site of warmth, transformation, and storytelling. The composition presents a portrait of Dante surrounded by two figures evoking Michelangelo, whose hieratic posture recalls that of sphinxes. At the center of the plaque, the inscription "Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate," ("Abandon all hope, ye who enter here"), taken from the gate of Hell in the *Divine Comedy*, functions as both a symbolic and material threshold. Addressed to those entering Hell, the phrase here marks a point of rupture: a world in which points of reference begin to falter and transformation becomes irreversible