

## Marita Vollborn on “ARES” at Chianciano Biennale 2026: Art Between Democracy and Power Politics

The European sculptor discusses respect for the American electorate, the limits of checks and balances, threats of war, the Greenland example, and why she is reconsidering exhibitions in the US.



Lower Saxony, Germany Jul 23, 2026 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Ms. Vollborn, congratulations once again on your selection for the Chianciano Biennale 2026 with your bronze sculpture “ARES.” In light of current developments in the United States under President Trump’s second term,

## **how do you see the role of art in addressing political realities? How political must contemporary art be?**

**Marita Vollborn:** Thank you. Art has always been political, whether it admits it or not. “ARES,” my bronze sculpture named after the Greek god of war, is a direct confrontation with militarism, profiteering from conflict, and the raw exercise of power. In the current American context, it feels even more urgent. The American people have democratically elected their president — that decision must be respected and accepted as the outcome of their democratic process. However, what cannot and must not be accepted is the erosion of checks and balances, particularly in international affairs. When domestic institutions are weakened and foreign policy becomes increasingly unilateral, art has a responsibility to speak out.

## **You emphasize acceptance of the election result but criticism of systemic issues. Can you elaborate on that distinction?**

**Marita Vollborn:** Absolutely. Democracy means living with the choices of the majority, even when one disagrees. But democracy also requires functioning institutions — checks and balances that prevent any single leader or faction from acting without restraint. Internationally, we are seeing a resurgence of great-power behavior that disregards international law, alliances, and mutual respect. Take the discussions around Greenland: the renewed interest in acquiring or dominating the island is a striking example of old-school imperial thinking returning in modern guise. It’s not just about resources — it’s about signaling dominance. Such moves, combined with threats of military action or economic coercion against allies and neighbors, cross a line. Wars are a no-go. Even the open threat or casual consideration of military options against sovereign territories must be rejected outright by any civilized society.

## **As a European artist with a strong critical tradition, do you feel a particular responsibility in this moment?**

**Marita Vollborn:** European art has a long history of confronting power — from Goya to Käthe Kollwitz to the post-war avant-garde. In times when American politics affects global stability, European artists have an even greater duty to address these grievances clearly. “ARES” is not anti-American; it is anti-militarism and anti-greed, regardless of where they originate. My work in the “Sinn und Scherben” project consistently explores human ambivalence — power and guilt, strength and fragility. Today, it feels necessary to highlight how the pursuit of dominance risks repeating the darkest chapters of history.

## **Have these developments influenced your own exhibition decisions?**

**Marita Vollborn:** Yes, they have. I am currently thinking very carefully about participating in exhibitions in the United States. As long as checks and balances are not reliably functioning again and travel to the US does not feel predictably safe and open for critical voices, I prefer to focus on European and international platforms where open discourse is still possible. This is not a boycott out of hostility, but a conscious decision rooted in principle. Art should not be used to whitewash problematic developments. At the same time, I remain open to dialogue and exchange — genuine cultural exchange has always been important to me, especially given my own history growing up in the GDR and experiencing the fall of the Berlin Wall.

## **Looking at your broader body of work, how does “ARES” fit into “Sinn und Scherben” and your overall approach?**

**Marita Vollborn:** “Sinn und Scherben” (Sense and Shards) comprises around 50 clay and bronze

sculptures that examine the full range of human experience and societal contradictions. “ARES” belongs to the more confrontational end of this spectrum — it gives form to the destructive forces that arise when greed and power go unchecked. Just as my journalistic work exposed systemic failures in healthcare, food industries, and politics, my sculptures make visible what words sometimes cannot fully capture. In an age of resurgent nationalism and great-power posturing, art must remain a space for critical reflection rather than decoration or propaganda.

**What message do you hope visitors take away from “ARES” at the Chianciano Biennale?**

**Marita Vollborn:** I hope they feel challenged. Respect the democratic will of the American people, but never stop questioning power — especially when it threatens peace, international law, or the sovereignty of others. European art, in particular, should stand firm: wars and threats of war are unacceptable. Platforms like the Chianciano Biennale, with its international yet independent spirit, are exactly the right places for such works. Art can be a mirror and a warning at the same time.

**Thank you very much for this conversation, Ms. Vollborn. We wish you every success in Tuscany.**

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