



ATLAS OF FORMS

Appearance and disappearance of forms
under a cross-cultural perspective

Soft Power Palace Festival,
KUNSTGEBÄUDE, Stuttgart
SCHLOSSPLATZ 2, 70173
5 - 11 November 2018

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Project Intro

1. Soft Power Palace; Festival Intro

SOFT POWER PALACE is a laboratory (October 27th until November 7th) and festival (November 8th - 11th) about independent art spaces in Europe, who will come together for two weeks in a short residency to think about the future of cultural exchange. 5 artist run spaces from Lyon, Milan, Barcelona, Sofia and Stuttgart will share their experiences of working independently in the field of exhibiting contemporary art, organising exchange, sharing skills, practising curation and co-working. The short residency aims to support and connect non-institutional, non-profit, cultural spaces that are specialized in intercultural work.

The aim of SOFT POWER PALACE is to imagine the future of cultural exchange and a feeling of transregional connections beyond political and economic forces.

2. Ardesia Projects; Project Intro

Our participation to SOFT POWER PALACE aims to explore the appearance and disappearance of forms through various historical and geographical locations, with the intent of establishing a trans-regional common ground through an investigation of our visual culture. Our project, ATLAS OF FORMS, consists in two phases of production; one week dedicated to the collection of images, forms, photographs and documents (which will be collected thanks to the collaboration of six photographers based in different geographical locations). The second week will be dedicated to the organization of the collected material in collaboration with invited professionals from different fields, whom are invited to curate and organize the collected material based on their different interpretations and cultural baggage. Hence, we do not only wish to establish a cross-regional common ground, but to investigate the curatorial process and highlight the relevance of inter-disciplinarity and exchange between different fields of study.

The outcome will consist in an exhibition during the festival dates (8th-11th November), showcasing the photographs and the organized material, and a permanent online gallery which will not only showcase the images, but which will document the curatorial process done in collaboration with the professionals.

Your Participation

We would like to invite you to participate to our project!

The five professionals we have decided to invite belong to the following disciplines;

Physics

Linguistics

Anthropology

Teaching/education

Psychology

1. What would we like you to do

We are delighted to invite you to be our guest for the duration of one working day to curate together the visual material collected during the first week of production. The visual material will consist of new photographs taken by the invited photographers (focusing on the theme of the return of form) and archival images and documents collected by us in response to the photographs.

We would like you to organize and assemble the various visual material into one or more thematically divided panels; hence, you will be asked to look through the images, select them and group them whilst initiating a conversation on the choices made. There is no specific theme you need to adhere to; it will be a spontaneous process which we hope will formulate questions rather than delivering specific answers. It is, mostly, the beginning of a research process. We invite you to be free, creative and unconstrained during the curation - we do not expect you to become an art historian, but to give your personal outlook based on your research field and individual interpretation.

The panels you curated will be documented and exhibited during the festival days, as well as in an online gallery. We would also like to record our time together in order to document our conversations, and extrapolate a small text which will give the public some insight on our curatorial choices.

2. Dates & Timeline

The dates dedicated to the curatorial process will be 5th-9th November (Monday-Friday). Ideally we would like you to join us for a full working day (approximately 10,00 am - 05,00 pm). Since we realize the difficulty of dedicating to us a full working day, we are open to be flexible and look for alternative hours and solutions.

If you wish to participate, please select the date that most suits you;

Monday 5th Nov

Tuesday 6th Nov

Wednesday 7th Nov

Thursday 8th Nov

Friday 9th Nov

3. Terms & Conditions

Unfortunately we are unable to offer a compensation for your participation. Yet, we will cover any expense to reach us (travel, etc.) and you will be invited to join us for lunch and dinner. Lunch and dinner will take place in a communal area of the beautiful palace Kunstgebaude, and will see the participation of all the artists and initiatives involved in Soft Power Palace; you will be immersed in a vibrant and curious atmosphere for the day!

Project Details; Aby Warbourg and the Atlas of Images

In this section you can find an in-depth description of the project; its theoretical background, the division of the production weeks, our aims and final outcomes. Please read this carefully to have a better insight on the project. We remain available to answer any questions and provide clarifications, if anything was to remain unclear.

“It is so that a spontaneous question arises: *how does form return?*, just as we say of ghosts. Nietzschean question, Freudian question, but Warbourghian par-excellence: the question of the *Nachleben*, of the survival of forms or of visual formulas.”

- *The Return of Form*, from *The Accidental Knowledge, Apparition and Disappearance of Images* Georges Didi-Huberman

Art history, from antiquity until today, has been constellated with culturally charged forms which seem to appear not only in different cultures, but also seem to disappear and re-emerge in different epochs in various geographical locations. Art history appears as a colorful mass of objects and events, states and changes, circulations and rumors. How to trace, in this immense mass, the creation and transformation of forms? We do not only ask ourselves what do these forms change into, but how do they transform through time and space. We do not only ask ourselves how do they distribute themselves in time and space, but in which way this redistribution transforms their anthropological character.*

In order to reflect on the future of cultural exchange and the possibility of transregional connections beyond political relations we must begin by recognizing and acknowledging a common ground which can be sought within the folds of our visual history. Art has always had the duty of giving voice to the intricacies of the human experience, sublimating it through sacred and profane objects in order to aid the human soul in understanding its own complexity. Therefore, our visual history provides an atlas of formulas which respond to a variety of cross-cultural human experiences; death, sexuality, power, procreation, nature, and so on.

Through this journey of appearances and disappearances, images and visual formulas have exited the realm of art history and entered the mundane world. Yet, they have entered the mundane world transfigured; etruscan ex-votos representing guts and intestines return in flea markets under the form of a colorful, plastic figure to be placed on the meat stand of a Nativity scene*, Corinthian columns reappear at the entrance of newly-built american cinemas, becoming increasingly approachable the more they lose their sacred origin.

Taking the above listed considerations as starting point to our project for Soft Power Palace Festival, we have decided to dedicate our two weeks of residency to the exploration of visual forms, their return, their transfiguration and their categorization through multiple voices which are both cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary. Our desire is to explore not only the return and transfiguration of forms under a global perspective, but to promote a compenetration of discourses and disciplines in the reading and understanding of such visual material. Therefore, we have decided to divide our permanence in two cycles of production.

The first week will be dedicated to the collection of images. Six photographers from six different countries will be asked to submit images that record local cultural symbols (from the most sacred to the most mundane). The submission process will be chain-linked, one photographer having to respond to the previous photographer's images, in order to activate a search for common cultural symbols. In the meanwhile, we will be responding to the submitted images by collecting relevant archival material and creating new images ourselves. The objective of the first week will be to accumulate a vast amount of images and visual formulas to work with during the second week.

The second week will focus on the reading, assembling, dismantling and exploring of the collected visual archive, taking as an example Aby Warburg's *Atlas of Images*. Five professionals from five different disciplines will be invited into our studio to curate and assemble the visual material on different panels, whose categorization will depend on the specific reading of the material provided by the different research backgrounds. Our participation to the curation process aims to be a background aid to the invited professionals, without our curatorial voice taking over; what we are interested in is unmantelling the decision process of the invited curators, in order to understand how different research fields work with, understand and interpret cultural symbols.

Throughout the two weeks we will be documenting and re-elaborating the processes and outcomes in an online gallery that we will build specifically for this project with the aid of graphic designers. The website will consist in; a curated online gallery with the photographs submitted by the artists during the first phase of production; a specific section documenting the panels curated by the invited professionals, thematically categorised, accompanied by text, videos and photographs recording the process. Ultimately, the website's thematic section-categories will be interactive; it will be permanently possible to upload image-contents relevant to the chosen category.

* Didi-Huberman, George, *La Conoscenza Accidentale, apparizione e sparizione delle immagini*, Bollati Boringhieri editore, 2011

*Ibid.

About

Ardesia Projects is a curatorial project dedicated to contemporary photography, stimulating critical debate around photography through exhibition, workshops, residencies & more. Ardesia aims to create opportunities for the photographic community with the intent of unburdening artists from production costs and to stimulate in-depth debate through essays, reviews, talks and workshops. Ardesia is a bilingual initiative (ITA|ENG) which hopes to create a bridge between the Italian and the European photographic landscape.

Benedetta Casagrande is an Italian photographer, curator and writer. Graduated from a Photography BA at the University of Brighton (UK) in 2016, she has been working with various institutions, amongst which the A plus A Slovenian Exhibition Centre of Venice (2013, IT), One Eyed Jacks Photographers Gallery (2014, UK), Fabrica (2016, UK), and has organized and curated the artist-in-residence program In-Between Shores (IT) in May 2018. Her photographic work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally. Currently, she is undertaking an MA in Art History and Museum Curation with Photography at the University of Sussex.

Dimitri D'ippolito is an Italian/American photographer and a craftsman born in Florence (IT). He studied photography at the Studio Art Centers International Florence (SACI) and graduated from BA Hons Fine Arts Photography at the University of Brighton in 2016. Dimitri's art concerns both: positive and negative situations in contemporary society and of past happenings that have an influence on our present. His bodies of work are often politically and satirically charged, as he works following the lines of socially responsible art. The aim of his practice is to be both critical and analytical whilst, most importantly, creating awareness in the public about issues or realities that he considers important and deserving to be shed light upon. Dimitri is currently working as studio assistant for Mark Power and Edmund Clark.

Michele Amaglio is a freelance photographer and curator based in Bologna. In 2015 he graduated in Photography at the University of Brighton. In 2015 he founded the curatorial platform Ardesia Projects, dedicated to the promotion of a debate on contemporary photography in Italy and in a broader international level. Since 2015, he intertwines his own artistic research with projects focused on having a social impact; he has been art director, collaborator and communication manager for projects focused on refugees help such as Open Resources (urban regeneration through social inclusion), Talking Hands (self-managed carpentry and textile workshops run by a group of refugees in Italy). In 2017 he moved in Bologna where he is currently studying Semiotics (MA) at the Alma Mater – University of Bologna.

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