

A meditation on violence

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Eva Sauer

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Gli spazi architettonici riflettono le caratteristiche delle persone che li vivono.

In questo viaggio attraverso l'Europa, partendo da Belfast, percorrendo la Germania, Francia e Polonia, verso il sud dell'Italia, attraversiamo luoghi costantemente sorvegliati, claustrofobici e abbandonati.

Inizia con le "peace lines" di Belfast, che sono, a dispetto del nome, gigantesche barriere che furono costruite per evitare che le comunità cattoliche e protestanti, che vivevano in zone separate della città, si sparassero a vicenda.

Viaggiamo attraverso involucri di edifici non finiti, che agli occhi dei cittadini sono diventati monumenti alla corruzione; territori militari confinati da muri e filo spinato; discariche celate sotto un manto erboso; bunker della seconda guerra mondiale, una tomba mai finita per Costanzo, "Ganascia", Ciano, un ministro del regime fascista. Il viaggio si conclude in Toscana dove vecchie fabbriche di polvere da sparo della prima guerra mondiale, costruite nelle foreste per rimanere invisibili al nemico, si decompongono invase dalla vegetazione.

In molte immagini del cinema distopico, la natura dilagante riconquista ciò che le è stato tolto: un processo questo, che infonde una sensazione di pace e sicurezza.

Tuttavia se osserviamo più attentamente, vediamo le piante soffocarsi a vicenda nel tentativo di conquistare un posto alla luce.

Il ritorno apparentemente pacifico alla natura non è altro che una lotta per la sopravvivenza e la continuità. L'umanità persegue questa lotta su un piano diverso; ma a differenza di altri animali e piante, lasciamo tracce: infinite rovine.

Ottobre 2016

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Architectural spaces reflect the characteristics of the people who inhabit them.

In this journey through Europe, from Northern Ireland through Germany, France and Poland down to the south of Italy, we contemplate scenarios and situations that show the downside of beautiful travel impressions: monitoring, confinement and desolation. Beginning with the "peace lines" of Belfast, which are, despite the name, huge walls that were built to prevent Catholic and Protestant communities, living in separated areas of the town, from shooting each other.

We travel through unfinished building shells, that in the public eye became memorials for corruption; we pass through military territories confined by walls and barbed wire, hidden trash dumps – overgrown by grass, Second World War bunkers, an unfinished grave for Costanzo "Ganascia" Ciano, a minister of the fascist regime.

It ends in gunpowder factories from the First World War, built hidden in forests to remain invisible to the enemy. Now they rot, overgrown by the vegetation.

As in the images of dystopian cinema, the rampant nature is redemptive. However, if you look closely, you may see how the plants twist, one into the other, in a slow, choking fight to reach the light.

The apparently peaceful return to nature is nothing but a fight for survival and continuity. Mankind pursues this struggle on a different level; but unlike other animals and plants, we leave traces: endless ruins.

October 2016





Peter T. Lang is professor in Architectural Theory and History at the Royal Institute of Art, in the Department of Architecture, Stockholm (Kungl. Konsthögskolans-KKH), where he conducts post-graduate research courses in architecture, design and multimedia communications. Lang holds a Bachelor in Architecture from Syracuse University and earned a PhD in Italian history and urbanism at New York University in 2000. He is a Fulbright recipient in Italian studies. Lang works on the history and theory of post-war Italian architecture and design, with a focus on sixties Italian experimental design, media and environments. He has been a member of the Rome based urban arts research group Stalker since 1997.

Alessandro Gallicchio is a Professor and Curator. He holds an International Ph.D. in Contemporary Art History at the Universities of Florence, Paris-Sorbonne and Bonn. His research has focused on nationalist influences in Parisian art criticism in the period between the two World Wars. His main research interests focus on cosmopolitanism and chauvinism, on the representations of the power in the Mediterranean area and on Reductive Art. He has participated in various conferences and published some results of his research in national and international Journals (Florence, Warsaw, Bonn, Tokyo and Paris). He has organized exhibitions in independent spaces in Tuscany and in Paris.

Pietro Gaglianò has proceeded from his degree in architecture to study the relationship between the aesthetics of power and individual freedoms, regarding the urban and social contexts as the location of contemporary languages (with a particular focus on the theoretical systems of performance art). He curates projects in Italy and abroad and experiments with hybrid structures, which weave pedagogical experiences into traditional exhibition formats.

Gian Piero Frassinelli – Born in 1939, graduated in architecture in Florence in 1968; in the same year he joined the Superstudio group that participated in the movement called “Radical Architecture”, which dissolves in 1986. In Superstudio and later, he deals with the analysis of the “architecture system” with the tools of anthropology.

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Without you this book would not be created:
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Work in progress:
<http://ameditationonviolence.blogspot.it>