

Piazza dell'Immaginario

虚幻广场

Dryphoto arte contemporanea

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“理想的广场”这一项目诞生，其目的在于满足普拉托市数个城区进行改善优化的需要。这一改善优化的提出必须基于现实进行全盘反思，那就是在如此一个城区空间内浓缩了数量众多而又庞大的不同文化、现况、



PIAZZA DELL'IMMAGINARIO

project curated by Alba Braza

organized by Dryphoto arte contemporanea

CONFERENCE

Imagine the Chinatowns – Literature of diaspora

Prato, Friday 19 June 2015 | 4pm – 8pm

Greetings: Valerio Barberis, Councillor for Town Planning and Public Works

Speakers: Giorgio Bernardini, Massimo Bressan, Gary W. McDonogh, Valentina Pedone and Marco Wong

Location: Chamber of Commerce, via del Romito 71, Prato

EXHIBITION

Piazza dell'Immaginario

Prato, Friday 26 June 2015 | 6:30pm

Artists: Francis Alÿs, Olivo Barbieri, Bianco-Valente, Pantani-Surace, Bert Theis

Location: via Filzi, via Mameli, via Giordano, via Pistoiese, Prato

Partners: Associna & Prato Didattica

In collaboration with:

Regione Toscana

Comune di Prato

Camera di Commercio di Prato

Associazione d'Amicizia dei Cinesi di Prato

ASM Ambiente Servizi Mobilità, Prato

Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci

as part of the regional project: "Cantiere Toscana Contemporanea"

Ordine degli Architetti di Prato

Circolo Curiel, Prato

Piazza dell'Immaginario is a project founded in 2014 and is designed to meet the need to improve one of Prato's districts, home to a wide range of cultures, realities, socioeconomic situations, interests and needs in a small area, where Dryphoto arte contemporanea is also based. In the upcoming edition (2015), works by Olivo Barbieri, Bianco-Valente, Pantani-Surace, Francis Alÿs and Bert Theis will be added to those by Andrea Abati, Gabriele Basilico, Bleda y Rosa and R.E.P. Revolutionary Experimental Space, installed in 2014. The exhibit will spread through the district and occupy new spaces with permanent installations, site-specific works and actions.

The conference *Imagine the Chinatowns – Literature of diaspora*, scheduled for the weekend before the exhibition opening, is based on the belief that multidisciplinary is necessary to understand our era. Speeches will be given by both national and international intellectuals and personalities.

The contamination between different disciplines and the act of moving out of conventional spaces are some of the characteristics of our time. So it may happen, as in this case, that a contemporary art project works on public space and is accompanied by interventions on urban furniture and decoration, engaging citizens interested in doing things aimed at improving the public space around them, offering advantages for the entire city.

One of the main challenges is to question the imaginary we have of Oriental culture, and also the imaginary that Eastern culture has of the West; to question ourselves about the imaginary we have of migration, how we imagine realities that are not our own, and how, in any given moment, these realities can actually be shaped by images.

Over the past year, we have tried to offer other possible versions of what the district is, what happens there every day and how citizens make use of public spaces through a range of interventions such as the action by Pantani-Surace involving the public/citizens in the creation of their work, the production of a number of videos in Chinese (visible using QR codes) that describe the exhibition and give information about it, the occupation of spaces dedicated to advertising for the publicizing of the exhibition, the organization of concerts and book presentations in the area around the *Piazza dell'Immaginario*.

Now, in 2015, a year after the installation of the first works by artists involved in the project, the project will continue with the participation of other artists and their works, destined to become part of that challenge to bring beauty but also create relationships, culture, social networking, enjoyment and the sharing of experiences.

CONFERENCE

Imagine the Chinatowns – Literature of Diaspora

The conference will constitute an opportunity to talk about the Chinese diaspora, broadening perspectives in order to reflect on the local context with a view to the global situation.

In the firm belief that multidisciplinary is necessary to understand our time, our work is not limited to a specific field but extended to several ones, using a range of sources. The conference itself represents a source for our work, a tool for the achievement of our goal and an occasion to share knowledge through contemporary art.

The conference doesn't claim to give any definitive answers, but rather to raise questions instead. It will consider the local and global situation in a fertile dialogue focused on both social/cultural issues and literary/journalistic ones. The national and international intellectuals and personalities invited include the anthropologists Gary W. McDonogh, professor at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania (USA) and Massimo Bressan, president of Istituto di Ricerca IRIS (Prato); Valentina Pedone, professor of Chinese language and literature at the University of Florence, Marco Wong, writer and honorary president of Associna, Giorgio Bernardini, journalist and writer.

After the institutional greetings, the conference will get underway with a presentation of the new edition of *Piazza dell'Immaginario*.

EXHIBITION

Piazza dell'Immaginario

Through the permanent installation of large-format photographs printed on PVC and site-specific works, the district changes along with all the expectations, memories and desires related to the spaces involved.

In this edition, works by Olivo Barbieri, Bianco-Valente, Pantani-Surace, Francis Alÿs and Bert Theis will be added to those by Andrea Abati, Gabriele Basilico, Bleda y Rosa and R.E.P. Revolutionary Experimental Space installed in 2014. The exhibit will spread through the district and occupy new spaces with permanent installations, site-specific works and actions that develop the concepts proposed last year.

The curatorial narrative began with a selection of photographic works representing public spaces that citizens themselves have turned into spaces to share and in which to cultivate relationships: couples dancing in a square (Gabriele Basilico), playing football in an makeshift field; tending to a little garden in an earthquake-struck area (Andrea Abati). The narrative now ends with *Mantova*, 1980, by Olivo Barbieri. Once again, a space changed by people who live it: the snow hides a parish football pitch near the river, some dodgem cars in the background. Bianco-Valente will create a site-specific work in via Mameli: the two artists came in Prato in April to visit and experience life in the Macrolotto Zero district and *Piazza dell'Immaginario*. Large-format photographs printed on PVC will be installed in via Umberto Giordano: the images document actions and interventions by artists reflecting on concepts similar to the ones which first generated *Piazza dell'Immaginario*.

Firstly, *Growing House*, 2004, by Bert Theis, documents his work produced in Shenzhen, China, in 2004. Theis, who also curated the *Isola Art Center* project, created specific architectural structures to promote a respectful experience of the space he works in, always bearing in mind the non-commercial use of the space.

Secondly, the work *Paradox of the Praxis I (Sometimes Doing Something Leads to Nothing)* by Francis Alÿs, a photograph that documents the action carried out by the artist in Mexico City in 1997 and that aims to show the beauty of the city without the use of filters. Alÿs pushes a big ice block from one point to another of the city, performing a paradoxical situation based on the impossibility of successfully completing his action, as seen and shared by all the people he meets along the streets.

Lastly, Pantani-Surace propose an image from the documentation of their action *La responsabilità dei cieli e delle altezze* staged in *Piazza dell'Immaginario* in 2014. This is a work that comes from the idea that a square doesn't belong to the space but to the people who live there: the action took place there, in our square, together with citizens/participants who produced the collective message "I love you" in Chinese, using woodcutting techniques. A structure created especially for the purpose allowed participants to impress the characters while jumping and dancing on a matrix. These three ideograms printed on paper were installed in the square (via Fabio Filzi) and they remained visible as long as time and weather permitted. The image selected is a trace of that action and allows us to create a link with the place where it happened, to demonstrate that the status and the value of an artwork fits in with the participation during the action.

EDUCATION

The educational section is a flexible structure based in *Piazza dell'Immaginario* with an activity programme staged throughout the district. The project includes *walking tours* to introduce artists and works, but also to describe the specific urban context in which the exhibition takes place.

The creative workshop for children will be organized and structured in two different sections:

- Activities and actions focused on contemporary art, starting from the various media used and issues addressed by the artists involved in the project;
- Direct involvement in the exhibition through an enjoyable tour around this "open-air progressive museum" and an initial orientation in the district where works are installed.

SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

Giorgio Bernardini, a Sociology graduate, is now a journalist and writer. He has written for Italian daily newspapers such as the *Sole 24 Ore*, *Il Messaggero* and for *Agi*. At the moment he writes for *Corriere della Sera* and he is a correspondent for the news agency Ansa. As a writer he has published *Chen contro Chen, la guerra che cambierà Prato* (Round Robin Editrice, 2014).

Massimo Bressan, anthropologist, is the president of IRIS and one of the founders of SIAA (Società Italiana di Antropologia Applicata). He has been working for 20 years in the field of social research and the evaluation of regional development programs. His specializations are economic and urban anthropology applied to local districts and economic systems.

Gary W. McDonogh is an anthropologist and professor at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania (USA). He has been studying Chinatowns of the world for a long time. He has published several articles about Chinatowns: *Chinatowns: Social Movements, Urban Conflict, and Global Scale* in "Quaderns-E" (Institut Català d'Antropologia, Barcellona, 2014) and "Negotiating Global Chinatowns: Difference, Diversity and Connection" in *Cambio. Rivista sulle trasformazioni sociali* (University of Florence, 2013) with Cindy Wong.

Valentina Pedone is a researcher at the University of Florence, where she teaches Chinese language and literature. She works on bilingualism, second-generations and Chinese migration. She has published several articles and books on these issues: *Filosofare randagio* (Hoepli, 2010), *A Journey to the West. Observations on the Chinese Migration to Italy* (Florence University Press, 2013) and *Letteratura cinese contemporanea* (Hoepli, 2015) with Serena Zuccheri.

Marco Wong honorary president of Associna (second-generation Chinese association). He has served as the editorial director of the bilingual monthly magazine *It's China*. As a writer, he published his first book *Nettare rosso* (Compagnia delle lettere) in 2010 and the short story *Appuntamento olimpico* (Lite Editions) in 2012.

2015 ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Francis Alÿs (Antwerp, Belgium, 1959) lives and works in Mexico City. He creates works that encompass many media, often involving the participation and presence of the artist. Being a "wanderer", a traveller exploring society by putting the emphasis on its values and contradictions, is a fundamental element of Francis Alÿs' artistic development. He always offers a perspective that differs from the official and canonical one, maintaining a coherence between his artistic projects and his own living conditions. Alÿs' work has been shown in many international institutions, including Wiels, Brussels; The Tate Modern, London; The Renaissance Society, Chicago; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Portikus, Frankfurt; MALBA, Buenos Aires; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg; Musée d'Art Contemporain, Avignon; Centro Nazionale per le Arti Contemporanee, Rome; Kunsthaus, Zurich; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; MoMA, New York; Or Gallery, Vancouver, and the MADRE, Naples. In 2012, on the occasion of dOCUMENTA 13, Alÿs showed his film *REEL-UNREEL* in Kabul. Alÿs has participated in several biennials: San Paolo (2010, 2004 and 1998), Venice (2007, 2001 and 1999), Shanghai (2002), Istanbul (2001 and 1999) and Havana (2000 and 1994).

Olivo Barbieri (Carpi, province of Modena, 1954) studied pedagogy at University of Bologna, and in 1971 he intensified his interest in photography. He produced *Flippers 1977-1978*, a work dedicated to an abandoned warehouse used as a pinball machine factory. The images in this series may be considered the storage of culture and the imaginary of an era. He participated in *Viaggio in Italia*, Bari 1984. In the early 80s, he started working on the artificial illumination of the cities of Europe and the Far East. Since 1989 he has travelled throughout the Far East, especially China, developing his ongoing project about the themes of environmental changes and their representation. In 1996 the Folkwang Museum, Essen, organized his first retrospective. In 2003 he started a new site-specific project in 40 cities all over the world. The *site specific* series *2003-2013*, *Parks 2003-2014*, *Real Worlds 2008-2013*, *Images 1978-2007*, *Virtual Truths 1996-2002* and *Artificial Illuminations, 1980-2014* explore the relationship between reality, perception and representation. Barbieri's work has been shown in many international institutions and galleries, and he has published a great number of photobooks.

Bianco-Valente, Giovanna Bianco (Latronico, PZ, 1962) and Pino Valente (Naples, 1967) live and work in Naples. Bianco-Valente started to work together in 1994. Their artistic practice is focused on the processes of the perception and definition of reality. Through visual abstractions, videos and environmental installations they aim to explore the relationship between body and mind, reality and imagination, nature and artifice. Bianco-Valente's works underline the imperfections and the architectural peculiarities of places and fabrics while reproducing stories and relationships connected to them. Their works have been shown in many group and solo shows in Italy and abroad, and they have held installations in many international museums and public spaces, such as the MAXXI, Rome; Museo MADRE, Naples; the Milan Triennial; Museo Nacional Reina Sofia, Madrid; Kunsthaus, Hamburg; NCCA – National Centre for Contemporary Arts, Moscow. They have produced site-specific projects in Lebanon (Becharre), Morocco (Marrakech) and New York (The Kitchen-ISP 2014, Whitney Museum).

Pantani-Surace, Lia Pantani (Florence, 1966) and Giovanni Surace (Vibo Valentia, 1964) have worked together since 1996, and teach at the Fine Arts Academy of Florence. Selected group shows include: N°1, Museo Laboratorio, Città Sant'Angelo, Pescara; *Working Insider*, Leopolda Station, Florence; *Allineamenti*, Trinitatiskirche, Cologne; *Mobili*, Nosadella due, Bologna; *Una giornata particolare, luogo delle possibilità*, Teatro Sant'Andrea, Pisa; *Au Pair, coppie di fatto nell'arte contemporanea*, Fondazione Malvina Menegaz per le Arti e le Culture, Borgo Medievale di Castelbasso, Teramo; *Start Point*, Sun Studio 74rosso, Florence; *Inventing the memorable*, Le Murate, Florence; *La responsabilità dei cieli e delle altezze*, Piazza dell'Immaginario, Prato. Selected solo shows: *Se la memoria mi dice il vero*, Certosa Monumentale di Calci, Pisa; *Non spiegatemi perché la pioggia si trasforma in grandine* Galleria Nicola Fornello, Prato; *Ti amo*, Madder 139, London; *The other party (who's next, dovrebbe piovere su di voi e non su di me)* Galleria Die Mauer and enclosure wall of Via Pomeria (playground), Prato.

Bert Theis

Bert Theis (Luxembourg, 1952) is one of those artists who stood out in the Nineties for his work in public spaces. His works explore philosophical, social and political issues; most of them are produced on the basis of specific spaces of cities. Over the last ten years, he has organized two long-term projects: *Isola Art Center* and *OUT – the Office for Urban Transformation*, working on the urban conflicts between citizens, city government and a multinational company in a district of Milan known as Isola. He has participated in several international artistic events, such as the Venice Biennale (1995); *Sculptur*. Projects in Münster (1997), *Arte all'Arte* (1998); *Manifesta* (1998); Gwangju Biennial (2002); Tirana Biennial (2003); Busan Biennial (2006) and Taipei Biennial (2008).

2014 ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Andrea Abati (Prato, 1952) has worked on photography since the late 1970s. The starting point for his work is his analysis of the transformations in the industrial architectural landscape, the symbolic observation of man-impacted nature, the behaviour of people and changes in the social fabric of the city, through the use of photography as a tool of knowledge and relation between oneself and the world. His most famous works include: *I Luoghi del Mutamento* (Places of Change), a series he began in 1988, undoubtedly his most complex project and also the best known, concentrating on the contemporary industrial landscape and the changes in social reality; the series *I Luoghi della Natura* (Places of Nature, 1997), nocturnal, dream-like visions and the sea become the place of reflection on contemporary identity, the mutant imaginary suspended between nature and artifice; in 2012 he created the series *La Forza della Natura* (The Force of Nature). Since 2008 he has also worked on video. For Abati, abandoning the concept of the work and instead triggering artistic practices in the public sphere can become a priority in certain moments, as in the case of his construction of *Giardino Melampo/Mandela Garden 1*. He has held many solo and group shows in Italy, France, Austria, Belgium, Germany, the USA and Canada.

Gabriele Basilico (Milan, 1944-2013) began his career in the area of social photography, but his main fields of activity were the industrial and post-industrial landscape, the transformations and urbanization of the territory. In this sense, his first project was *Milano. Ritratti di fabbriche* (Milan, Factory Portraits), shot on the former industrial outskirts of Milan in 1978-80. In 1984 he was invited to take part in the Mission Photographique de la D.A.T.A.R., the largest photographic campaign to be conducted in Europe in the 20th century, organized by the French government. In that same period, he completed *Porti di mare* (Seaports, 1982-88), and in 1991 he took many photographs in Beirut, which had been completely destroyed by war. He continued his research on Milan and other Italian and European cities, aware of the fact "that in all cities there are more or less visible presences that show themselves to those who want to see them." His works are included in many international public and private collections, and have been shown in many museums, institutions and private galleries in Italy and abroad.

Bleda y Rosa, María Bleda (Castellón, 1969) and José María Rosa (Albacete, 1970) have worked as a duo since 1992. They live and work in Valencia, Spain. According to the critic Alberto Martín, the fundamental nucleus of their work is the representation of the territory, with which they attempt to underline the complex union of cultures and times that shape the territory. They thus transform the landscape genre into images of great evocative impact, manifestations of their direct experience of the places photographed. The passing of time, traces and memory are the main features of their work. Recent solo shows include: Real Jardín Botánico, Fundación Telefónica and PHE'10 in Madrid; Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville; Galería Elba Benitez, Madrid; Galería Visor, Valencia; Rosenthal Fine Art, Chicago; Galería Pedro Oliveira, Oporto. Group shows: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona; Fundación Marcelino Botín, Santander; Museo Nacional Reina Sofía MNRS, Madrid; Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona MACBA and Fundación Joan Miró, Barcelona; AA Architectural Association, London; Centro Cultural Gabriela Mistral, Santiago, Chile; Musée d'art moderne, Ceret, France; Stenersenmuseet, Oslo; Kulturhuset, Stockholm. They took part in MANIFESTA 4 and the 12th International Biennial of Cairo.

R.E.P. Revolutionary Experimental Space

Established in 2004 in Kiev, Ukraine: Ksenia Gnilitskaya (Kiev, 1984), Nikita Kadan (Kiev, 1982), Zhanna Kadyrova (Brovary, Ukraine, 1981), Vladimir Kuznetsov (Lutsk, Ukraine, 1976), Lada Nakonechnaya (Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, 1982) and Lesia Khomenko (Kiev, 1980). By the time the R.E.P. group was founded in 2004, all of its members had already developed an artistic personality of their own. They have continued along the same lines ever since. However, for all these years the artists have been engaged in collective art practices, thus maintaining their

small art community. The political events of the "Orange Revolution" were a key element in the group's establishment. The first collective actions of the R.E.P group were carried out in the crowd of protesters in Kiev's Maidan square: it was the unanimity of broad masses of society struggling for a common political cause that prompted these Ukrainian artists to work together. Another reason to maintain the group, which still counts today, is the weak infrastructure of the Kiev art scene. Lacking an extensive institutional network capable of supporting experimental art, artists form associations to make up for the absence of nonexistent institutions. Since 2007 they have been involving other groups in joint projects, presenting various forms of collaboration in a single space.

INFORMATION

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