Mythologies of Accumulation

web exhibition
13.03.2017 — 13.04.2017

Athanor' second web exhibition spans projects which deal with the theme of accumulation from different perspectives. The title itself is intended to question the way in which accumulative processes of collecting and archiving can be considered as "sacred" acts, while the care of the archivist — or the passion of the collector — can be seen as deeply connoted by a religious or spiritual dimension.

The way in which the contents are displayed in this online exhibition aims to foster viewers in discovering these four archive–based projects. As the Italian art critic and curator Marco Scotini said about exhibiting archive materials: "'what' displayed artworks and documents are is never independent from 'how' they are staged".[1] The basic interface of the projects' webpages provides a neutral background: an attempt to not put some contents in relief, but rather "to put them in the viewer's sight", as the architect Lina Bo Bardi once declared apropos of her setup design for Museu de Arte in São Paulo[2], a three dimensional rendering of the concept of accumulation.

Lina Bo Bardi, gallery setup,
Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 1968

If this concept is the leitmotif which binds the projects together, they are indeed very different both in their premises and their visual outputs.

Paolo Patelli's *The Hut of European Identity* plays around the inciting statement that there is no such thing as an "European identity", at least not in a definite and conclusive way. Starting from the concept drawn for the House of European History (HEH) — a museum recently opened in Brussels with the aim of providing access to "transnational processes and events in Europe through museological interpretation"[3] — the project's theoretical framework highlights the lack of concrete points of reference transversally agreed by all the cultures forming Europe. Rather, this work–in–progress identity is made up of military conflicts and ideological

clashes; the harmony and equity figured by EU institutions seem to be no more than the bridges depicted on € banknotes: an archetypal, distant, fake version of reality.[4]

Paolo Patelli, *The Hut of European Identity*, Amsterdam, 2016

As a counterpart to the HEH, Patelli built a more modest "hut", as an "unsolicited addition of footnotes, annotations on the margins"[5] and as a collection of material culture items regarding Europe's political life, including pamphlets, flags, a loudspeaker.

The symmetrical and perfect compositions featured on euro–notes are completely reversed by the urban–organical accumulations created by Ryota Matsumoto. Athanor exhibits just a sample of the prolific production of Matsumoto, visual artist, architect and urban planner. His artworks are morphological reflections of contemporary urban milieus, whose inputs, defined as "socio–cultur-

al entities"[6], come from both the architectural practice and the art history.

William Baziotes, Untitled, 1932

Taking into account assorted and peculiar references, from Futurism and Surrealism to Abstract Expressionism and more recently Julie Mehretu's large–scale abstract architectures, Matsumoto acts as an alchemical catalyst able to give shape to chaotic, yet perceivably ordered, compositions. The abstract imagery is a result of an hybrid technique between analog tools (ink, acrylic, graphite) and digital media (3d parametric modeling, algorithmic processing, compositional custom softwares). The layering of multiple perspectives, together with the sibylline titling, contribute to convey a strange feeling of votive awe towards these manifold image–divinities.

Indeed, a sense of awe is what Antoine Lefebvre and Farah Khelil should have felt while browsing shelves in the Avranches Library,

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which houses thousands of precious manuscripts from the Abbey of Mont Saint–Michel, but also worn out books, devoured by book–eating insects. As a part of their ongoing project bookworms, the two artists, both book lovers, reflected on the importance of books as factor of knowledge transfer.

Alain Resnais, *Toute la Mémorie du Monde*, 20', 1956

Appropriating the title of a doc movie by Alain Resnais[7] — a display of the intricate mechanisms of cataloguing, storing, retrieving books in the Bibliotheque Nationale Française — *ALL THE MEMORY IN THE WORLD* sees the risks of physical damage to a book object as a metaphor for those ones, much more dangerous, which affect cultural transmission as a whole.

The process of accumulation and its close relationship with the identity of the collector is the focus of Nicolas Vamvouklis' research: *Collecting Queerly*. Here

presented in the form of a weekly log, this research[8] explores gay identities and identifications as they are communicated in and through art and provides a critical approach to the study of collectors. Starting from historical imagery depicting collectors and their possessions, the log will then outline the turbulent existence of the Greek collector and gallerist Alexandre Iolas, the relationship with his collection and the villa which housed it.

Alexandre Iolas, Villa Iolas, Agia Paraskevi, 1964 ca.

Archive materials will be gathered together and discussed from a contemporary perspective, in order to set a new layer in the field of queer studies. Questioning the very nature and definition of collecting, Vamvouklis underlines how the act itself, rather than the collected items, is keen to become an object of veneration.

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1   Dal Sasso, Davide (2016). "Dialoghi di Estetica. Parola a Marco Scotini", Artribune

2   Bo Bardi, Lina (1950). "O Museu de Arte de São Paulo". Habitat - Revista das Artes no Brasil, quoted in Stephen Mark Caffey, Gabriela Campagnol, "Dis/Solution: Lina Bo Bardi's Museu de Arte de São Paulo", Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies, 2014

3   europarl.europa.eu/visiting/en/brussels/house-of-european-history

4   On the usage of fake imagery on euro-notes: dezeen.com/2013/05/02/sam-jacob-opinion-money-design/

5   Patelli, Paolo (2016). "The Hut of European Identity: Some Context", neweuropeans.org/the-hut-of-europe-an-identity-some-context/

6   Matsumoto, Ryota (2016). ryotamatsumoto.com/p/about.html

7   Resnais, Alain (1956). *Toute la Mémoire du Monde*, 20'. youtube.com/watch?v=i0RVSZ_yDjs

8   Inspired by the conference *Other Objects of Desire: Collectors and Collecting Queerly*, held at the University of Chicago and later transcribed into the homonymous publication edited by Michael Camille and Adrian Rifkin: youtube.com/watch?v=5mZdtNxCkH8

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