

Press Release

ON HOLD

Nine voices about the time of migrations

February 10 - March 19, 2021

Opening February 9, 11 am - 9 pm

Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani - Via Ventura 6, 20134 Milan (Italy)

On Tuesday 9 February, from 11 am to 9 pm, in the Milan space of Prometeo Gallery Ida Pisani (in via Ventura 6) opens WAITING FOR, a group exhibition that rethinks contemporary human migration through a conversation between nine "storytellers": Maria José Arjona Filippo Berta, Regina José Galindo, Edson Luli, Maria Evelia Marmolejo, Ruben Montini, Santiago Sierra, Giuseppe Stampone and Mary Zygouri.

In conjunction with the opening in via Ventura, a new collaboration with VIAFARINI also starts, in the CONCORDIA 11 space (in Corso Concordia n.11, 20129 Milan), which takes the form of an exhibition dialogue between two artists, one represented by the gallery and one currently in residence at the historic non-profit organization: Regina José Galindo and Arjan Shehaj.

Ideally without interruption with the collective show *Sometimes I think that...*, with visual reflections on the first outbreak of the pandemic, Prometeo Gallery now decides - one year after the origin of the health emergency - to reread the stories of nine authors on the migrations of peoples, a forced and constant diaspora to which the pandemic event is superimposed with devastating effects, and from which this unprecedented cataclysm threatens to steal the right attention of public opinion.

By filling so frequent mass-media gaps, *ON HOLD* aims to bring us back to reflect on the seeds of these migratory phenomena, with an often tragic ending. **Through video works, drawings and installations it is proved that what leaves no choice to the migrant, that is**

conflicts, poverty and scarcity of resources, is often the result of predatory behavior of the single power, or of unfair community political choices. The selection of works on display sheds light on the seeds of these diasporas, as a sign of the fight against any policy of exclusion and dehumanization, offering itself instead as a choral tool to go beyond any physical and linguistic boundary, in which too many voices are often lost. Strongly stratified, the exhibition from its title underlines in particular the condition of *waiting/ being on hold* suffered by migrants in transit, to carry out any basic function for a human being: waiting to eat, to have a bed to sleep in, to go to the bathroom, to to be released or for someone to pick them up.

The exhibition itinerary

Maria José Arjona (Bogotá, Colombia, 1973) herself appears in the work *Flag* (2016) while she is waving a golden thermal blanket as an identity banner, often provided as first comfort to migrants. Even the Italian **Filippo Berta** (Treviglio, 1977), with his work *Homo Homini Lupus* (2011), takes up the symbol of the flag, in this case the tricolor, which the video shows as it is fought and torn to pieces by wolves. Berta in *On the straight and narrow* (2014) then highlights the impossibility of finding a balance when trying to rationally adhere to the social body. In this video, a line of people, shot from above, walks trying to follow the edge of the water's edge, the ideal line of an evanescent border.

Relations of power, legal and illegal, define the complex panorama of contemporary migration between Central America and the United States, which **Regina José Galindo** (Guatemala city, Guatemala, 1973) investigated in the installation *America's Family Prison*, consisting of photos, videos and a key contained in a case. Galindo's 2008 project, subsequently acquired by MoMA in New York, consisted of having the artist, his partner and daughter caught in the small cube-shaped cell produced by the company T. Don Hutto, the first authorized by the state of Texas to produce cells to house entire families, held by the authorities

in their attempt to cross the border between Mexico and the United States.

In 1985 Maria **Evelia Marmolejo** (Pradera, Colombia, 1958) was pregnant in Spain, in Madrid: in the photographic series *America*, the Colombian artist recalls that the discovery of the New Continent coincided with the beginning of European colonialism. Nothing should have legitimized the horrors of the colonizers on the colonized and nothing should legitimize the perpetration of certain atrocities.

What makes man such, including the undeniable need to move, goes back to the intense black and white video *What is man?* (2014) by **Edson Luli** (Shkoder, Albania 1989), in which in an intimate close-up each interviewee, of different ethnic groups and linguistic backgrounds, answers the perpetual question that refers to the Greek philosopher Diogenes and which takes on new meanings in times of melting-pot and globalization.

Ruben Montini (Oristano, Italy, 1986), the author of the poignant installation *Habibi* (2019), turns not to individuals, but to the sea, holder of all the bodies and all the stories of those migrants who have not managed to cross it, with an artwork made by installation, photography and embroidery.

Victims of economic relationships that prevail over personal ones are then the subject of the monumental photographic work by **Santiago Sierra** (Madrid, 1966) *3000 huecos de 180 x 50 x 50 cm each* (2002), an action carried out through a group of immigrants of Maghreb and sub-Saharan origin who dug 3,000 holes, each on a human scale, on a hill in Montenmedio (Cadiz), in Andalusia, from where you can glimpse the African continent.

A panorama free from any prejudice is what **Giuseppe Stampone** (Cluses, France, 1974) imagines in *Mimesis* (2018), borrowing Raphael's *Madonna del Belvedere*, then an icon of the new spirit of the Renaissance and today a symbol of a new global world, whose flag is still to be drawn. Finally, another quotation is the one found in *Venus of*

the rags / In transit / Eleusis (2014), by the Greek artist **Mary Zygouri** (Athens, 1973), who relocated Pistoletto's emblematic work in a contemporary Elefsina, the region where the cult of the goddess of crops Demeter originated, claiming the active participation of the community in the name of common interests.

NB: The inauguration will take place at a specially extended time and in compliance with current anti-Covid19 regulations.

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