

New Babylon

10.07 - 03.09.23

Agnese Spolverini

Alessandro Manfrin

Clarissa Baldassarri

Juan Pablo Macías

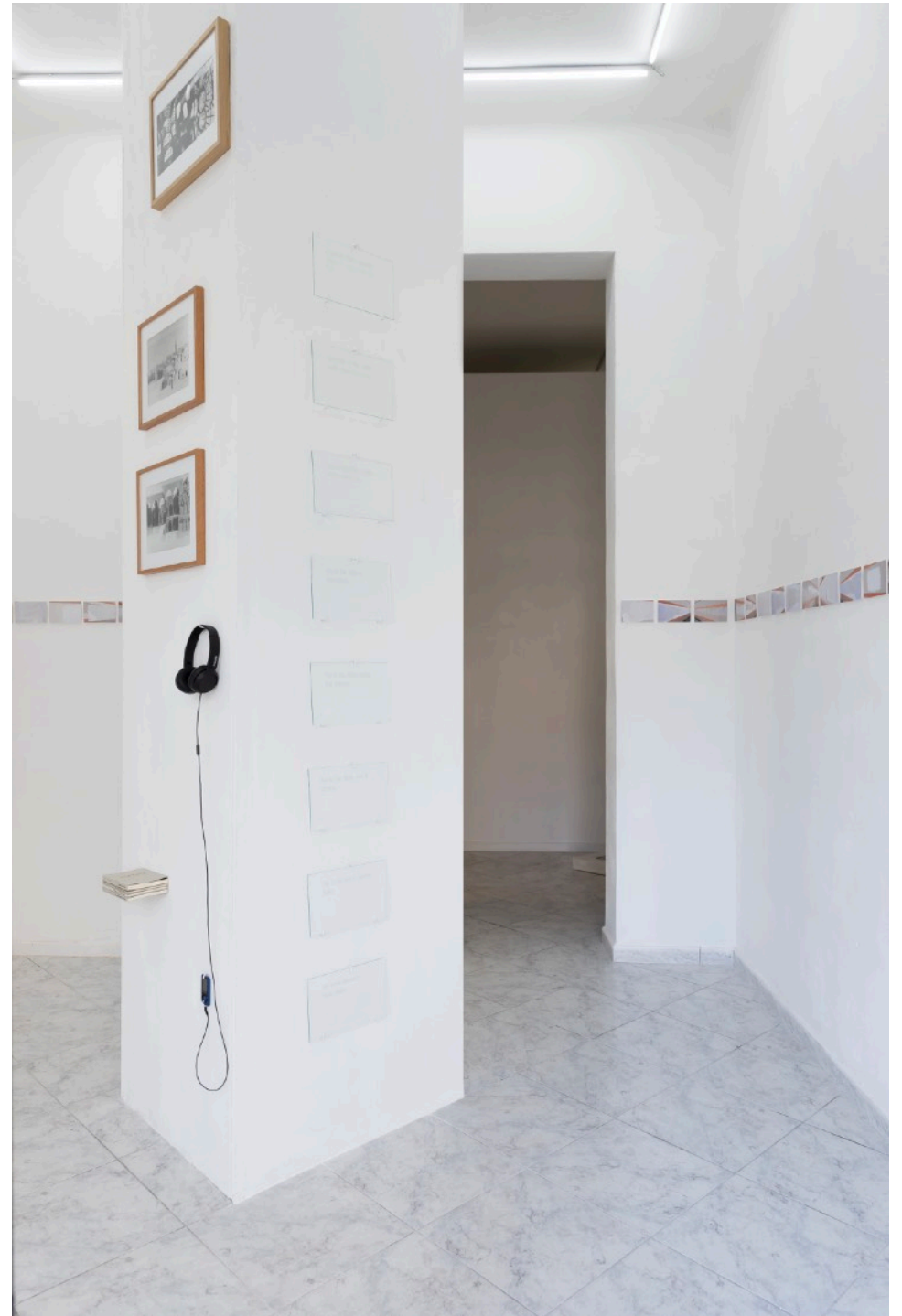
Margherita Moscardini

Stefano Serretta

Yehuda Neiman

ph. Alessio Belloni

GMCG | [contacts](#) | [info](#)



Just one city in just one world.

For centuries and centuries, the distances between places stayed the same. Until the end of the 18th century, people moved about in the same way, and more or less at the same speed, throughout the ages.

Only the trains and steamboats of the early 1800s narrowed the world and cut down those distances. Since then, technological advances have followed one another at an astounding pace. In just over one hundred years, we went from the first steam trains to the conquest of space.

There is a famous quote attributed to Henry Ford, who pioneered the assembly line in the automotive sector: “If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.” I think people living in the “West” at the turn of the twentieth century were well aware of the scientific and technological progress being made in transportation. Perhaps they didn’t understand the basic principles, but they were well aware of the potential of first steam and then fossil fuels as a source of energy for locomotion.

It’s true, since the earliest steam-powered means of transport on land and sea, we have saved considerable time in moving around. In a way, the world shrunk. But not too much – still, it took weeks, if not months, to move from one continent to another. Not to mention significant economic resources.

The real revolution came with the discovery of the potential of electricity. To paraphrase Stefan Zweig in “Decisive Moments in History”, it’s amazing that the historical moment when a thought “written down” in Paris reached Rome via telegraph is not emphasized in school curricula. We can’t understand why, in educational programmes, territorial conquests and wars are given more weight than Humanity’s technological progress.

At that moment, when the first word travelled hundreds and hundreds of kilometres in an instant, the world truly became smaller. Of course, people continued to move about as they had before – but not thoughts. Starting in 1837, at least in Europe, countries were connected nearly in real time. It took a few decades and incredible effort for words to cross the Atlantic Ocean. But at that time, Humanity as a whole seemed to have the desire to be united and connected.

Next, there came the battle of the currents. To us, especially because of novels and films, this story seems almost like a thriller, with the world watching to see which would come out on top: Thomas Edison’s direct current or Nikola Tesla’s

alternating current. But aside from lighting cities and bringing power, this didn’t have such a decisive impact on transportation or communications. The telephone, first appearing in the second half of the 19th century, was slow to spread. And anyway, in my view, it had a much lesser impact than another invention that came more or less at the same time: the radio.

Guglielmo Marconi’s radio was certainly a major change. Unlike the telegraph, which required an immense effort to connect continents across oceans, the radio, transmitted by its waves of the same name, was better received by inhabitants of the globe. It was accessible, with no need to learn any kind of special code. Although much more immaterial than its predecessor, the voice of an operator in Sydney could be heard in London in an instant. With the spread of the radio, the world (or at least most of it) was truly bound together tightly.

From there, with the earliest discoveries of quantum mechanics in the early 1900s, with Alan Turing’s first calculator, we soon came to the computer, the internet, and the technological world of today.

The aeroplane, with early experiments by the Wright Brothers culminating in the first flight of a person-carrying aircraft in 1903. And in 1909, Louis Blériot was the first person to fly across the English Channel. On 12 April 1961, Jurij Gagarin was the first person to go to space. And in 1969, Neil Armstrong took his first step (and the first step for all of us) on the Moon.

For anyone with a scientific mind and interests, like me, this roughly century-long sprint from steam machines to computers has always been fascinating. Perhaps we view it with a romantic eye, but Humanity’s desire to connect to each other faster and faster and with greater efficiency gives us hope that, at some point, we’ll understand that we all live under the same roof. Reading texts by authors living at the turn of the twentieth century, I’ve grasped the significance of the succession of all these discoveries, which we take for granted today. The wonder of a Humanity that goes to great lengths to connect with each other and come together.

Thinking about these events in our scientific and technological evolution and rereading the Bible, I was reminded of the Old Testament passage about the Tower of Babel. Genesis describes how, in the early days of Humanity, all of Earth’s inhabitants lived in a single city, Babylon.

These citizens of the first and only city on the planet spoke the same language and lived and prospered together. With their technological progress, united in their efforts, they began to build a tower high enough to reach God. But God feared the unrelenting spirit of these individuals, so he descended to Earth, confused their languages, and dispersed them over the face of all the Earth. Here, we find a precedent: a time when a united Humanity prospered, coexisting in peace.

I'm reminded of a few passages from Charlie Chaplin's Final Speech in the Great Dictator:

We have developed speed, but we have shut ourselves in. Machinery that gives abundance has left us in want. Our knowledge has made us cynical. Our cleverness, hard and unkind. We think too much and feel too little. More than machinery we need humanity. More than cleverness we need kindness and gentleness. Without these qualities, life will be violent and all will be lost. The aeroplane and the radio have brought us closer together. The very nature of these inventions cries out for the goodness in men - cries out for universal brotherhood - for the unity of us all. Even now my voice is reaching millions throughout the world.

And also:

Now let us fight to fulfil that promise! Let us fight to free the world - to do away with national barriers - to do away with greed, with hate and intolerance. Let us fight for a world of reason, a world where science and progress will lead to all men's happiness. Soldiers! in the name of democracy, let us all unite!

Here is Charlie Chaplin, during the Second World War, wishing, via The Jewish Barber, the film's protagonist, that science and progress would bring prosperity to all.

As a matter of fact, the complete automation of production was also at the foundation of the Marxist utopia for overcoming capitalism. And it is a *conditio sine qua non* for the construction of the Situationist artist and architect Constant's New Babylon. Constant took inspiration from the Homo Ludens described by Johan Huizinga, that is, a technologically advanced era where individuals, freed from economic, productive, and functional tasks, are free to dedicate themselves to play and culture. After decades of debate, the Positivist view of progress has been challenged and

nearly discredited. But I don't want to believe this. It is clear to us all that the internet and technologies connected to it have not brought humanity to the world. In fact, in some ways, they have actually driven us apart. But, as far as I'm concerned, and based on what I believe, all these tools we literally have in our hands will soon help us. Chaplin, with inferior technology, from our modern perspective, wished for "a world of reason, a world where science and progress will lead to all men's happiness."

I'd like to conclude these thoughts by addressing the utopia of New Babylon. As we know, first the Letterists and then the Situationists discussed urbanism in their writings. There were famous maps of the cities of Paris and Venice. Psychogeography and everything else.

Constant's New Babylon, without a doubt, stems from something that happened in Alba. Together with Pinot Gallizio, he thought up a city for the Rom community that settled in Piedmont each summer. The "Gypsy City" designed by Constant and Pinot Gallizio called for moveable partitioning walls under a single roof, adaptable to the variable number of individuals sheltering there.

This brought about the idea of designing a nomad city on a global scale. A *dériville*, a city where the permanent nomadism of a Humanity liberated from capitalism was meant to create spaces of social interaction for itself.

This whole story of the evolution of technology, on the one hand, demonstrates Humanity's desire to live under one roof, and on the other, highlights that this race to perfect technology has failed in its goal.

It seems, then, that the only way to believe in a single civilization inhabiting a single planet is to believe in just one common city. And if we think about the Biblical Babylon and Constant's New Babylon, it will soon be necessary to found a new, single city to encompass the entire surface of the Earth and accommodate all of its individuals.

I'd like to propose a game, the "Psychogeographical Game of the Week" published in Potlatch (Bulletin of the Letterist International) Bulletin n. 1, dated 22 June 1954:

Depending on what you are after, choose an area, a more or less populous city, a more or less lively street. Build a house. Furnish it. Make the most of its decoration and surroundings. Choose the season and the time. Gather together the right people, the best records and drinks. Lighting and conversation must,

of course, be appropriate, along with the weather and your memories.
If your calculations are correct, you should find the outcome satisfying.

And I would add:

When you're satisfied with the outcome, build another house, attached to it, with the same conditions as above. Host more people and continue the conversation. Repeat this action until you've built a ring of continuous houses along one meridian of the Earth. And then build another ring along another meridian, and another, until the Earth's surface is entirely covered.

Basically, put the utopias of Constant and Superstudio into practice.
The outcome is sure to satisfy you.

Gian Marco Casini, Livorno 23 June 2023

GMCG
contacts
info







THE ANARCHIST DOCTRINE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

José Otílica

I

PROBLEMAS DEL MOMENTO EN NUEVE ESTUDIOS BREVES

A.K. Owen

II

EVERYDAY LIFE AND THE CULTURE OF THE THING

Boris Arvatov

III

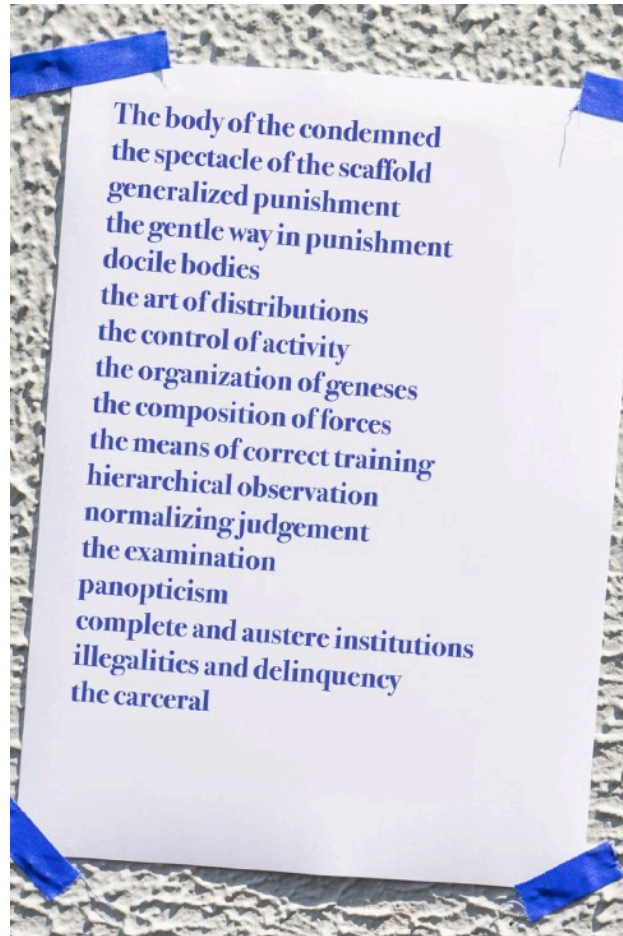
ANTI IN ANARKHIIA-TVORCHESTVO

Kazimir Malevich

IV

Topic #1:

Alessandro Manfrin:



In the 50's, the French artist, who was the founder of Letterist International, Gil J. Wolman proposed to give the public free access to the prison all over the country offering the tourist the chance to stay there with the prisoners. In addition to this, he proposed a game in which a visitors would be drawn to get a life-sentence.

I have always thought about the topic of incarceration. I have never openly expressed my opinion about the matter for a number of reasons such as shyness or fear of having to deal with something so delicate. Or for the simple reason that I wanted to keep at a safe distance from something so complex.

Once again, by images everything seems to be easier and more natural. I borrowed Michel Foucault's words, more specifically from the table of contents of the book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (*Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*, Éditions Gallimard, Paris, 1975) that he dedicated to the issue of prison.

The index of the book has become a poem, a ready-made consisting of words, a statement, a poster. The following image was then printed and hung on the wall of San Vittore Detention Center.

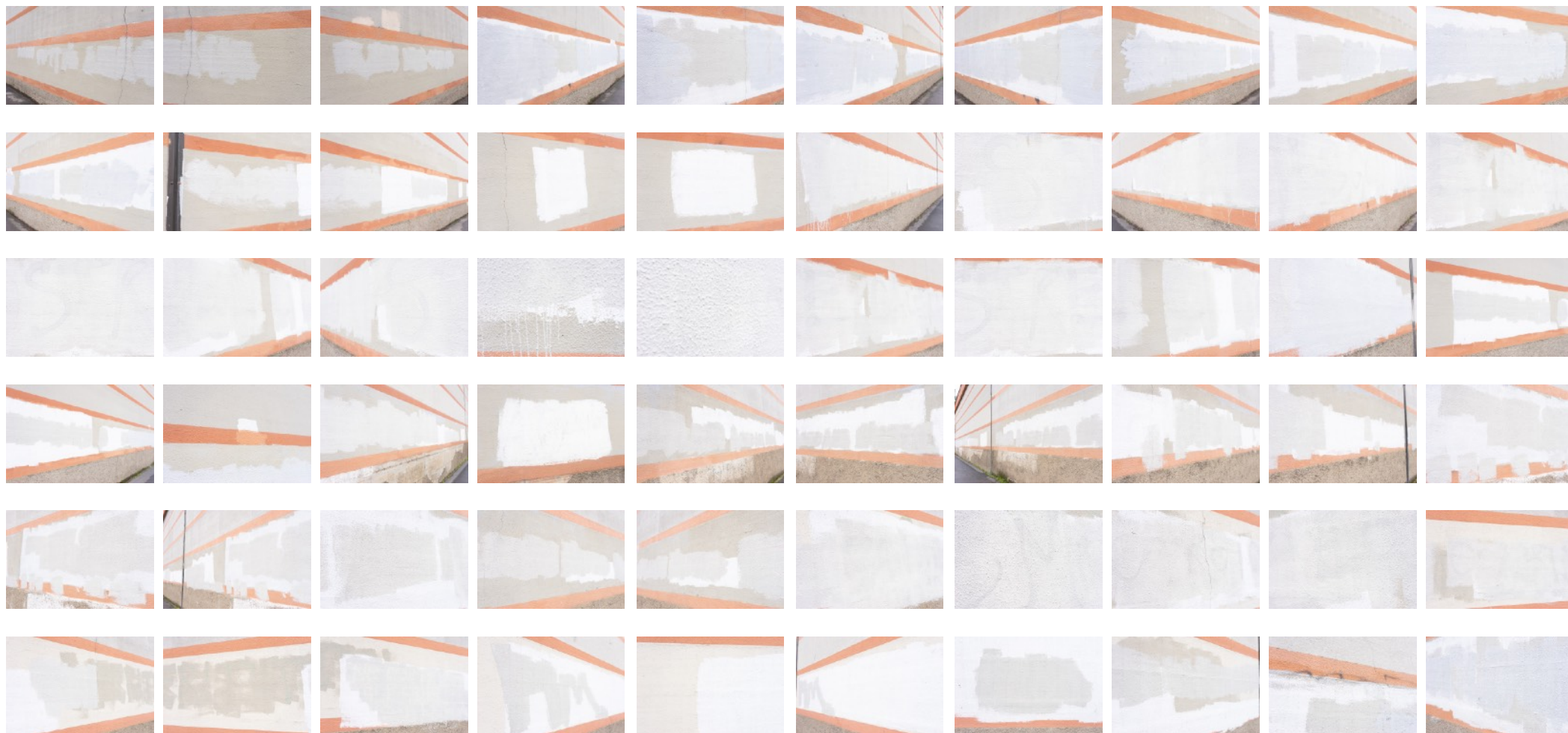
Alessandro Manfrin

Daily paintings (San Vittore)

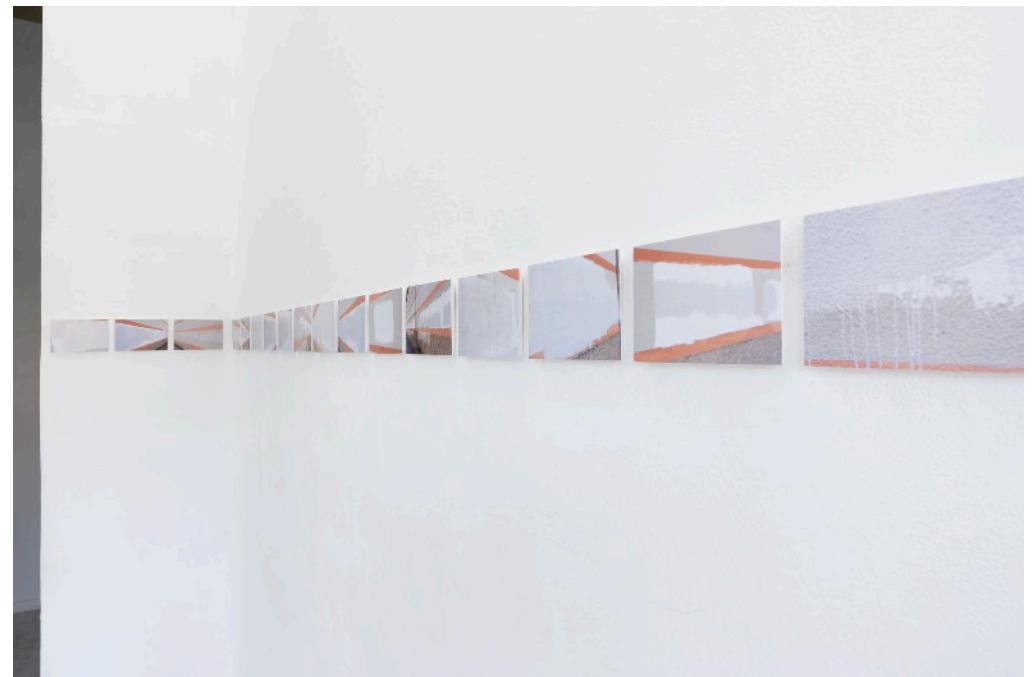
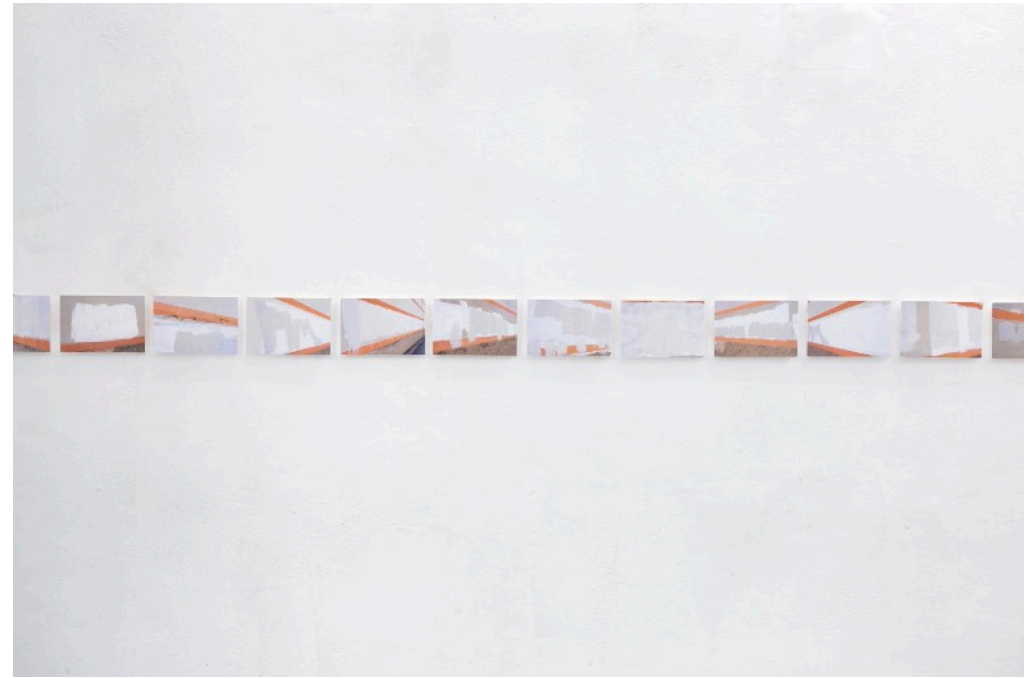
2023

60 inkjet photo prints on matte paper

10x15 cm each



Alessandro Manfrin
Daily paintings (San Vittore)
2023
detail



Topic #2:

The Belgian artist Marcel Mariën, in the article "Le pas du commandeur (The Commander's Step)," which appeared in 1955 in the magazine "Les lèvres nues (Bare Lips)," proposes to pile up, once there are no more wars to celebrate, all the equestrian statues from all cities into a single desert plain. According to Debord, this would offer passersby the spectacle of a cavalry charge as a memory of all the greatest mass murderers in history.

Stefano Serretta:

I still vividly remember the sense of disorientation I felt the first time I walked among the giants. Almost by chance - after taking a deviation reminiscent of *the Deviation* of Moebius - inside Budapest's Memento Park, I wandered among the monuments and austere sculptures that once loomed large in Soviet Hungary and had now found a new home and a new meaning here, placed outside their symbolic value solely due to their aesthetic and historical significance. Past the portraits of great leaders (Marx, Engels, Lenin, Bela Kun...) and personifications of grand themes like labor and laborers, the war of liberation, the motherland - statues that reached seven meters in height, with muscular profiles and torsos caught in the apparent effort to shape the present, crystallizing the memory of possible futures of the revolutionary dream betrayed in the terrible past of dictatorship - beyond these bodies and gigantic faces resembling death masks, it was the void rising above Stalin's boots that struck me the most. The original statue had been toppled during the protests of 1956, and the replica I was facing of these enormous bronze boots almost amplified the dictator's volume in his absence. An invisible gesture of which only the silent trace remains within a park that tells the construction of self-deception, a choral narration, a system of beliefs now emptied of meaning. Today, the great bronze leaders have moved to blockbuster films, and the large profiles of ideologists, thinkers, and founding fathers are now just a pigeon's perch, but the (sometimes) invisible

energy that moved these heavy and imperative monuments is still alive. It is the long wave of October that shook the world and continued to flow through the streets of Europe and beyond for almost a century, despite everything. These struggles are now photographic documentation and historical memory, of which a small segment is represented by the drawings I have selected for the exhibition - moments and experiences of students and workers who opposed the cold bronze of the statues with the living flesh of their bodies, struggles whose achievements are (also) the reason for this drift that I allowed myself within the cemetery of a dream turned nightmare too quickly. You sent me a quote, and I conclude in the same way (let's go from top to bottom, but it's beautiful like this) because sometimes everything seems like shit "but it will end, like a storm, like a bad hit of acid, like a movie of which I already know the ending I know it will end, like water evaporating in the sun, like a chant that says there cannot exist a better world." We sang it at a demonstration in Genoa, a year after the G8, and deep down, I still believe it: we will hang up the boots of this system and its current representative, sooner or later.

Stefano Serretta

Sutra 69-79

2022

mixed media on paper

50x35 cm



Stefano Serretta

Sutra 69-79

2022

mixed media on paper

50x35 cm



Stefano Serretta

Sutra 69-79

2022

mixed media on paper

35x50 cm



Stefano Serretta

Sutra 69-79

2022

mixed media on paper

35x50 cm



Topic #3:

In “Théorie de la dèrive (Theory of the dèrive)” Guy Debord considers how weather influences dèrives. The dèrive is “a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances... In a dèrive one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. (Guy Debord)”

Agnese Spolverini:

It’s mid-July. My computer and my phone have different opinions on the temperature – one says 37, the other 39. I’d like to know which one is telling the truth.

I think about Debord and about the dèrive... no, no... I think about the dèrive and I think about water... I’d like to be swimming in cool water. It’s too hot.

I’m lying naked on the bed, in the dark. I’m adding a few extra degrees of heat by holding my computer on my stomach. I think about the dèrive and think it’d be a fun game, maybe I should try it. But my legs won’t move. It’s the hottest summer ever, they say, and my body agrees: it won’t move, and I wonder if it’s possible to dèrive when my body has decided not to move. And then I think that it isn’t just my body that’s decided to become paralysed, but the bodies of many others. And it seems that, more than dèriving, the only thing we want to do is to slide onto the ground and feel our skin melt into the floor – the only cool thing left, so cold it’s almost painful to the touch.

Can you dèrive without moving? Can you do it by melting in place?

Since I can’t move, I try to stroll into the cartography of my thoughts. The first place I come across is a dry, sun-scorched field. I curl up there, a little, but that doesn’t last long. It’s too hot, even in my psycho-

field. I go a little further, and find a shady path. I walk about 200 million synapses. I hear the sound of water. I get closer, and finally I see it – flowing into stone pools. There must be a spring. I go to it and wet my wrists and feet. At the bottom of this series of pools, I see a path. I think I'll take it, but first, I want to keep my feet in the dark, cool water of the spring for a bit. Two internal minutes pass, and I go from the psycho-cool to extreme heat again: the blue light of my phone drags me back to the starting line in this, mostly unsuccessful, attempt at dèriving.

I try to return to my stroll through the park of my mind, but the pathway has been broken, my eyes only stare at the palms of my hands, in search of a virtual map to guide me through the steps I already took, or that a Google image search suggested I take. And I wonder where to go while I consult a map that Virtual Anaximander gave me, every millimetre mapped out. There is nothing more to explore. How can I get lost if my outer brain has already mapped out all the places I don't know? How can I dèrive if my wishes don't wish to get lost? If my legs won't move, and even when they do, like psycho-legs, they go back over steps that others have decided for them?

Has the dèrive become impossible since the millimetre-precise mapping of the world never leaves us? Can the starting point for the dèrive now only be stillness?

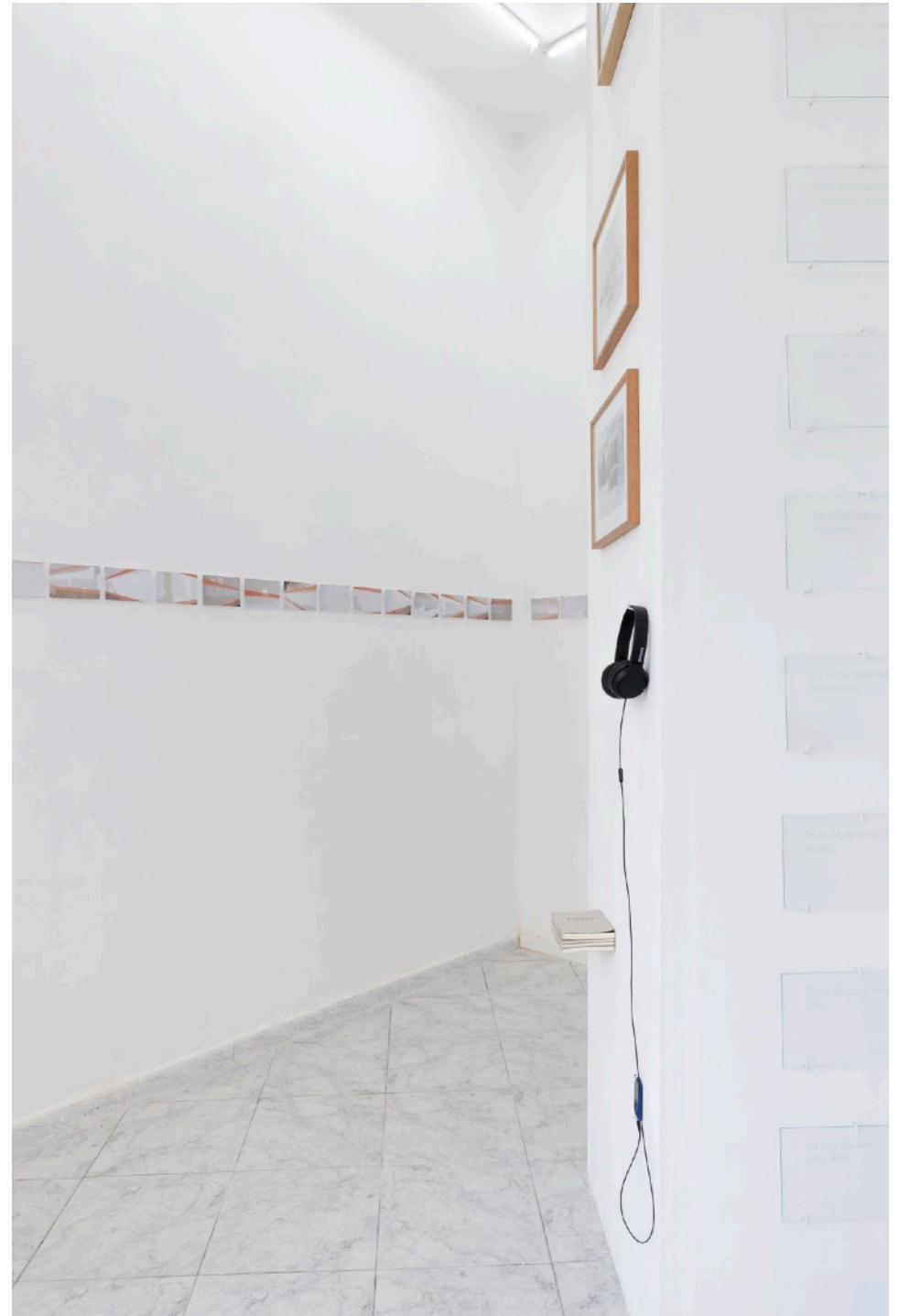
Agnese Spolverini

Con-fluire

2022

sound track

6' 17"



Agnese Spolverini

Con-fluire

2022

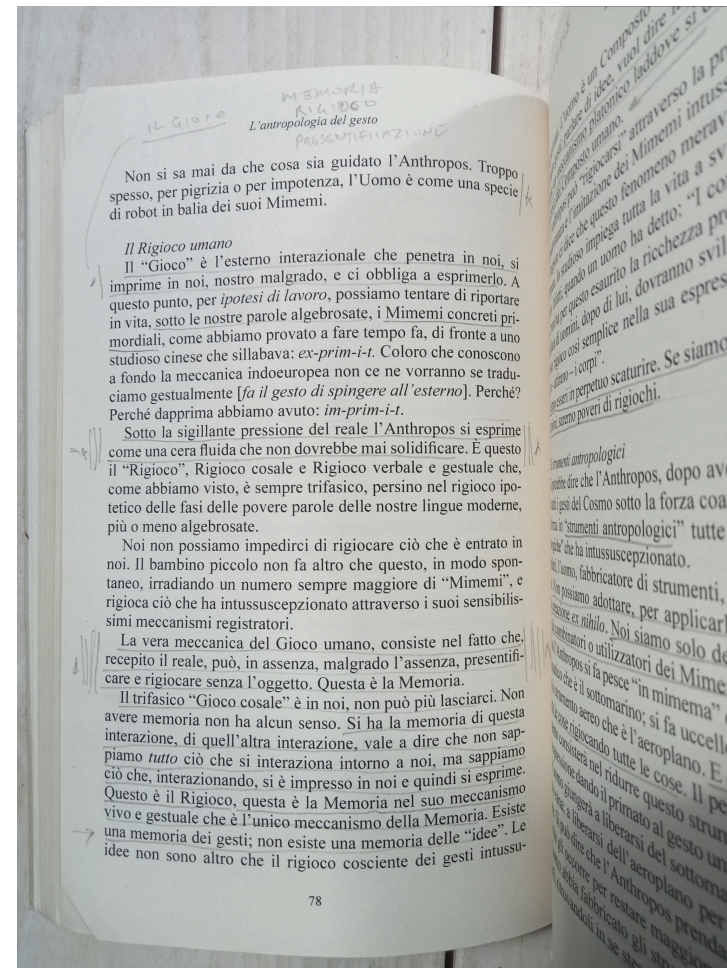
[preview video](#)



Topic #4:

Juan Pablo Macías:

Constant's "New Babylon" was conceived as a nomadic camp on a planetary scale, a shared residence that, with the help of mobile elements, constituted itself as a temporary and constantly renewed living space. These constituent elements, remind me of some of Jean Prouvé's architectural projects, in particular the construction of houses for refugees in France after 1945 and the mobile aluminium panels for the modular and fast construction of dwellings that were sent, for example, to Africa.



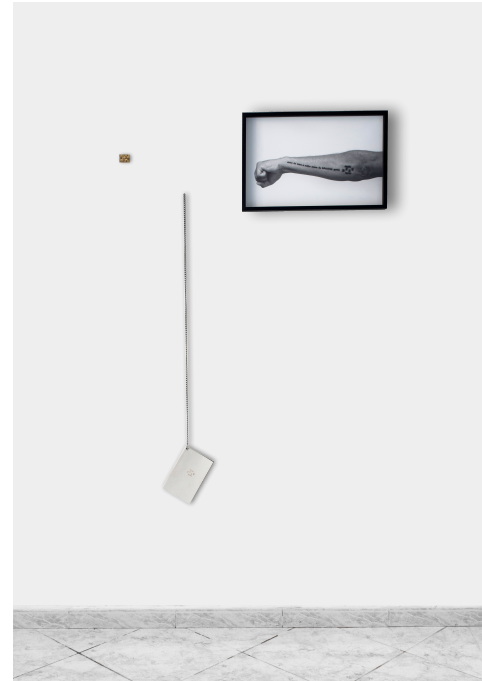
09/08/2023

Juan Pablo Macías

Word+Moist Press Volume I

2014

book, chain, copper seal, photo print
ed. of 5 + 2AP

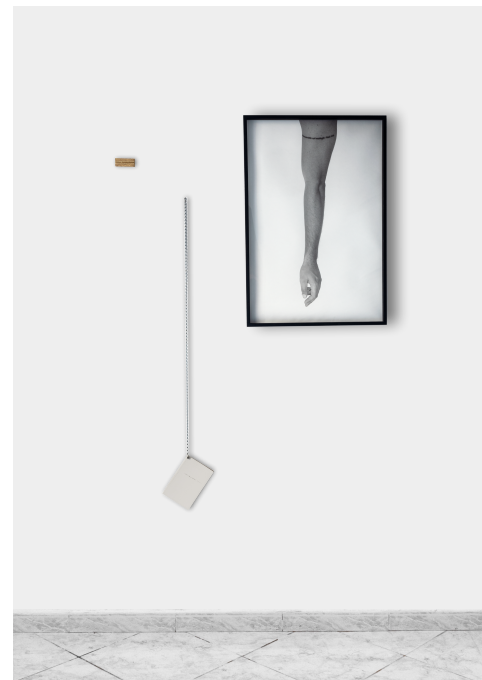


Juan Pablo Macías

Word+Moist Press Volume II

2015

book, chain, copper seal, photo print
ed. of 5 + 2AP



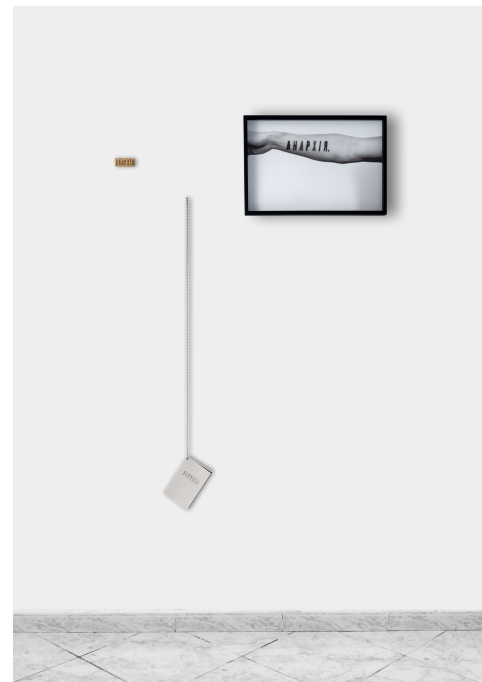
Juan Pablo Macías

Word+Moist Press Volume III

2019/2020

book, chain, copper seal, photo print

ed. of 5 + 2AP



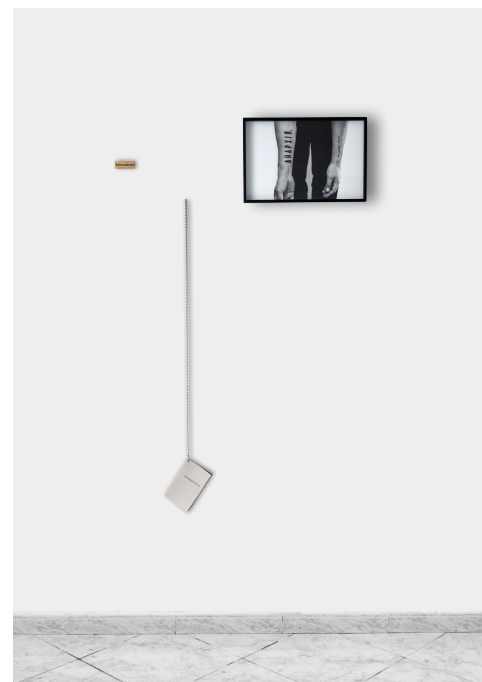
Juan Pablo Macías

Word+Moist Press Volume IV

2019/2020

book, chain, copper seal, photo print

ed. of 5 + 2AP



Topic #5:

In “The Right to the City”, Henri Lefebvre says: “This city is itself ‘oeuvre’, a feature which contrasts with the irreversible tendency towards money and commerce, towards exchange and products. Indeed the oeuvre is use value and the product is exchange value. The eminent use of the city, that is, of its streets and squares, edifices and monuments, is la fête (a celebration which consumes unproductively, without other advantage but pleasure and prestige and enormous riches in money and objects).”

Margherita Moscardini:

Events have now become the ultimate product of consumption. But defending the city as an oeuvre, its use value over its exchange value, is here also a way of saying that the oeuvre itself, as we intend it in this exhibit, exceeds any exchange value. By definition, the value of the oeuvre cannot be quantified with the parameters used to measure the value of the things of this world.

Margherita Moscardini

Metropolitan Voids Agency #Seoul

2014/2023

photo print on paper

40x60 cm

ed. of 3 + 2AP



Margherita Moscardini

Metropolitan Voids Agency #Istanbul

2013/2023

photo print on paper

40x60 cm

ed. of 3 + 2AP



Margherita Moscardini

Metropolitan Voids Agency #Biarritz

2018/2023

photo print on paper

40x60 cm

ed. of 3 + 2AP



Margherita Moscardini

**Metropolitan Voids Agency #La Rochelle
2018/2023**

photo print on paper
40x60 cm
ed. of 3 + 2AP



Margherita Moscardini

**Metropolitan Voids Agency #Istanbul
2013/2023**

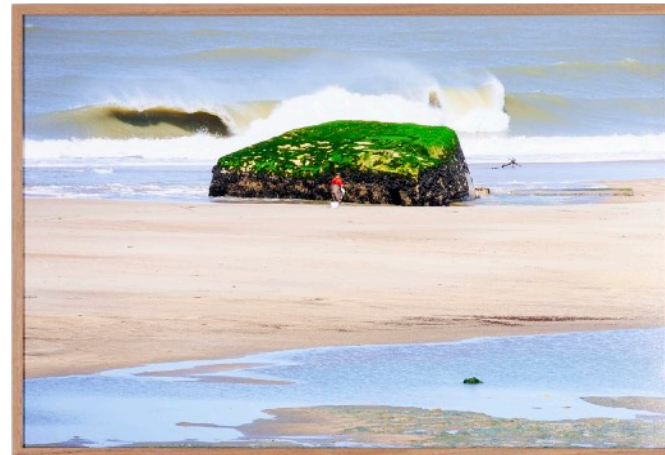
photo print on paper
40x60 cm
ed. of 3 + 2AP



Margherita Moscardini

**Metropolitan Voids Agency #Bordeaux
2018/2023**

photo print on paper
40x60 cm
ed. of 3 + 2AP



Topic #6:

Then the Lord said: "If now, while they are one people, all speaking the same language, they have started to do this, nothing will later stop them from doing whatever they presume to do.

Let us then go down and there confuse their language, so that one will not understand what another says."

Thus the Lord scattered them from there all over the earth, and they stopped building the city.

Clarissa Baldassarri:

Acts 2: 1-16

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues[a] as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, [b] 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" 13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." 14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully

to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel

1 Corinthians 14: 6-25

6 Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? 7 Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the pipe or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? 8 Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? 9 So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. 10 Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. 11 If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me. 12 So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church. 13 For this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. 16 Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer,^[d] say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying? 17 You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified. 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words

in a tongue. 20 Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. 21 In the Law it is written:

“With other tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me”, says the Lord.

22 Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers. 23 So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, 25 as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”

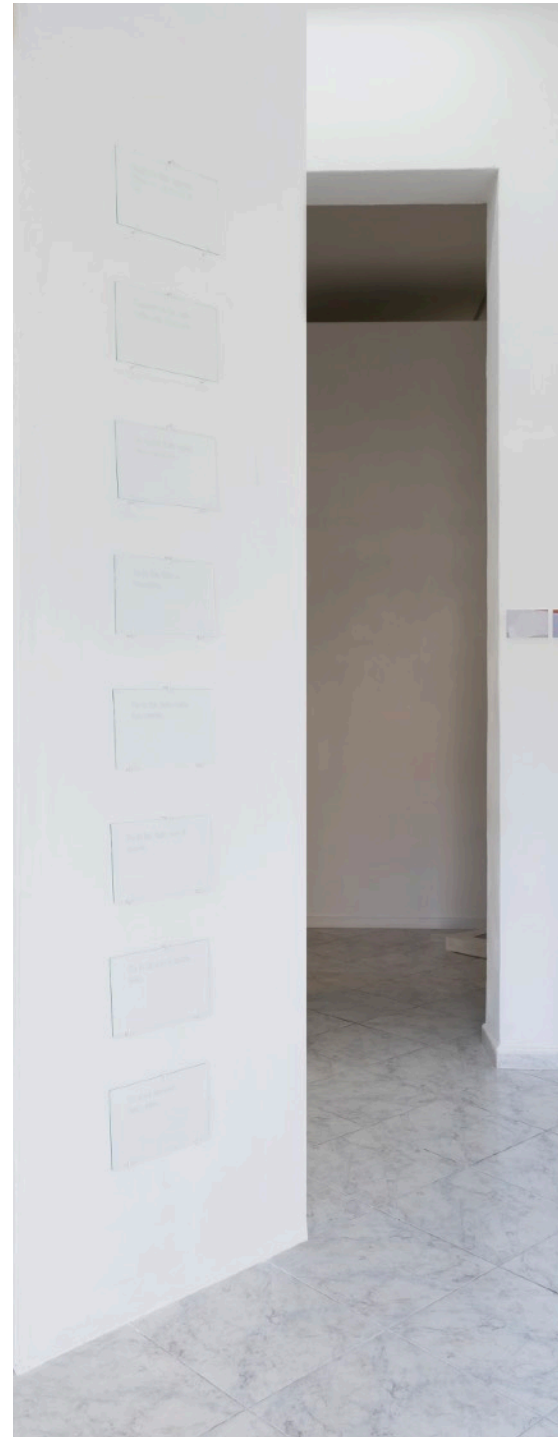
Clarissa Baldassarri

Genesis

2023

engraved glass

17x27 cm each



Clarissa Baldassarri

Genesis

2023

color video, plaster, tablet, battery charger

8x45x37,5 cm | 29' 11"

[preview video](#)



Topic #7:

Yehuda Neiman:

Yehuda Neiman

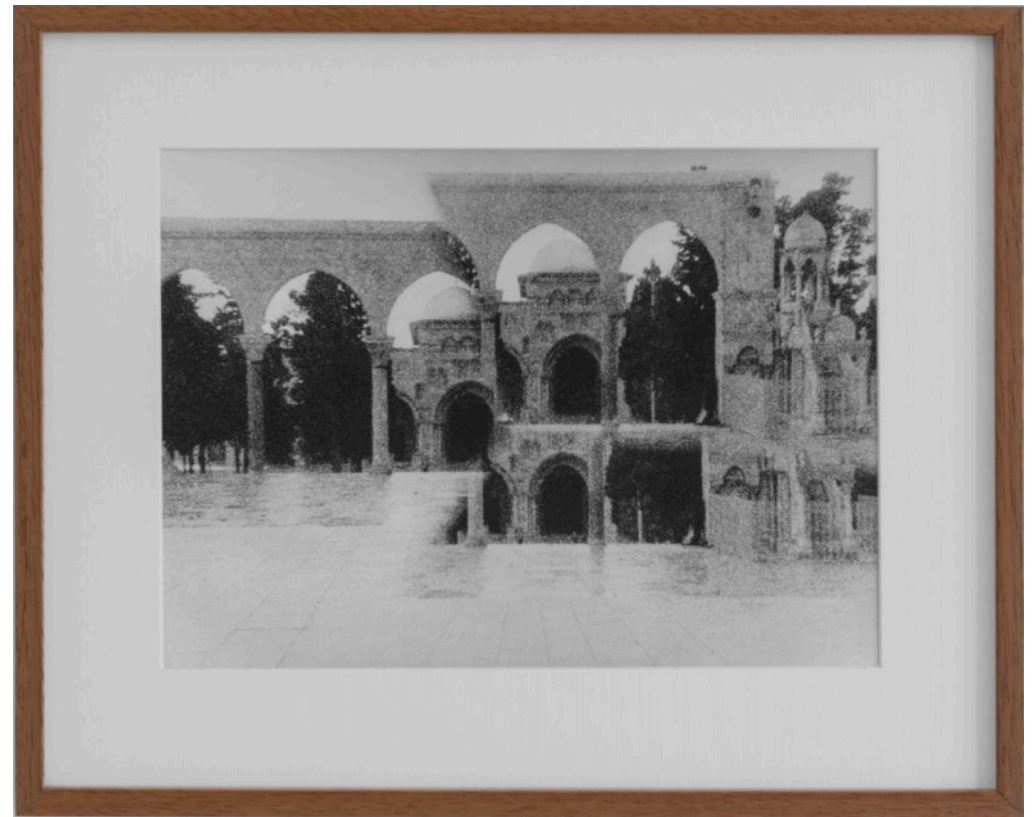
Jerusalem

1970/2021

photo print on paper

20x28 cm

ed. of 3



Yehuda Neiman

Jerusalem

1970/2021

photo print on paper

20x28 cm

ed. of 3



“Alienated industrial production makes the rain. Revolution makes the sunshine.”

Guy Debord

New Babylon
10.07 - 03.09.23

GMCG
contatti
info