

“When the Present is History” at Depo, Istanbul

By
moussmagazine.it

Depo is presenting the group exhibition “*When the Present is History*” curated by Daphne Vitali and showcasing the work of 17 international contemporary artists. The exhibition, which is part of the official parallel program of the 16th Istanbul Biennial, is focusing on the ways in which artists look at the past in order to engage with diverse social and political problems of today through works of art concerned with historical records that cross over not only with memory and the past, but also the present experience.

A large number of artists today, acting as archivists, archeologists or editors, have used different methods of searching, selecting and appropriating existing images and documents. By re-visualizing, re-arranging and re-editing found material, they attempt to enquire about its status in order to create works that unsettle established narratives and imagine alternative readings.

The exhibition “When the Present is History” explores the ways in which artists from different backgrounds and geographies have appropriated and reconfigured historical accounts, contributing to wider dialogues on history, remembrance, forgetfulness and collective memory. The artists’ starting point is often rooted in their country’s histories so as to speak about broader social, political and economic issues and propose new viewpoints and interpretations. By looking to past, recent and contemporary documents, these artists choose to employ found photographs, images, texts, objects, sound, film and TV footage, in order to narrate anew events that are interlinked with our quickly evolving present conditions.

The title of the exhibition refers on the one hand to the present’s interrelation with the past, but also to the way history is always present and continues to influence and shape the way we perceive our world now. The exhibition brings together major and minor histories, well known or lesser known past events with contemporary issues through research-based works of visual artists from Turkey, Italy, Greece, Lebanon, Germany, France, Czech Republic, Serbia, Lithuania, Holland, Belgium and the US, creating direct correlations between the works as well as open narratives.

How to re-interpret and re-tell history? How to use and read historical images? What is the power of the still and moving documentary image? The exhibition presents different ways in which artists have made use of archival material in order to imbue it with a new sense of subjectivity, rediscover a sense of contemporaneity and speak about the present. Artists reflect on the past, reenact historical events, recall obsolete records of history and use the archive as an active, discursive process. They urge us to remember, and uncover hidden stories by excavating and unearthing, but also revitalizing and reconstructing.

Participating artists: Zbyněk Baladrán, Eric Baudelaire, Ege Berensel, Rossella Biscotti, Banu Cennetoğlu, Barış Doğrusöz, Eirene Efstathiou, Alessandra Ferrini, Johan Grimont, Ivan Grubanov, Yota Ioannidou, Deimantas Narkevičius, Ines Schaber and Avery F. Gordon, Rayyane Tabet, Stefanos Tsivopoulos, Vangelis Vlahos, Malastrada film (M. H. Bertino, D. Castelli and A. Gagliardo).