

ANCHE LE STATUE MUOIONO

09.03 / 09.09.2018

CONFLITTO E PATRIMONIO TRA ANTICO E CONTEMPORANEO

STATUES ALSO DIE (*ANCHE LE STATUE MUOIONO*)

Conflict and heritage from the ancient world to the modern day

9 March - 9 September 2018

Exhibition venues:

Museo Egizio

Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo (closing date 29 May 2018)

Musei Reali (Salone delle Guardie Svizzere closing date 3 June 2018)

Thanks to a partnership between Turin's Museo Egizio, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin's Musei Reali and CRAST (Centro Scavi dell'Università degli Studi di Torino), an exhibition has been created that invites visitors to reflect on the importance of cultural heritage, proposing a common theme that brings together three prestigious museums – Museo Egizio, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo and Turin's Musei Reali – and the artefacts of the past, displayed alongside contemporary artworks. The topic will then be discussed in more detail at an international symposium in May.

Torino, 8 marzo 2018

These four institutions have come together to create a choir of voices discussing the extremely topical issue of vulnerability and the systematic and intentional destruction of cultural heritage, whilst at the same time stressing the importance of its conservation and protection.

The exhibition, which will be spread over three different venues – **Museo Egizio**, **Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo** and **Musei Reali** – has borrowed its title from a documentary made in 1953 by the French film director Alain Resnais (*Les Statues Meurent Aussi*) and uses a detail from a black and white photograph by **Mimmo Jodice** (taken from his *Anamnesi*) as its visual symbol, which features the face of a stone statue that has fallen victim to time and history.

The scientific project – developed by curators Irene Calderoni, Stefano de Martino, Paolo Del Vesco, Christian Greco, Enrica Pagella and Elisa Panero – focuses on **three main themes**. The theme of **destruction and plundering** diachronically analyses the reasons that have led people to destroy artistic and archaeological heritage in an attempt to falsify the identity of others and to disperse and annihilate the collective memory of communities. The second theme is **the power of images**, which are never merely visual signs but rather the vessels of an infinite number of meanings and, often, instruments of power. The third and final theme is the **role of museums**: considered to be institutions whose purpose lies halfway between the principle of conservation/protection and appropriating activities, both 'predators' of heritage and custodians of artefacts that are otherwise exposed to the risk of destruction and oblivion. Symbols of Europe's colonial past, museums today are asked to review and reconstruct their role as narrators of culture, shedding light on the biographical background of the objects they put on display.

The exhibition demands that we consider the following questions as a matter of urgency: What role does artistic/historical heritage play within the process of constructing the cultural identity of a community? What are the repercussions of such widespread destruction on our sense of belonging, on the concept of tradition and communion, on the possibility of considering ourselves as individuals within a group? On what bases can we build a future if the traces of our past have been

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systematically obliterated? How can we formulate a concept of compensation, of reconciliation? The exhibition attempts to answer these questions by allowing ancient artefacts to interact with the works of contemporary artists, many of whom come from countries where war has put heritage at risk, and sometimes destroyed it, such as Iraq, Iran and Syria.

With *Statues Also Die*, **Museo Egizio** has opened up to contemporary art for the first time in its history, displaying the exhibition in its room dedicated to Khaled al-Asaad, who was barbarously murdered by IS forces whilst attempting to defend the archaeological site of Palmyra, of which he had been the director for over 30 years. Nine contemporary artists conduct a dialogue through their works – installations, videos and photographs – with thousand-year-old artefacts. The exhibition begins with a striking collection of gazes: those of the nine faces photographed by Mimmo Jodice and the broken countenances of the governors of Qaw el-Kebir (1900–1850 BC). An important opportunity for reflecting on the role of museums is entrusted to works such as those of Ali Cherri, Liz Glynn and Kader Attia. An exhibition room is dedicated to photographs taken by the CRAFT centre at Nineveh: the Turin-based research centre was the last to record the beauty of Sennacherib's 'Palace without Rival' before it was razed to the ground.

Evelina Christillin, president of Museo Egizio, commented: *'The Statues Also Die exhibition is a tangible demonstration of how the synergy between cultural organisations can produce a significant result: an exhibition that is held at a number of sites throughout the city, located in three different museums and recognised as one of the initiatives associated with the European Year of Cultural Heritage. For those of us here at Museo Egizio, the inauguration of this exhibition also sends out a signal of openness towards other artistic languages, in this case that of contemporary art, proof of an approach that would like to see this museum open up to any kind of dialogue. We are very grateful to Intesa Sanpaolo banking group for their support of both the exhibition and the international symposium, which will be held in May. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Consulta Torino, which has agreed to work with us on this project as well as on future initiatives.'*

The approach adopted at **Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo** is to investigate the present, reflecting on the museum's themes, on archaeology, colonialism, national identity and the relations between cultures. The exhibition revolves around Kader Attia's 16 empty display cabinets with their shattered glass, inviting the viewer to reflect on the various different ways in which museum artefacts have been ill-treated. The same themes are tackled in different ways by the artists Mark Manders, Simon Wachsmuth and Lamia Joreige. Two artefacts hailing from Museo Egizio's collections still bear the signs of the violence to which they were subjected in the distant past.

The museum's president, Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, commented: *'Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo has always welcomed cooperation among institutions, actively participating in the art network and in Turin's cultural life. Statues Also Die is the result of a scientific project that has been shared between the curators of four different institutions based in our city. Together, through dialogue, they have brought their artistic languages closer together, resulting in an exhibition that is both intense and thought-provoking. I am particularly proud of the role played by works of contemporary art in the exhibition, drawing the public's attention to topics of compelling relevance to today's world through a unique perspective that tackles the questions raised by history, the complex relationships between cultures and the crucial question of how we pass on memory and preserve and protect our heritage.'*

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Musei Reali have put forward their own reflection with their display of archaeological artefacts and works of art: from Assyrian bas-reliefs, Cypriot and Roman art right up to the paintings of Rogier van der Weyden. The exhibition weaves in contemporary art with Mariana Castillo Deball's spectacular installation in the extremely central location of Palazzo Reale's Salone delle Guardie Svizzere, as well as footage of recent research and restoration work carried out by the CRAFT centre in Iraq. Tales of new uses, destruction and looting, but also of new contexts of form and meaning, lost identities, dismemberment and long-distance journeys: a modern-day scenario that follows the market forces that, as ever, have regulated the arrival of cultural assets, initially in large dynastic collections and, later, in the world's most prestigious Western museums.

The director of Musei Reali, Enrica Pagella, stated: *'Musei Reali have reflected on the controversial role played by museums over time, as a place for safeguarding and preserving objects for society, but also as vehicles of appropriation and decontextualisation. Following the Faro Convention, this role needs to be re-evaluated. The part of the exhibition held at the Royal Museums creates a dialogue that addresses the themes raised by the other exhibition sites, opening itself up to the language of contemporary art in a succession of cross-references between past and present, whilst also looking to the future.'*

Statues Also Die is based on the conviction that art has the power to trigger new debate, setting itself a two-fold aim: to inform the public and demonstrate the outcome of the recent violent destruction that has devastated the cultural and artistic heritage of many countries; and to raise awareness, because it is only through an understanding of cultural assets that we can ensure that heritage is carefully safeguarded, a legacy and a collective memory that must be protected and passed on.

The exhibition is part of the programme of events held to mark the **2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage**, whose themes will be discussed in-depth at an international conference that will include scholars and experts from various different fields who, taking their cue from this exhibition, will discuss the many issues related to the vulnerability and destruction of treasures of the art world and the importance of carefully protecting and preserving cultural heritage.

CRAFT's director, Stefano De Martino, stated: *'CRAFT, the centre for archaeological research and excavation in the Middle East and Asia, and the University of Turin have been working in the Middle East for many years now on archaeological sites, carrying out research and academic activities. We are particularly committed to restoring the grand halls in Baghdad's National Museum of Iraq. That is why we have enthusiastically embraced the Statues Also Die exhibition project, which concerns issues that are not only relevant to our work but are also of enormous interest. The partnership with Fondazione Museo Egizio, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo and Musei Reali is a strong sign of how all these institutions can work together on common themes whilst addressing different historical eras.'*

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