

# LAVERONICA

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Jonas Staal  
*Propagandas*

Opening Saturday, 26 March 2016, h 19.00  
26.03 - 13.06.2016

**Laveronica Arte Contemporanea** is pleased to present "Propagandas", the first solo exhibition in Italy by Jonas Staal, curated by Matteo Lucchetti, and developed in collaboration with the Ragusa-based Sicilian anarchist group "Sicilia Libertaria".

The exhibition revolves around the ongoing research by Jonas Staal on the way different forms of governance impact aesthetic and cultural production, as a way to understand what we can define as propaganda today. The unconventional use of the plural for the title pinpoints the multiplicity of meanings that the word propaganda can assume in relation to different forms and manifestations of power, stressing that the term cannot be restricted to the negative meaning traditionally connected to totalitarian regimes. The four selected projects — dating from 2011 to 2016 — are presented here in a dialogical display examining different aspects of the mutual influence between art and politics in different political systems: from the regimes of global capitalism in "Monument to Capital" (2013) to the revolutionary Kurdish model of democratic confederalism in "New World Summit: Rojava" (2015); the clash among the Spiritist ideals and the modernist urban plans of Brasilia (2013–2014), and the western ultranationalist discourse analysed in "Closed Architecture" (2011).

Each case study shows how different constructions of power imprint themselves upon spatial models: buildings, cities, parliaments and public spaces. Looking retrospectively at Staal's past projects the grammar of a conflicted architecture emerges as a red thread, a grammar through which the artist shows the process in which ideology becomes form. Architecture takes a recurring role in these works as the domain where political and ideological discourse translates into a spatial and social structure. In this light, one could observe Staal's works as a research of "ideological architectures". In the exhibition, representational tools of architecture are used to show different understandings of how these ideological architectures come about: two scale models, a video rendering, two urban-planning drawings and a billboard introduce different conceptions of the term "propaganda".

Staal's practice is both analytical and proactive, and these two approaches often merge in the creation of platforms where the role of art is understood as a way to reach a greater impact in the social domain. Two examples are "Art Property of Politics" and the "New World Summit". The former is a manifold study embodied in several diverse chapters – three of which are presented in Modica – where instrumental approaches to art and architecture are investigated and brought to a state of transparency: a prison model designed by an ultranationalist politician and the representation of high finance/capital in the form of the world's tallest skyscrapers are concrete case studies in the exhibition, showing how dominant forms of political and economic power structures translate to form in our era. The latter, the "New World Summit", is an artistic and political organization founded in 2012 through which the artist creates temporary and permanent parliaments for stateless and blacklisted organizations. Staged so far in six locations, among which Berlin, Brussels and Rojava (northern Syria) – these parliaments serve as platforms for the political voices excluded from official democratic spaces. After the start of the War on Terror in 2001, countless individuals and movements found themselves labelled as terrorist, unjustly imprisoned or simply deprived of the right to an active political role in society. Since 2012 the Summits offer new agoras where counter-hegemonic subjectivities gather to produce new narratives for new worlds that are unfolding. A different ideological architecture emerges here: the parliaments are not merely instruments of politics, but spaces in which we re-imagine the space of a radical democracy through the domain of art.

## Jonas Staal

He lives and works in Amsterdam.

Jonas Staal (1981) is an artist whose work focuses on the relationship between art, democracy and propaganda. He is founder of the artistic and political organization New World Summit that develops alternative parliaments for stateless political movements. Staal's work includes public interventions, exhibitions, theater performances, and publications. His work was exhibited at the 7th Berlin Biennale (2012) and the 31st São Paulo Biennale (2014). The first overview of the New World Summit was shown in Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana (2015) and the first overview of his school, the New World Academy in Centraal Museum Utrecht NL (2015).

His publications *Post-propaganda* (Fonds BKVB, 2009) and *Power?... To Which People?!* (Jap Sam Books, 2010) provide the theoretical basis for his work. He recently edited the publication *Stateless Democracy* (BAK, 2015) on the cultural revolution in West-Kurdistan.

Staal currently works on his PhD research entitled *Art and Propaganda in the 21st Century* at the University of Leiden. He is further involved in a collaboration with the autonomus government of West-Kurdistan in Syria to construct the first public parliament in the region.