

PROPAGANDA WORKS

5.08 - 23.12.2024

Jonas Staal in collaboration with Golrokh Nafisi, Radha D'Souza, Progressive International a.o.

With contributions by Tom Estrera III (Concerned Artists of the Philippines), Rojava Film Commune, Grupo Etcétera, Didem Pekün, Dora Garcia, Adelita Husni Bey, Daniela Ortiz and Igor Grubic

Program

Friday, 2nd August 2024 - 7 PM

Booklaunch: Golrokh Nafisi in conversation with Jonas Staal about her latest publication *Testimonies*

Libreria Zazie Modica, [Corso Umberto I, 269 - Modica]

8:30 PM

Walk and conversation through the city of Modica to see posters made by Tom Estrera III (Concerned Artists of the Philippines), Rojava Film Commune, Grupo Etcétera, Didem Pekün, Dora Garcia, Adelita Husni Bey, Daniela Ortiz and Igor Grubic for Progressive International

Saturday, 3rd August 2024 – 6:30 PM

Opening *Propaganda Works* Galleria Laveronica

7:30 PM

Screening *Propaganda Theatre* and discussion in collaboration with Modicaltra [Piazzetta Grimaldi; next to San Nicolò Inferiore church]

About

The exhibition *Propaganda Works* gathers various collaborative projects and campaigns by artist Jonas Staal ranging from campaigns to courts and from children's books to internationalist poster collections. They can be considered *works of propaganda*, but simultaneously be considered proof that *propaganda works*, meaning: that propaganda can be affective and effective in constructing new emancipatory realities.

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The exhibition *Propaganda Works* gathers various collaborative projects and campaigns by artist Jonas Staal, ranging from alternative people's tribunals to children's books and internationalist poster collections. They can be considered *works of propaganda*, but simultaneously be considered proof that *propaganda works*: meaning that propaganda can be affective and effective in constructing new emancipatory realities.

Inside the Gallery

Redistribute Extinction, 2022-ongoing

If we are facing the sixth mass extinction, how do we ensure that its consequences are distributed equally? Already we face a present where forced mass movement and armed conflict are increasingly fueled by climate catastrophe, while the largest polluters in the Global North escape any form of accountability for the disasters they cause. Can we collectivize extinction to ensure an equal distribution of increasingly scarce means of survival?

These questions are central to the series of paintings titled *Redistribute Extinction* that have been reproduced in various poster campaigns, most recently as part of the 2024 edition of Earth Day in Palermo. The posters depict the landscapes of climate catastrophe in the form of burning luxury cruise ships and the collapsing infrastructures of mass extraction practices. If something needs to be propagated to extinction, the posters make clear, it's not the living worlds of humans, animals and plants, but the systems of extraction and exploitation that brought about the climate crisis in the first place.

Child of Revolutions, 2024

In collaboration with Golrokh Nafisi

Little comrades are creative workers in their own right, who partake in the collective effort to construct a new revolutionary society. It is this notion of intergenerational comradeship that is central to the work *Child of Revolutions*: a collaboration between Golrokh Nafisi, who painted the banner, and Jonas Staal, who wrote the story.

Child of Revolutions tells the story about the Haitian Revolution, the October revolution, the Burkinabé Revolution and the First Intifada. The central narrative is that these are not uprisings of the past, but the very revolt of life that sustains our present, visualized by Nafisi's depictions of intimately connected bodies of revolutionaries across different times and places. And whenever we join the struggle for justice, we join this family of revolutionary ancestors as well.

Both a book and a banner, *Child of Revolutions* allows for parallel forms of propagation: from the intimacy of the bedtime story to being carried in mass protests.

Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes (CICC), 2021-ongoing

In collaboration with Radha D'Souza

The *Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes* (CICC) is a more-than-human tribunal that aims to prosecute climate crimes committed by states and corporations, not only in the past and present, but also in the future. In the CICC the public acts as jury and is tasked with passing a verdict based on *The Intergenerational Climate Crimes Act*: the legal foundation of the CICC.

The CICC has held public hearings in close collaboration with climate activist groups and affected communities against transnational corporations and states, such as Unilever, ING Group, Airbus and the state of the Netherlands (2021) as well as Hanwha Group, Doosan Group, POSCO and the Republic of Korea (2023). The *Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes, Video* (2021), narrated by Radha D'Souza, provides an introduction to its proceedings and founding philosophy.

Public hearings of the CICC take place in installations made out of evidence of climate crimes such as paintings of animals and weavings of plants made extinct from colonization onwards, each termed "comrade" in a different language. They are proof that climate crimes are colonial crimes and call upon intergenerational comradeship across the human and non-human world in our common propagation of living worlds for all.

94 Million Years of Collectivism, 2022

94 Million Years of Collectivism is a video study that explores the geological period from 635 to 541 million years ago known as the "Ediacaran." For 94 million years, complex organisms co-existed in the Ediacaran ecosystem, but without any predatory behaviors between them. The Ediacaran is essentially a "collectivist" ecology, in which resources were shared, not extracted.

The reality of the Ediacaran fundamentally challenges the Neo-Darwinian propaganda narrative that capitalist predation forms the primal evolutionary drive of life. Across geological time, various complex ecologies have emerged in which solidarity, redistribution and collectivization amongst living beings was central to co-existence.

In the video study, the neither-plant-nor-animal biota of the Ediacaran appear with the faces of revolutionaries from the past centuries. Marx emerges out of *Swartpuntia*, Clara Zetkin from *Corumbella*, Hồ Chí Minh from *Charnia*. This emphasizes that across space and time, both humans and non-humans have sought to propagate egalitarian forms of living. The struggle for radical equality is not an impossible utopia, but firmly grounded in earth history, and the origins of planetary life itself.

Outside the Gallery

Art of Internationalism, 2021

Across the town of Modica, you will find posters by contemporary artists in support of Progressive International: a new internationalist umbrella organization that coordinates campaigns across its members, ranging from progressive governments, political parties, unions, Indigenous nations, social movements and public intellectuals. The poster series is produced by the Art of Internationalism, the cultural wing of Progressive International, founded by several artists that have contributed to the campaign as well, including the Concerned Artists of the Philippines, Rojava Film Commune, Etcétera, Didem Pekün, Golrokh Nafisi and Jonas Staal, with newly made contributions by artists Dora Garcia, Adelita Husni Bey, Daniela Ortiz and Igor Grubic, each re-imagining the visual language of internationalist, transnational and planetary politics for the 21st century.