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# GESTURES OF RESISTANCE

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Kennard Phillipps collage 2014-16



Craig Fisher's Homemade Devices 2013-17

*Gestures of Resistance* aims to respond to our current general mood of political anxiety and alienation by opening up socio-political critique in order to resist the palpable feeling of disempowerment. Rather than accepting the non-choice of the neoliberal setup of Greece or current right-wing politics both in America and Europe, the artists of *Gestures of Resistance* reflect on the current state of our political condition, our current housing situation, the state of education and art, liberalism, diversity and pluralism in this moment of historical crisis, whereby the state of today seems to have strong links to the state of the past.

2017 is a meaningful year, in that it marks the 60th anniversary of the *Sputnik Shock*, a moment of great significance in the establishment of the Cold War which resulted for many people in a struggle for liberation, political freedom and individual identity. 2016 marked significant political events: on the 23rd June 17.4 million British citizens voted to leave the European Union, killing the UK's membership of the biggest and most prosperous trading bloc in the world. On the 8th November 2016, Donald Trump was elected the American President and the Republicans retained the Control of Congress and Senate. 27 years earlier, on the night of the 8th November 1989, the Berlin Wall came down.

**In *Gestures of Resistance* artworks by sixteen international contemporary artists are exhibited at the Romantso Cultural Centre in Athens during Documenta 14:** From photographs and collages to sculptures and installations each artist has an agenda and political take, some subtle and cryptic some openly confrontational.

**Peter Kennard and Cat Phillipps** provocative collages (2014-2016) take the vacuity of the former prime minister David Cameron's face, printed on the Financial Times and ripped through, to show the emasculated welfare state, the destitution of the people, the protests and the violence of the authorities. **Broomberg & Chanarin's** posters (2016-2017) also engage with layered narratives, made from selected pages from the International New York Times, and hand-printed, referring to both current and past political events. **Alfredo Jarr's** film *The Cloud* (2000) provides an ephemeral monument in the memory of those who lost their lives trying to cross the border from Mexico to the US and offers in its 45 minutes a space and time of mourning. **Steffi Klenz's** *He only feels the Black and White of it* (2016) addresses complex issues of individual identity and freedom within the territorial borders of the oppressive and dictatorial political state of former East Germany.

**Bill Balaskas** in contrast with his sleeping mask series *The leadership has failed* (2015) uses embroidered words from one of the most important revolutionaries of the 20th century Rosa Luxemburg while **Edward Chell** uses the visual device of the car number plate for his series *Carbon 12* (2016) referring to the UN's twelve most threatened global tree species suffering the effects from the car industry and pollution.

Words are also crucial to **Bob and Roberta Smith's** *Letter to Michael Gove* (2015) addressing the former minister for education. The recording of the artists voice invades the Romansto space at key intervals as he urges the politician to rethink the role of creativity in society and realise that innovation comes from 'optimism, risk taking and art'. **Wolfgang Tillmans** uses typography as a persuasive tool as his multicoloured *Remain* posters urge the British public that their voice matters.

Other artists such as **Francis Summers, Louisa Minkin** and **Ian Dawson** in *Pictures not homes* (2015-17) use the housing crisis as an anchor in their work evoking contemporary archaeological recording practices and new technologies such as photogrammetry, reflectance transformation imaging [RTI] and 3D laser scanning: while **Stuart Whipps**, *Recorded Amendments: The Carboniferous Epoch* (2013), examines how Britain's new towns built during the optimism of post-war Britain – have become landscapes of either mass consumption or high unemployment in a single generation, resonating with the growing concerns of the dynamics of the European community.

Like Summers, Minkin and Dawson, **Yorgos Sapountzis** and **Socratis Socratous** also work with sculpture but in their case directly relating to Greece. Socratous' *Stolen* (2012) was produced at the height of the Greek financial crisis when he 'stole' twigs and leaves from the National Garden and cast them in precious metal displayed on a piece of pristine white marble. Yorgos Sapountzis, in *Reklame car colors* (2014) and, *Corner point point - red green* (2014) uses aluminium sheets, fabric and screen printed images from photographs of the surrounding area, to evoke a number of associations, from banners carried at a protest to classic works of Modernism. **Jessica Voorsanger's** wall hanging *Legacies* (2017) – a patchwork of textiles overlaid with sports action cards of the British Gold Medal winners from the Athens Olympics, 2004 and newspaper cuttings from Trumps inauguration – are an embodiment both of the excitement and hope of the Olympics and a criticism of the legacy of its sites as well as the uncertainty of President Trump.

**Craig Fisher's** *Homemade Devices* (2013-17) present a more sinister vision. His sculptural objects are inspired by images of improvised explosive devices found whilst researching on the Internet. The works explore the formal inventiveness and provisionality of such objects employing a variety of craft processes in their production. **Terry Perk** and **Julien Rowe** have 'acquired' Arthur Ducklin's portable *Peithotron* a machine that purportedly induced suggestibility in its subjects, where it was deployed at League rallies with the intention of making converts in the 1950's and 60's, its presence in the exhibition a provocation on fact and fiction. Finally **Malgorzata Markiewich** in her performance produces a balancing act, suggesting a quiet and provocative act of resistance, while **Pavel Büchler's** *Fly* (2009) emits the sound of a fly buzzing, trying to escape, trapped in a reclaimed EXIT sign.

*Gestures of Resistance* also extends outside the gallery space with an artists procession on 22nd April. Social resistance to austerity in Greece included diverse forms of solidarity in that sociopolitical crises always provide moments of opportunity to (re-)think and(re-)action. In the Procession artists parade their work on plinths, banners and blazoned on sandwich boards continuing the artistic conversations from within the gallery and taking them to the street as they proceed along the route from the Romantso Cultural Centre to the Polytechnion the site of the 1973 political uprising. The procession includes works by the artists, **Rosie Gunn, Chris Coekin, Andrea Gregson, Anthony Heywood, Peter Kennard and Cat Phillipps, Bob Matthews, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Kathleen Rogers and Emmanuelle Waeckerle.**

**Curated by Prof. Jean Wainwright**

**Director of the Fine Art and Photography Research Centre UCA**

### **Information**

20 -30 April 2017, Romantso Cultural Centre, Athens, Greece

Admission Free.

**Opening times exhibition:** Monday – Sunday, 12 – 8pm

**Private View:** Thursday 20th April, 7 – 9pm, Performance 8pm **Malgorzata Markiewich**

**Procession:** Saturday 22nd April, Breakfast at 11am, Procession at 12.30pm

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**Supported by the University for the Creative Arts and the British Council**

