

## TERRITORIAL MACHINES: EXTRACTING NATURE

THE COOL COUPLE

Curated by Arnold Braho

MAAB Gallery is pleased to present *Territorial Machines: Extracting Nature* curated by Arnold Braho, The Cool Couple's first solo exhibition within the gallery; the idea for the exhibition also stems from the collaboration with Marco Lorenzetti of MLZ Art Dep.

*Territorial Machines: Extracting Nature* presents a group of previously unseen works and is one of the results of the research developed during The Cool Couple's artists' residency at the Nirox Foundation in South Africa in 2017. The project was also promoted by the Italian Council 2020 (eighth edition), which offered a programme of support and international promotion of Italian contemporary art arranged by the Direzione Generale Creatività Contemporanea (DGCC – Directorate General for Contemporary Creativity) of the Italian Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

The title of the exhibition refers to the concept of territorial machines, which is to say, macrostructures capable of codifying organic, human and animal life, but also of producing a certain type of territory composed of a set of signs, practices and habits that organise time and space. With its neo-liberal roots, this system is analysed here by The Cool Couple in a context of wilderness, and in particular in the South African context, where the animal industry, privatisation and the extraction of value from nature, blend the notion of wildlife conservation with market logics. The current contradictions express a range of controversies: on the one hand a practice that has made South Africa the country with the most biodiversity in the world, thanks to the proliferation of a huge number of wild animals, with, on the other hand the total reconstruction of an idea of nature as private property and commodity for trade. The principle of conservation is thus totally relegated to its mere use: it is commodification, in fact, that assures the survival of animal species. From the end of Fordism onwards, nature has been progressively incorporated by capital, articulating itself as a consequence into techniques for the preservation of fauna, and thus shifting production from machines to living bodies. Today, the techniques applied by so-called territorial machines are immaterial, structural and invisible, and represent the ability to extract value; in this case from animal life forms.

It is precisely the idea of wild nature and the way it changes within our imagination that is staged by The Cool Couple in *Territorial Machines: Extracting Nature*. If lions, elephants, rhinos, impalas and wildebeests, to name but a few, play the role of luxury goods managed by private or public parties, how has our way of visualising the animal world changed? Making use of photography conceived as a form of secretly spying, able to establish a circumstantial paradigm but also allowing the deciphering of an opaque reality, The Cool Couple analyses the structures of privatisation of South African wildlife. The images displayed present a geography of fences, walls and capture systems of so-called territorial

machines, but also the collective image that these same devices present online. Some of the images were produced through the use of artificial intelligence (AI), with the aim of reconstructing an archaeology of domestication, particularly of the wild.

**The Cool Couple** is an artist duo based in Milan and established in late 2012 by Niccolò Benetton (1986) and Simone Santilli (1987). Their multidisciplinary research focuses on the friction points in the processes of production, sharing and consumption of images.

TCC's work has been exhibited at institutions such as: CCC la Strozzi (Florence), Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa (Venice), Les Rencontres d'Arles, MACRO Museum (Rome), Museo del '900 (Milan), MAMBO (Bologna), MUFOCO (Cinisello Balsamo), Galleria Civica di Trento, City Gallery Wellington (NZ).

They've been awarded with Francesco Fabbri Award for Contemporary Photography (2014), Graziadei Prize (2015), Artverona's under 40 photography prize (2017), Euromobil Under 30 Prize (2017), Premio Johannesburg (2019). In 2020, The Cool Couple is among the winners of the 8th edition of the Italian Council, an award that joins Artevisioneprize, promoted by Careof and Sky Arte, and Artefiera's ACollection award.

The Cool Couple are lecturers at NABA, IED and course leaders of the BA in Visual Arts at Made Program.

## **Hard Facts**

MAAB Gallery

via Nerino 3 – 20123 Milano

From October 3<sup>rd</sup> to November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024

Open from Tuesday to Friday, 10.30 am – 6 pm

Opening: Thursday, October 3 | 6 pm – 8 pm

## **Per informazioni e materiali**

T. +39 0289281179

E. [info@maabgallery.com](mailto:info@maabgallery.com)

[www.maabgallery.com](http://www.maabgallery.com)

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