

Review

by Kolja Reichert

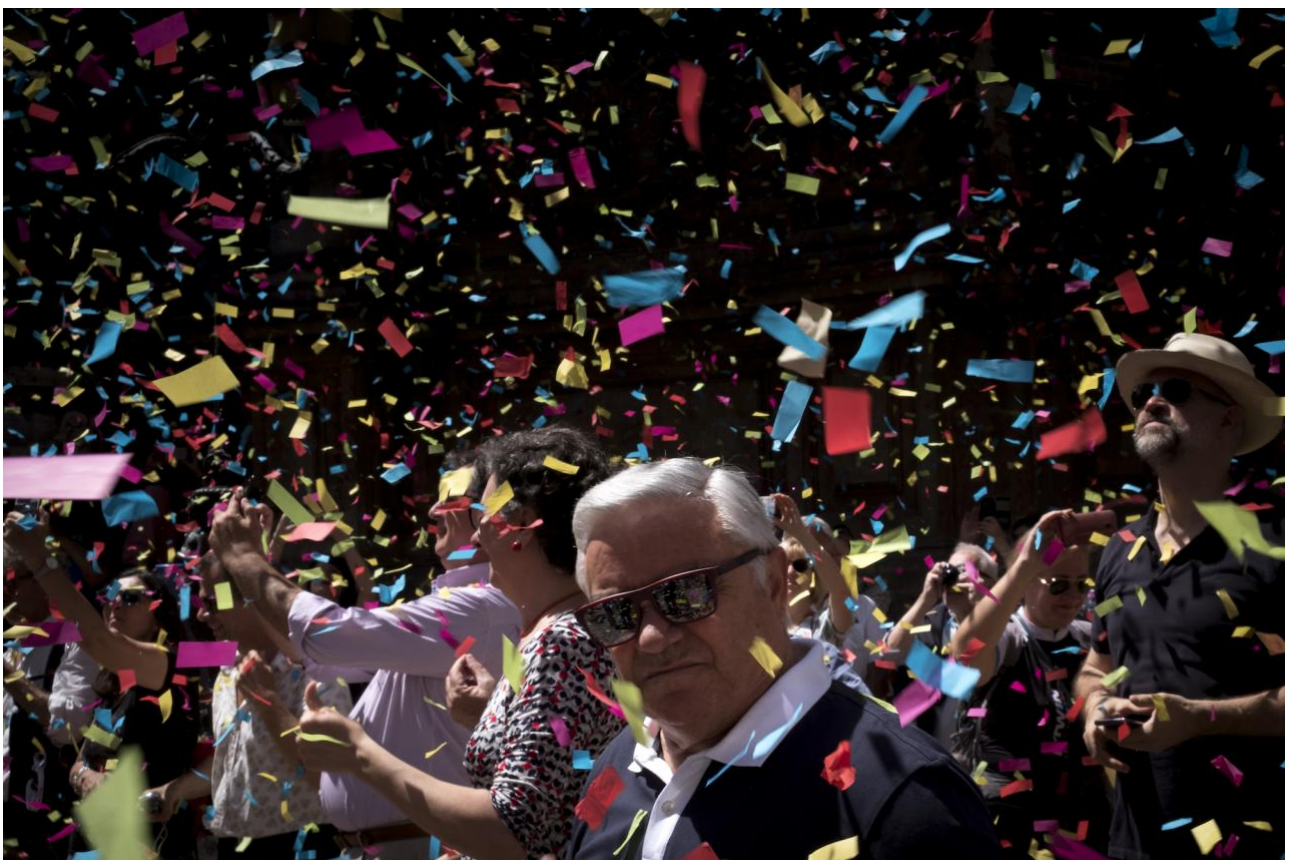


Coloco & Gilles Clement
Becoming Garden (2018)

Experiencing Protocol no. 90/6 (2018) by the Milan-based duo Masbedo required crossing two thresholds in a time machine: First up the staircase of a palazzo until reaching a tiled, neon-lit 80s-style library office with fans fighting the summer heat; then through the door into the Sala delle Capriate of the State Archive of Palermo, which appeared like a Harry Potter fantasy. A huge hall, dimly lit by fogged old windows, was filled with countless rows of shoulder-high shelves holding uncatalogued paper files and jam-packed shelves along the interior wall reached from the floor to the towering ceiling. Mesmerised visitors roamed the aisles and cautiously touched some of the dusty files, revealing years like 1862 and

1741, the silent brooding of centuries soundtracked by only the clattering of a Sicilian marionette projected onto a large LED panel on the hall's back wall. It sorted its limbs without performing any significant action, a ghostly presence watching time pass rather than filling it.

During the opening days of Manifesta 12, the most emphatically shared advice was to not miss Protocol no. 90/6, and rightly so. (Unfortunately it was only on view for a few weeks, as part of the accompanying 5x5x5 program.) But what made the intervention so good? Was it the video loop, for which Masbedo hired legendary puppeteer Mimmo Cuticchio? Or was it rather the archive itself? The main artistic gesture here was framing what was already there: Art served as a guide into an otherwise fenced-off part of urban reality.



Matilde Cassani
Tutto (2018)

The same applies for most parts of the main program, as minimal interventions prevail. At the southern wall of the Botanical Garden, Michael Wang built First Forest (2018), an installation with a stainless-steel viewing platform that overlooks a defunct gasometer, where Wang planted flora from the Carboniferous Period. Nearby, in the Botanical Garden's miniature bamboo forest, visitors follow the sound of blissful yawning to find a

hidden flatscreen playing Zheng Bo's Pteridophilia (2016—ongoing), in which seven nude men pet plants in a Taiwanese forest. Again and again, visitors dip their noses into a work and then breathe in the city again, this beautiful old, fractured city, lying outside of time like an exposed skeleton.

When, as Manifesta Founding Director Hedwig Fijes claimed “the city itself is the biennale,” the titles of works or artists’ names are not always required to create meaning. In the Giardino dei Giusti, yellow mosquito nets cover lemon trees and the installation doesn’t bear any artistic information; instead, it is explained that agronomists from the University of Palermo are monitoring “the performance of the trees” for the duration of Manifesta. The roofless Chiesa di Santa Maria dello Spasimo is also listed as a venue even though it houses no work, in turn making it the exhibit. Visitors cross the space on their way to an outdoor curved wall made of extruded brick that encases three lemon trees, planted by “spatial practitioner” duo Cooking Sections.



Jelili Atiku
Festival of the Earth (Alaaragbo XIII) (2018)

The city and its churches, palaces, and history make the show. Art, meanwhile, dissolves into a pollen-like state, called in to sprinkle a city with a spirit of sensitivity, clarity of mind, and future-orientation to highlight its history and spread the word of its attractiveness to investors and entrepreneurs who might help finally fulfil a hope that has been recycled since the nineties: the hope of reviving public life in a post-Mafia era. This is, in other words, less an art than an urbanist exhibition, shaped by the thinking of OMA's Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli and his three fellow “creative mediators” (of whom only one, Mirjam Varadinis, is an art expert). Art with which to gather pins provides the fabric of the city.

The show, however, more than lives up to its cheerful title “The Planetary Garden”: fruits are everywhere as metaphors for a Deleuze- and Haraway- inspired focus on the diversity and coexistence of species. In the sky are drones, planes, and satellites that Richard Vijgen traces in a painterly projection; at the 60s social housing project ZEN 2, forty minutes by car from the centre of Palermo, is Gilles Clément and Cocolo's urban garden, built to be cherished and cared for by the local community in shared responsibility; and in the Oreto River estuary, plants researched by Malin Franzén are learning to live alongside toxins. In many ways, this Manifesta suggests a planetary perspective of joint care, fitting the pharmacological age. But what it doesn't do is challenge, question, or problematise

the art. The distinction between good and bad works thus loses its meaning, instead becoming a question of memorable versus forgettable experiences. If that were the only criterion, this show would almost be flawless.

Website

16 June – 4 November

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Cooking Sections
What is above is what is below (2018)



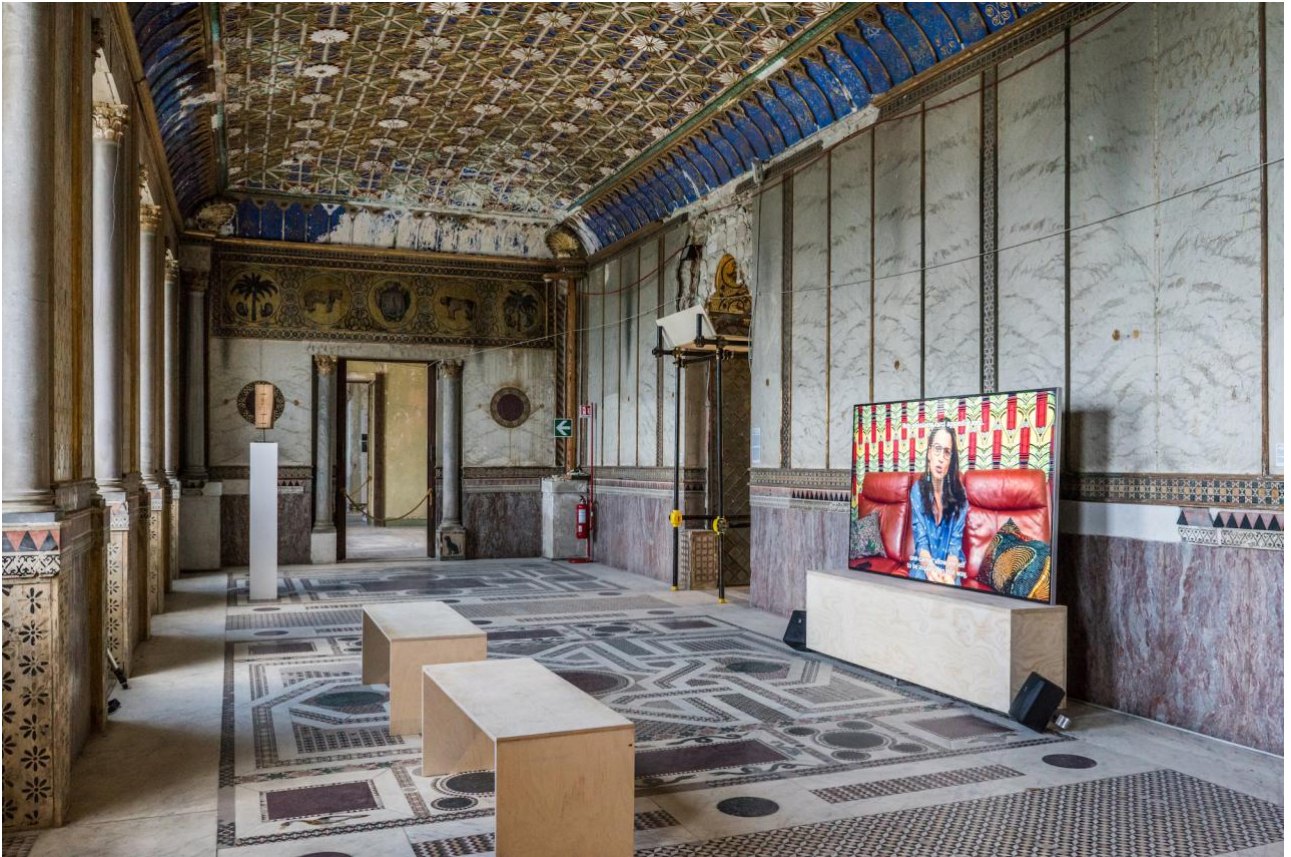
Zheng Bo
Pteridophilia (2016 –)



Masbedo
Protocol no. 90/6 (2018)



Roberto Collovà
Ponte Luminaria. Giardino di giardini. Azioni sulla Costa Sud (2018)



Kader Attia
The Body's Legacies. The Post-Colonial Body (2018)



Renato Leotta
Notte di San Lorenzo, 2018



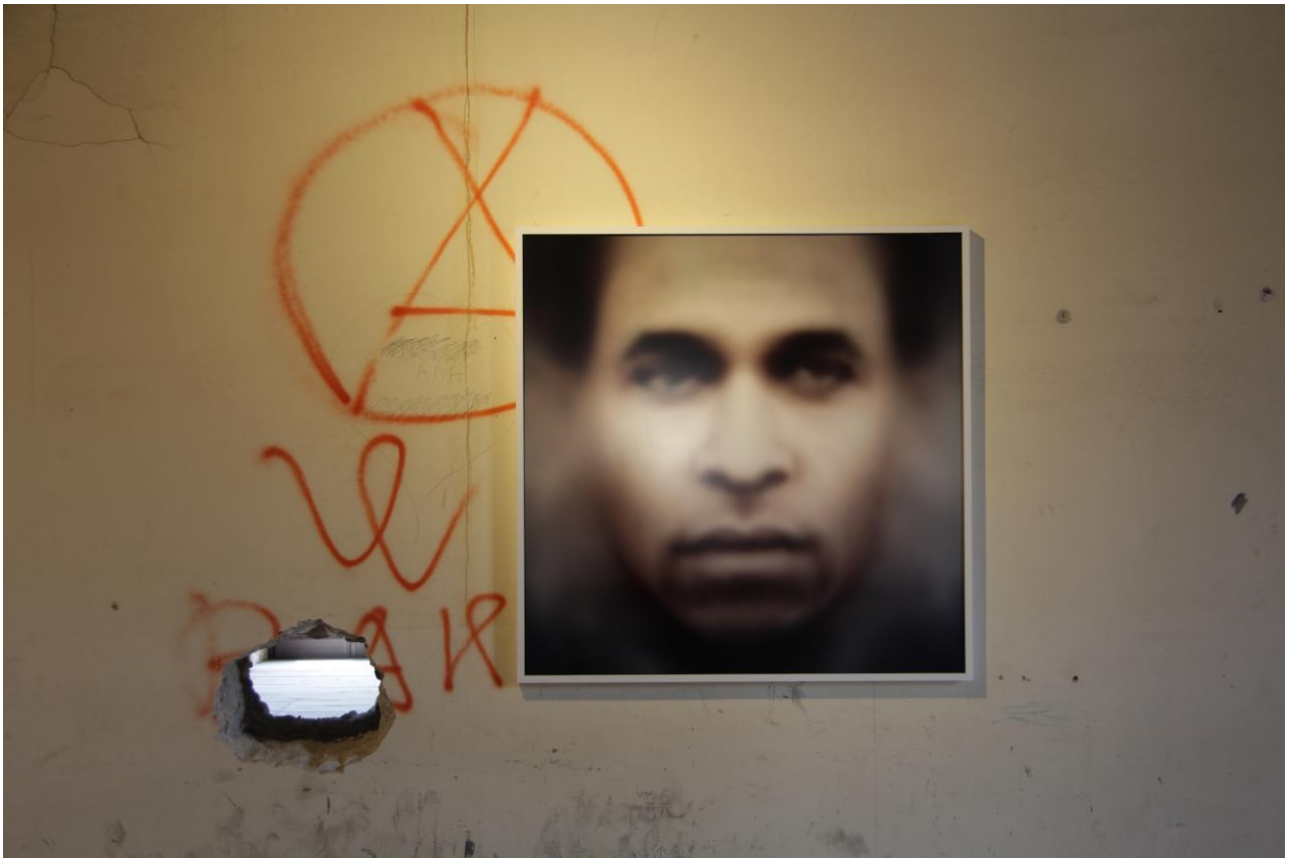
James Bridle
Citizen Ex (2015)



Uriel Orlow
Wishing Trees (2018)



Cooking Sections
What Is Above Is What Is Below (2018)



Trevor Paglen
It Began as a Military Experiment (2017)

PALERMO

MANIFESTA 12

MANIFESTA

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