Maria Iorio & Raphaël Cuomo, winners of the tenth Furla Art Award, are presenting the first incarnation of their long-term research project Logica del passaggio at Fondazione Querini Stampalia during La Biennale di Venezia - 56th International Art Exhibition.

Curated by Simone Frangi, this show by Maria Iorio & Raphaël Cuomo takes stock of the first stage of work on the project that won them the 2015 Premio Furla last November.

Conceived and curated by Chiara Bertola, the Premio Furla is a biennial award for excellence in contemporary art that focuses on emerging Italian talent. Founded with the aim of supporting Italy’s finest artistic endeavours – by monitoring and selecting artists, and helping them grow while producing new work – the prize has established itself over its fifteen-year history as an international showcase for emerging creativity. This tenth edition of the Premio Furla has been organized by Fondazione Furla in partnership with the Cultural Office of the City of Milan and Palazzo Reale, which hosted the launch of the award and the exhibition “Growing Roots” – and in collaboration with Fondazione Querini Stampalia, miart and Viafarini, and has obtained the official sponsorship of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities.

In Logica del passaggio, Maria Iorio & Raphaël Cuomo analyse the general context of Italian “economic” migration northward toward other parts of Europe from the late Fifties to the mid-Sixties, sticking scrupulously to the facts and yet trying to reconfigure them through storytelling and imagery: how people crossed the border, their working conditions, exploitation, the limits placed on their rights and movement in order to obtain a work permit, all the way to the efficient biopolitical device of health inspections that marked the “passage” of migrants from Italy to Switzerland.

The work presented at Fondazione Querini Stampalia specifically focuses on migration to Switzerland in the Sixties, which was characterized by immigrant workers being restricted to the sphere of production, by discrimination and xenophobia, and by the use of “health risks” as a strategy to control emigration and the legality of border crossings. The latter is a normative process eloquently embodied in Iorio & Cuomo’s project by the modernist building in Brig used as an immigrant health inspection centre until the mid-Nineties. Through a film and a spatial system, Maria Iorio & Raphaël Cuomo reread and retranscribe this chapter of history without ever slipping into mere documentary, working instead to reveal the replicable structure and logic behind it.
In the words of the exhibition curator Simone Frangi, who along with Virginie Bobin singled out the two artists to take part in Premio Furla 2015, “Logica del passaggio uses the strategy of doubt to emphasize the discrepancy between official, institutional portrayals of Italian economic migration and the subjective views of the migrants, trying to construct a ‘history from below’ capable of capturing the life experience that drives historical events, their polyphonic nature and the degree of oblivion and obliteration that accompanies the construction of collective memory”.

The film- and installation-based work at Fondazione Querini Stampalia grew out of a period of gestation involving research into documents and images in immigration museums and photo archives, then shifted into observations in the field and passages through the same areas travelled by the migrants. Logica del passaggio introduces a minority perspective into how these migratory episodes are portrayed today, testing the validity of History and exposing it to the first-hand stories of those who actually made that passage. Following the narration of a young woman, which gradually gives way to a narration by multiple voices, the video at the heart of Logica del passaggio highlights the tales of the people who lived out the historical event in question from a subordinate position: the film helps put archival images back into circulation, taking them out of their institutional framework in order to generate new paths.

The public presentation of this work by Maria Iorio & Raphaël Cuomo marks the closing stage of the Premio Furla’s tenth edition, which began last September with the announcement of the five finalists, and continued with the naming of the winners in November and their participation in the retrospective Growing Roots – 15 Years of Premio Furla, curated by Chiara Bertola, Giacinto Di Pietrantonio and Yuko Hasegawa (Milan, Palazzo Reale, 5 March - 12 April 2015), which looked back over the ten editions of the prize through the works of its winning artists.

The projects of the five artists shortlisted for the tenth Premio Furla were judged by an international jury, chaired by this year’s guiding artist, Vanessa Beecroft, which included Teresa Gleadowe (Chair, Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, UK), Barbara Hernandez (Director, SOMA, Mexico City, Mexico), Alya Sebti (Artistic Director, 5th Marrakech Biennale, Marrakech, Morocco) and Benno Tempel (Director, Foundation Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague, Netherlands).

The jury awarded the prize to Maria Iorio & Raphaël Cuomo, explaining their decision as follows: “The work of Iorio and Cuomo connects history to current issues which are relevant in Europe and worldwide. It explores the questions of migration (immigration/emigration), the museum archive, memory, and the cultural construction of these themes in ways that counterbalance how they are depicted in society and the mass media, introducing new perspectives”.

Maria Iorio & Raphaël Cuomo’s project Logica del passaggio will be on view at Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice from 5 May to 6 June 2015, during La Biennale di Venezia - 56th International Art Exhibition.

Moreover, as in previous years, the winning duo will have the opportunity to study and work abroad as part of an artist residency, this time to be held at SOMA in Mexico City. The residency will be organized by Viafarini, a documentation center for contemporary art that has managed the general archive on the prize since its fifth edition, and which provides hospitality for the foreign curators through the VIR (Viafarini-in-residence) residency programme in Milan.

The video presented in the exhibition Logica del passaggio, the project which won the 2015 Premio Furla, is made with the contribution of Fondazione Furla and the support of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, the Republic and Canton of Jura, and Le Souvenir du Présent, Geneva.
The exhibition will be accompanied by a reader comprising texts by Simone Frangi and Cynthia Fornage. The reader will be published by Archive Books, Berlin.

PRESS CONTACTS

Press Office - Premio Furla
T. +39 02 36565133
M. +39 349 2529989
press@fondazionefurla.org

Press Office - Fondazione Querini Stampalia
Sara Bossi
T. +39 041 2711411
M. +39 339 8046499
s.bossi@querinistampalia.org