

FORTIFIED INFINITY **by Wolfgang Wirth**

Filippo de Tomasi, March 2018

Our expression 'limit' comes from the Latin word *limes*, which were fortified roads in defense of the territory. We realize that in the Latin vocabulary coexisted two dimensions: a first material one related to the physicality of a place; and another abstract one, where the action of defense presupposes a differentiation between inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. This more archeological approach will allow us to unfold the explicit and implicit meanings of the most recent works by Wolfgang Wirth, presented in this exhibition: FORTIFIED INFINITY. Thus, the archeological perspective integrates the methodology of the artist: the plans of the military fortresses of Elvas and Olivença serve as basis for a general reflection on limits.

The diptych *Stars (Reflections on a Landscape)* presents these maps in a more stylized way as the stars are inserted into imaginary yet natural landscapes. Nevertheless, these fortresses reveal themselves to be visual obstacles for its appreciation: the mirrors, which are part of the image, interfere with our vision, in an attempt to include the viewer and at the same time destroying the borders of the image.

Similarly, in *Black Hole I + II* the plan of the fortress imposes itself as a filter: black, which in art theory is the absence of color, on the one hand empties the historical monument of its meaning, allowing our eyes to fill in the space on the other hand. In the series of nine silk-screen prints entitled *Shapes*, using a stronger stylization, Wirth creates a pattern playing with the lines of the fortress' map. Applying this artistic mechanism, the historical/political value of this monument, no longer gets its meaning from the physical aspect, but is deconstructed by the altered and alternating repetition of the stylized maps.

In the gallery space there are also two sculptures present. The first one is positioned at the front wall of the gallery entrance space and can be considered a gateway to the exhibition itself, where through colors, the artist combines and creates new significations in the reconstruction of the wooden fortress. The other sculptural project is formed by mirrors and refers also to a function not of exclusion, but of inclusion: as a fact, all of the surrounding elements are reflected in its surface and dialogue with it.

Among all the works of this exhibition, *Wall* is the one accomplished by Wirth in direct contact with the historical monument: coming closer, we understand that the papers are the result of the use of the frottage technique, which is: the artist transferring with dry oil pastel parts of the walls of the Elvas fortress. The reproduced monument, retracted like this of its own history in space, enters the gallery as a momentum of reflection over the threshold's end.

I would like to finish by highlighting the social contemporaneity of Wirth's artworks presented in this exhibition. His works reflect our personal and collective condition of interrogation about the differences between us, the other and the limits of our relationship with this different/other. But maybe it would be better to rethink this concept of limit by turning again to the Latin word: not only as *limes*, but also as *limen*, which means beginning, entrance. In this perspective, Wirth rethinks the fortress from the point of view of a (non-) limit: something that separates, but simultaneously could – and should – unite, allowing an open and fruitful dialogue.