

PRESS RELEASE

March 1, 2019

## Verde Prato. Urban experiments between ecology and reuse.

Exhibition curated by Elisa Cristiana Cattaneo and Emilia Giorgi

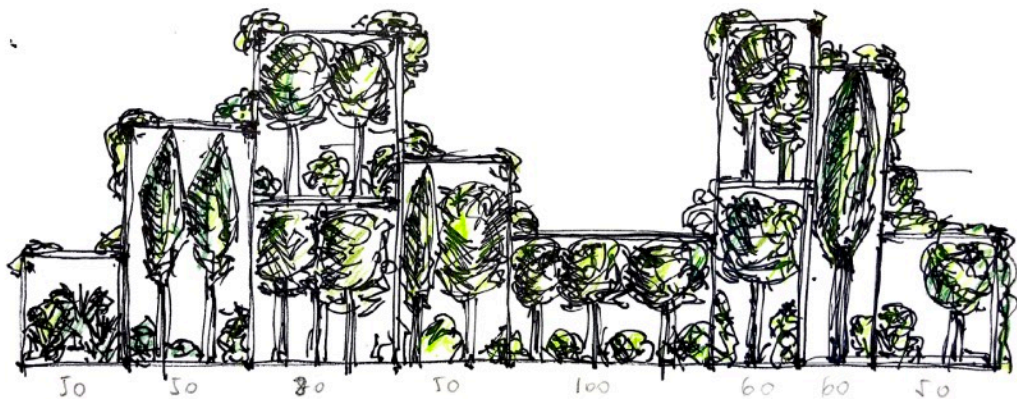
19 March to 11 April, 2019

Opening: Tuesday 19 March, 6.00 pm

Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato, Italy

The exhibition *Verde Prato* (Green Prato), curated by Elisa Cristiana and Emilia Giorgi, which will set the stage for the Piano Operativo (the Urban Regulation) of the Municipality of Prato and the multitude of actions and strategies implemented in recent years to define the new instrument for the Tuscan city's urban policies, will open at the Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci on Tuesday 19 March at 6:00 pm. It is an experimental and innovative project, the result of intense team work by the Municipality of Prato's Ufficio di Piano which boasts of valuable contributions from international experts such as the architect Stefano Boeri and the scientist Stefano Mancuso, to mention just a few.

image



Stefano Mancuso, *Preparatory drawings for confined ecosystems*, 2019.

The exhibition design, by the Fosbury Architecture collective, will present heterogeneous materials such as drawings, maps, design documents, historical photos and video through a scaffolding system conceived as a scenic machine. A tale that unfolds through texts and images along the creative process that aims to transform Prato into a green, European and open city, integrating the nature system with the built environment. In addition to the focus on town planning aspects, the exhibition will present an installation devised for the occasion by Stefano Mancuso, photographic projects by talents such as Fernando Guerra, Maurizio Montagna and Delfino Sisto Legnani, and an interactive robotic machine that allows the public to navigate the various elements of the Piano Operativo. The exhibition is completed by an area designed as a meeting spot and a space for taking part in educational activities, conferences and round tables, turning the exhibition into a place of debate, a living square inside the museum.

The Piano Operativo of Prato is an innovative Town Planning tool drawn up by the Ufficio di Piano and adopted in September 2018. It is based on the great experience transmitted by the Prato legacy of the urbanist Bernardo Secchi at the end of the Nineties. Prato is observed in its metropolitan dimension and induced to relaunch the manufacturing heritage and re-evaluate the natural heritage, surpassing the division between the city and agricultural spaces thanks to wide-ranging management. The challenge, also conducted thanks to an extensive participation programme, “Prato al Futuro” – which involved all the citizens and saw the Municipal Administration in dialogue with architects, stakeholders and associations – is to promote the reuse of the city, reducing new land consumption, and develop an urban forestation project, using ecology to respond to the global challenges of climate change and local challenges involving the well-being of residents.

Based on these directions, the exhibition covers 3 thematic areas: *Ecology*, *Re-Use* and *Going Public*.

The *Ecology* section includes the urban forestation idea conceived of by two excellences in the “environmental revolution”: architect Stefano Boeri and scientist Stefano Mancuso. According to Mancuso, “*redevelopment with plants is the most effective tool to improve the environmental and social quality.*” For this reason, he turned Prato into a case study and worked with his team to conduct a census of the city's arboreal heritage, using plants as urban sensors. To complement this work, Boeri produced an *Action Plan for the Urban Forestation of Prato*, with the aim of having one tree for each inhabitant of the city. The section is linked to the site-specific installation Urban Jungle by Stefano Mancuso, a system of bordering ecosystems that evokes an ideal city skyline as a single, enormous urban jungle, beyond the traditional







Fernando Guerra, *Città di Prato*, 2017.



separation between the built environment and nature. “*Not only along the avenues, in the parks, in the flowerbeds, and in the gardens, but wherever there is an available surface – roads, façades, roofs – there must be a plant,*” says Mancuso.

The *Re-Use* section opens with a reference, through drawings and historical photos, to the experience of the Prato Laboratory, led from 1976 to 1978 by the director Luca Ronconi with architect Gae Aulenti: one of the first reuse experiments involving manufacturing facilities in view of “*a theatre above all acted, based on a place other than the theatre,*” in Ronconi's words. The central topic of the new Piano Operativo is in fact the definition of strategies to transform the existing building heritage, and in particular the industrial archaeology within the urban areas. Following the logic of outlining a sustainable development scenario for the city, the Piano Operativo sets out the intervention methods relating to reuse of the buildings, including them within a broad vision of the city that sees Prato, the “factory city,” as one of the paradigmatic places at international level in terms of re-cycling practices, a dynamic context that can aim to become a European “eco” district of excellence, implementing a circular economy process.

image



Fernando Guerra, *Città di Prato*, 2017.

Finally, the *Going Public* section starts with some shots taken from the

photographic project by Delfino Sisto Legnani carried out in 2016, as part of the installation *Manufacturing Assemblages in Prato* by Matilde Cassani at the Oslo Architecture Triennale, demonstrating how celebrations for Chinese New Year in the historical centre and the industrial district became a spectacular occasion for integration between the city and its different communities. The topic of public space and of a city suitable for its inhabitants runs through the entire Piano Operativo, and interfaces with all the themes addressed by the Plan: from the *Cento Piazze* to the *Riversibility* projects, from 5G technology (Prato has been chosen as one of the five Italian cities where it will be tested) to Smart Mobility. Prato therefore conceives of its Piano Operativo from the logic of promoting the idea of an open city, a city of global hospitality accessible to and usable by all categories of its inhabitants.

The projects dedicated to Prato by the photographers Fernando Guerra and Maurizio Montagna meander along the gallery walls and envelop the exhibition space as stage sets. The exhibition includes a selection of the imposing photographic survey carried out by the Lisbon artist Fernando Guerra at the end of 2017 to interpret the transformation phase the city is undergoing, thereby revealing the stratification of the landscape and the many types of city that Prato is constructing, placing attention on the reuse and regeneration of the manufacturing heritage. Imagination and future are two closely linked terms that represent the starting and arrival points for the project *Paregon* (2018) by the Milanese photographer Maurizio Montagna. Here the attention is placed on the plant world, whose dynamics seems to suggest the path for a new collective action, thereby changing our perspective coordinates after centuries of anthropocentric vision.

The stage designed by Fosbury to accommodate conferences, round tables and spaces to examine the central topics of the Piano Operativo in more depth, from the perspective of participation that has always represented the basis of this new urban planning instrument, is an integral part of the exhibition. An object that becomes a playscape for children and the educational activities promoted by the museum.









## Biographies

**Stefano Boeri** (Milan 1956) graduated in Architecture at Politecnico in Milan and in 1989 he received his PhD from Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia (IUAV). Full Professor of Urban Planning at Politecnico in Milan, Boeri has been a guest professor at various universities, including Harvard University's Graduate School of Design (GSD), the Strelka Institute in Moscow and the Berlage Institute in the Netherlands, the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne. Stefano Boeri is director of the Future City Lab (FCL) of Tongji University in Shanghai, a program which explores the future perspectives of metropolis. Since February, 2018 Stefano Boeri is Chairman of Fondazione La Triennale di Milano, one of the main cultural institutions in Italy, staging exhibitions, conferences and events on art, design and architecture. Stefano Boeri Architetti's work ranges from the production of urban visions to the design of architectures and open spaces, including several waterfronts, such as Naples, Trieste, Genoa, La Maddalena, Doha, Marseilles and Thessaloniki, with a constant focus on the geopolitical and environmental implications of urban phenomena. The focus on the relationship between city and nature leads to the creation of Vertical Forest realized in Milan in 2014, which is the first prototype of a sustainable residential building with facades covered with trees and plants: a model of metropolitan reforestation that conceives vegetation as an essential element of architecture.

**Fosbury Architecture** is a design and research collective founded in 2013, based in Milan, Rotterdam and Hamburg. It is made up of Giacomo Ardesio, Alessandro Bonizzoni, Nicola Campri, Veronica Caprino and Claudia Mainardi. Fosbury Architecture's work has been awarded prizes in various international contests, including European13 (Leeuwarden), the Museum of Natural Sciences (Turin), YA C (Bologna) and Recycling Socialism (Tallinn Architecture Biennale). The collective was the youngest Italian group chosen to take part in the Chicago Architecture Biennial in 2017, *Make New History*.

**Fernando Guerra** (Lisboa, 1970) has been a pioneer in the way architecture is photographed and divulged. 20 years ago, he opened studio FG+SG together with his brother, and both are responsible in large part for the diffusion of Portuguese contemporary architecture in the last twenty years. Fernando Guerra is an architectural photographer. His training, however, is as an architect. His gaze is divided between two distinct modes of constructing the world. Given this fact, he is in a prime position to personify the metamorphosis of the field of photography that will lead the practice of creating images to eventually identify itself, in



part, with the field of architecture. Fernando Guerra's work is regularly published in various national and international publications, in magazines such as Casabella, Wallpaper\*, Dwell, Icon, Domus, A+U, among many others. FG+SG collaborates with various Portuguese architects such as Álvaro Siza, Carlos Castanheira, Manuel Mateus, Manuel Graça Dias, Gonçalo Byrne, ARX Portugal, João Luís Carrilho da Graça, Promontório Arquitectos, as well as international architects such as Márcio Kogan, Isay Weifeld, Arthur Casas, Zaha Hadid, Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, among others. In 2012 he was nominated Canon Explorer, having been appointed Canon Explorer, assuming the role of ambassador for Canon Europe in terms of architectural photography.

**Delfino Sisto Legnani** (1985) lives and works in Milan. After graduating at the Polytechnic of Milan, he begins to collaborate with some of the most important newspapers and magazines such as Domus, Abitare, Elle Decor, Vogue Italia, Appartamento, Mousse Magazine, Disegno, Pin-up Magazine, The New York Times, Repubblica and Corriere Della Sera. Encompassing reportage, architecture and still life photography, his work has been awarded and exhibited in museums and institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Triennale of Milan and in many galleries and exhibition spaces such as Pomo Gallery (Milan, 2014), Il Crepaccio (Milan, 2014), MIA Art Festival (Milan, 2001). In 2012 and 2014 he participated to the 13th and 14th Architecture Biennale of Venice. In 2015 he curated for the Prada Foundation of Milan the coral photographic project *Fragments*, developed in collaboration with the studio OMA, which explored Rem Koolhaas' building, seat of the Foundation. In 2017 he founded MEGA with Giovanna Silva and Davide Giannella, an independent space for underground artistic and cultural projects.



Internationally renowned scientist, **Stefano Mancuso** (1965) leads the International Laboratory of Plant Neurobiology (LINV) of the University of Florence ([www.linv.org](http://www.linv.org)). He is a founding member of the International Society for Plant Signaling & Behavior and member of the Accademia dei Georgofili. He is the author of many books as *Brilliant Green* and *The Revolutionary Genius of Plants*. He founded the start-up PNAT. He is the curator of the “Nation of Plants” for the Triennale di Milano

**Maurizio Montagna** was born in 1964 in Milan, where he lives and works. He has been practicing photography for 20 years, crossing the fields of architecture and urban landscape. His works have been exhibited in museums and galleries in Italy and abroad, including the XXIV International Architecture Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, the Milan Triennale, Palazzo Te in Mantua, the National Institute for Graphics and the Ara Pacis Museum in Rome. In 2018 he created his first permanent



installation, *Billboard Site Specific 2018*, for the public art project *A Cielo Aperto* curated by Bianco Valente in Latronico. Among his publications, in addition to various editorial projects on architecture, there are the monographs *Albedo* (2004) and *Billboards* (2008) - project, the latter selected by Paris Photo.



## Media

*Photographs by Fernando Guerra, Maurizio Montagna, Delfino Sisto Legnani, plus drawings by Stefano Mancuso are available for publication at the link below. For documentation on the new Piano Operativo adopted by the city of Prato and for any other information relating to the exhibition, please contact:*  
[paola.giaconia@image-web.org](mailto:paola.giaconia@image-web.org).

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