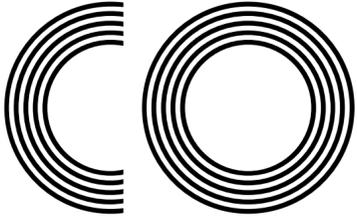
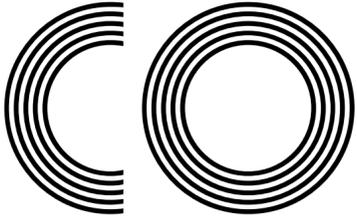


RE



LIFE UNDER  
REPRESENTATIONAL  
REGIMES

5 — 26 FEB 2011

ERÖFFNUNG: FREITAG 4. FEB 18 H  
OPENING: FRIDAY 4 FEB 6 PM

BOAZ ARAD &  
MIKI KRATSMAN  
ARIELLA AZOULAY  
DIEGO CASTRO  
FRANCESCO FINIZIO  
THOMAS GALLER  
ROEE ROSEN  
ANNA WITT  
HANNES ZEBEDIN

Und die Sammlung von  
RUDI MAIER: «SO  
GEHT REVOLUTION»  
— WERBUNG &  
REVOLTE

And the Collection of  
RUDI MAIER: «SO  
GEHT REVOLUTION»  
— ADVERTISING &  
REVOLT

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WEITERE STATIONEN  
FURTHER VENUES

Kunsthalle Exnergasse Vienna  
Währinger Strasse 59  
1090 Wien  
http://kunsthalleexnergasse.wuk.at

12. Mai — 18. Juni 2011  
Eröffnung 11. Mai 2011 — 19 h

12 May — 18 June 2011  
Opening 11 May 2011 — 7 pm

Digital Art Lab in Holon  
16 Yirmiyahu Street  
Holon 58835, Israel  
www.digitalartlab.org.il

Dez 2011 — Feb 2012  
Dec 2011 — Feb 2012

Eine Ausstellungsprojekt kuratiert von  
Siri Peyer und Joshua Simon

An exhibition project curated by  
Siri Peyer and Joshua Simon

Ernst und Olga Gubler-Hablützel Stiftung  
Georges und Jenny Bloch-Stiftung

Stadt Zürich  
Kultur

österreichisches kulturforum<sup>bm</sup>

AUSSTELLUNG  
EXHIBITION

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www.whitespace.ch  
info@whitespace.ch

ÖFFNUNGSZEITEN  
Mi 15 — 18 h  
Fr / Sa 14 — 18 h

OPENING TIMES  
We 3 — 6 pm  
Fri / Sat 2 — 6 pm

PROTEST:  
EIN LUXUSPROBLEM



Diego Castro, Die Aura des Kunstwerks im Zeitalter  
der Reproduzierbarkeit der Aura, Zeichnung aus einer  
Serie von 50 / drawing out of a series of 50, 2009

SCREENINGS

CORNER COLLEGE  
Perla-Mode  
Langstr. 84 / Brauerstr. 37  
8004 Zürich  
www.corner-college.com

SA 5. FEB — 18 H  
Gespräch mit OLIVER RESSLER  
Filmscreening  
"What would it mean to win?"  
Ein Film von Zanny Begg & Oliver Ressler,  
40 min., 2008

SAT 5 FEB — 6 PM  
Talk with OLIVER RESSLER  
Film screening  
"What would it mean to win?"  
A film by Zanny Begg & Oliver Ressler,  
40 min., 2008

SA 26. FEB — 18 H  
Gespräch mit RUDI MAIER  
Screening «So geht Revolution» —  
Werbung & Revolte

SAT 26 FEB — 6 PM  
Talk with RUDI MAIER  
Screening «So geht Revolution» —  
Advertising & Revolt

# RECOCO — LIFE UNDER REPRESENTATIONAL REGIMES

“THE CRISIS OF THE NATION STATE AND NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY CORRESPONDS TO A CRISIS OF THE MODERN THEORIES OF GOVERNMENT”

Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Commonwealth*, 2009

*ReCoCo* — *Life Under Representational Regimes* comes at a time of shared understanding that the political devices that have been formulated since the beginning of modern democracy with the French revolution, and have been established since the end of the Second World War, namely those of liberal democracies, are in a deepening crisis, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Block. Under the parliamentary regimes of the past decades we have been subjected to the rule of capital's technocratic Fascism — a bureaucratic elite of economists and political practitioners executing a new form of colonialism — privatization. With an increasing policing of public life, fuelled by sentiments of xenophobia we have entered the realm of post-democracy. Resignation, conspiracy and corruption have become the way we understand politics (ReCoCo). Political agency takes its form as resignation, political truth arrives in the shape of conspiracy theories and governance is synonymous with corruption.

*ReCoCo* — *Life Under Representational Regimes* answers to the discursive explosion of conspiracy theories, which stems from a widespread re-visioning of liberal politics. ReCoCo is a term through which we can look at the construction and organization of various political concepts of representational regimes: transparency and media, spectatorship and sovereignty, citizenry and Nielsenism<sup>1</sup>.

*ReCoCo* — *Life Under Representational Regimes* puts these forms of knowledge and power, and the aesthetic economies that they produce in negotiation with artistic practice. This, at a moment of enhanced ornamentalizing of the classical political gestures of parliamentary regimes. A rococo of those tropes (hence the echoing of term in the title). The exhibition brings together contemporary works that engage with questioning truth regimes<sup>2</sup> and representational governments, experimenting with the performance of representations and the inactivity embedded in contemporary parliamentary systems. *ReCoCo* — *Life Under Representational Regimes* focuses on works by artists whose work goes beyond representationalism, exploring spectacle and conspiracy, political spaces of appearance and political resignation, corruption and governance, live TV and dead democracy.

## RESIGNATION

WHO IS REALLY WINNING  
THE ELECTIONS?

It seems that today governance has become synonymous with corruption. It seems that corruption has become the prevailing concept when addressing the truth of politics. There is no other way to discuss truth in the political sphere today, other than through conspiracy theories and tracings of deals between elected

<sup>1</sup> Nielsenism is a term that comes from the Nielsen Ratings audience measurement systems, that were introduced in the US first in the 1920s in an effort to determine the audience size and composition of radio and later on television programming. These are used to calculate exposure and efficiency of advertisements. Nielsenism defines a mode of commodification in a post-Fordist economy in which, through advertising, the viewer is the product that is being sold by the radio station and TV network to the advertiser.

officials, public servants, big business, the clergy, lobbyists and other parties of interest. Echoing the Nineteenth-century's restoration era, our political discourse cannot offer historical processes. The works of Naomi Klein and Michael Moore, among others, unfold vast conspiracy realities backed up by journalistic investigation. These have become a familiar expression of criticality in the political sphere. The deep mistrust in the mediation of news corporations has generated the phenomenon of Wikileaks which aims go beyond representational forms of journalism. Perhaps it is no coincidence that under today's parliamentary governments, corruption expresses itself in the form of primitive accumulation — as real estate deals: the stories around the activities of the Prime Minister of Portugal José Sócrates as a civil engineer; Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's links in Napoli and other places; the fires and political upheaval following the 2007 elections in Greece; Hezbollah's rebuilding of bombed neighbourhoods in Beirut following the Israeli attacks of 2006; the new neighbourhoods of Cairo that Gamal Mubarak, son of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, is building around the capital; The Clintons Whitewatergate controversy; and former Israeli PM Ariel Sharon's 'Greek Island' affair and Malal B village are but a number of examples of a widespread phenomenon. Ever since the latifundia granted to Roman soldiers, all the way through Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris under Napoléon the Third in the mid Nineteenth-century (and the descriptions of the speculation market it created in Émile Zola's *The Kill (La curée)* of 1871–72), real estate has been closely linked to the management of the political — the public sphere, the built one and the mental one, has been shaped and dominated by this mechanism.

The prominent ideology of Privatizations gave rise to a class of politicians tied to the genealogy of neo-liberalism — all with strong ties to key business figures who benefit immensely from the ongoing waves of privatizations they have been implementing in the last two decades throughout parliamentary regimented countries. Privatization, as a form of inner-colonization, is an ongoing project of a debt economy — based on mortgage and credit card systems as forms of social engineering. This system has experienced in the last two year its biggest crisis — one that has been spreading from the inner cities in the US to Florida and Orange County, California and has lead to a global financial crisis. And so, it does not matter who wins the elections, the oligarchy of practitioners from the OECD, IMF and World Bank are echoing the oligarchy of the Soviet politburo.

Anti-immigration racist populism, in the manner used by Geert Wilders in Holland, Thilo Sarrazin in Germany and Nicolas Sarkozy in France, Heinz-Christian Strache in Austria and Pia Merete Kjærsgaard in Denmark, has brought forward an anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, anti-unions, anti-welfare politics. Under the reign of capital's technocratic fascism, we notice that politics is dominated hermetically by right-wing vocabulary. And so the question of politics is a question of articulation. For example, in Europe today, women's rights are being articulated through xenophobia. Therefore, the question we pose in the political realm should be, who is able to articulate what and how?

<sup>2</sup> Truth regime is an expression coined by Michel Foucault: Each society creates a 'regime of truth' according to its beliefs, values, and mores. Foucault identifies the creation of truth in contemporary western society with five traits: the centering of truth on scientific discourse, accountability of truth to economic and political forces, the 'diffusion and consumption' of truth via societal apparatuses, the control of the distribution of truth by "political and economic apparatuses", and the fact that it is "the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation". Individuals would do well to recognize that ultimate truth, 'Truth', is the construct of the political and economic forces that command the majority of the power within the societal web. There is no truly universal truth at all; therefore, the intellectual cannot convey universal truth. The intellectual must specialize, specify, so that he/she can be connected to one of the truth-generating apparatuses of the society.

## CONSPIRACY

THE SPECTATOR / SOVEREIGN:

Jorge Luis Borges's 1944 short story *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* offers a model for reading into (and writing) conspiracy theories. The story begins with a researcher writing a book on the Irish liberation movement of the mid Nineteenth-century and its leader Fergus Kilpatrick. It is the story of some Irish rebels, one of whom (Kilpatrick) has confessed to betraying their movement. After confessing, "he and his cabal decided that he should die a hero, a martyr, thus redeeming his traitorous act by furnishing Ireland with a shining example of heroism". Taking their inspiration from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Abraham Lincoln's assassination, and using the entire town as a stage, it is decided that Kilpatrick will play the role of a hero and sacrifices himself "in order to preserve his heroic image and the peoples' passion for the cause". The execution takes place in the theatre with the audience witnessing it as an assassination. The researcher in the story realizes the truth — the assassination was in fact a execution. The role of the audience at the theatre was therefore of constituting and validating the theme of assassination of the hero over that of the reality of the execution of the traitor.

As we are subjected to a politics of representation in two ways — both under the system of political representation and under that of the representation of politics — the system of elected representatives who, supposedly represent us — 'The People'; and the system of political representations, by which the media informs us — 'The Spectators'. The tension between us being viewers ('The Spectators' in the media) and us being the sovereign ('The People' in the parliamentary governments) is expressed in a series of paradoxes. Under parliamentary governments today, political resignation has become a new form of agency; Ignorance has become our political knowledge; Passivity has turned to be our political activism; and de-regulation of finances has become the regulation of poverty. The omnipresence of capitalist propaganda generates a critic of each and every image. The way we read the media; photos, captions, headlines, and news stories, is a paranoid one. The 'CNN effect' of 24/7 live TV broadcasts produces a constant disbelief. Under the regime of the media a series of questions arise: where did this image come from? Who brought it to my knowledge? Why am I seeing this?

Live broadcasts, especially those of sport events, present themselves with a strict truth regime. As truth regimes they are validated first of all by their construction of space and continuation of movements (the way they are being edited suggests them as presenting the event while it is happening). In sports broadcasts the referee's limited perception on site validates the mediated knowledge of the viewer as better (the TV cameras *always* see more than the referee). With the sport event taking place live in front of our eyes, as TV viewers, it unfolds through our passivity, and our passivity constitutes it as a truth regime. But as we learnt from so many sports conspiracies and conspiracy theories, as we passively watch a sporting event on TV a black market deal has taken place, a crime was executed; fraud, theft and bribe. And so, we were watching a corruption as it took the form of a sports event on TV. Following Borges's story, the role of the audience at home is of constituting and validating the sport event as it happens over that of the crime. Hence, by accepting the truth regime of the sports event we are part of the conspiracy.

## CORRUPTION

HOW COME POLITICIANS  
ARE ALWAYS WRONG?

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951)*, Hannah Arendt suggested the Dreyfus affair to be a 'foregleam' of the Twentieth-century, a grand rehearsal of the rivalling ideological powers of

Twentieth-century Europe. With the help of Karl Marx's analysis of the fall of the Second French Republic and the rise of Napoléon the Third and the Second Empire in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1852)*, one can borrow this 'grand rehearsal' idea and apply the grave mishaps of the Second French Republic to Twentieth- and Twenty-first-century representational regimes. Marx is giving an insightful account of the events unfolding, describing how the logic of lesser evil and (almost) free general elections results in proto-Fascism. In his text Marx shows how the February 1848 Revolution, calling for universal manhood suffrage, resulted in just a few months in the election of a "grotesque mediocrity" of a president, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, who was elected President of the Republic with almost 5.5 million votes (75% of the total). Bonaparte would later on eliminate the Second Republic and restore a Second Empire on December 2, 1852 (what Marx refers to as his Eighteenth Brumaire — the coronation date of Napoléon Bonaparte as emperor, on the revolutionary calendar). And so, the perpetual rituals of elections under parliamentary regimes result in Capital's technocratic Fascism (with variations on the neo, post, proto or semi-Fascisms in the way it is implemented). Marx would have probably agreed with Deleuze and Guattari when they say: "No, the masses were not innocent dupes; at a certain point, under a certain set of conditions, they *wanted* Fascism."

In an interview he gave François Truffaut in 1966, Alfred Hitchcock illustrated the term 'MacGuffin' which he used in his suspense films with a story: "It might be a Scottish name, taken from a story about two men in a train. One man says, 'What's that package up there in the baggage rack?' And the other answers, 'Oh that's a MacGuffin.' The first one asks, 'What's a MacGuffin?' 'Well,' the other man says, 'It's an apparatus for trapping lions in the Scottish Highlands.' The first man says, 'But there are no lions in the Scottish Highlands,' and the other one answers 'Well, then that's no MacGuffin!' So you see, a MacGuffin is nothing at all." Hitchcock explained the term as a "mechanical element that usually crops up in any story. In crook stories it is almost always the necklace and in spy stories it is most always the papers". This way, for example, we never ask what is whispered into the ear of Dr. Ben McKenna (James Stewart) in the Casablanca market in Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much (1956)* — the meaning has no meaning. The MacGuffin is, in many ways, the pseudo-event of the live TV broadcast.

We live under a totalitarian representational regime (think of money as the purest representation which defines our political imaginary and economical vocabulary). This regime is totalitarian to the extent that it is redundant to name it so. Unlike previous totalitarian party-lead regimes, undermining this one by calling it totalitarian is meaningless. Since its grip is all encompassing, naming it so seems to have no subversive currency. The crisis of representation is such, that the second American war in Iraq brought journalism as we knew it to its demise, with all the news networks collaborating with the WMD lie. The death of journalism gave way now to the rise of new non-representational forms such as Wikileaks. When all is left of politics today is policing, we should re-evaluate the spaces of appearance of political participation. Twenty years after 1989 the model of state censorship has changed into the economic threat of legal censorship by libel and slander lawsuits. Self-censorship by the press is what defines the narrow boundaries of mainstream politics today. While the model of state-censorship is that which creates the image that the press has of itself, as actually having something to say, it is the self-censorship which is internalized by the media, which proves that it no longer has anything to say.

Siri Peyer and Joshua Simon

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