

The Cool Couple

EMOZIONI MONDIALI

10 December 2021-8 January 2022

artKIT

The Cool Couple, an Italian artistic duo, emerges from the expanding field of contemporary photography. Their multidisciplinary works address the frictions and conflicts that, as they say, arise between images and people. For the first time in Maribor, they present their interactive installation *Emozioni Mondiali*, which humorously and insightfully highlights the discrepancies and intersections between the worlds of art and football - the influence of the market on artistic production, commodification, the role of the spectators, and everything from the celebrity system to the historicization and institutionalization of power.

Emozioni Mondiali is an untranslatable Italian term that roots in the multiple meanings of the word *mondiali*. As an adjective, *mondiali* means »worldly«, »global«, and in less formal, colloquial language, »exceptional«, »glorious«, »great«, and as a title, it refers to the FIFA World Cup, or »Mondiali di calcio« in Italian. The phrase appeared as a hashtag shortly before the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, but despite a strong marketing campaign that was mainly based on the success of the 2006 Italian national football team, the hashtag was hardly used by anyone. The Italian national team, which failed to qualify even for the eighth-finals, therefore finished the championship in Brazil rather dismally, and the whole championship was marred by numerous scandals, which caused the media and public attention to shift from the playing field to the geopolitical one. At the same time, the terrorist group ISIS started tagging their propaganda videos with the hashtag #emozionimondiali in order to infiltrate and increase visibility. The artists were particularly fascinated by this interplay between sport and politics and decided to draw parallels with the art world.

The central element of *Emozioni Mondiali's* work is a Play Station 4 game console with the game Pro Evolution Soccer 2018 (PES 2018), which was visually and contextually reworked by the artists. The video game is therefore not just a formalization of an idea, but an integral part of the project. As PES 2018 does not have official licenses to use the images and iconography of official football clubs, the game is designed in such a way that it allows the users to customize almost all elements: the player's names and features, sports uniforms, crests, banners, fan elements, slogans, etc. The Cool Couple has taken advantage of this customizable feature to produce a work of art. In doing so, they have also gone beyond gender-rigid and exclusionary art historical narratives and the world of men's football, by including female artists among the players/artists by remaking the avatars. Despite the growing popularity of women's football, these video games still do not include female footballers. The artists also do an excellent job of linking football as a game, i.e. the positions of the players, the ways of playing, and the tactics, with artistic movements, individual artists, and the artistic characteristics of particular art-historical periods. Specific formations and visual elements thus express the characteristics of a particular movement or style or artist, while the market values of the players/artists show the approximate values of their works on the art market and at auction. The spectator can choose

between the following teams: Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Impressionism, Futurism 1909, DADA, S. F. Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, Fluxus, Pop Art, Conceptual Art 1961, Art Informel, Land Art, Arte Povera, Young British Artists, Dreams, and Conflicts – Venice Biennale 2003, Photo-Legends, Post-Internet and Documenta (13).

The artists have thus juxtaposed the art system, the world of professional football, and the world of video games. Through the interactive installation, the viewer is shown the connections between the dynamics of each system, such as the celebrity system, the financial market, profitability, competition, and promotion. At the same time, connections are also made from the position of the spectator - just as football enthusiasts follow the game, the movements of the players, the different styles of play, and the language that is established within the field, so too do art enthusiasts study, follow and identify the particular artistic, formal and contextual characteristics of individual art movements, artworks, curated exhibitions and museum collections.

The artists round off their installation by a specially designed tribune, which is complemented by individual LED screens displaying quotes from individual artists («Creativity takes courage» - Henri Matisse) in combination with marketing slogans of sports equipment brands («Don't run away from challenges, run over them» - Nike). In this way, the artists further draw attention to the similarities and parallels between the languages of the art world and the world of football - two seemingly different worlds which, as we can see in *Emozioni Mondiali*, if analyzed through the prism of neoliberalism, are remarkably similar.

BIOGRAPHY

Webpage:



The Cool Couple is an artist duo based in Milan, Italy, founded in late 2012 by Niccolò Benetton (1986) and Simone Santilli (1987). Their artistic research focuses on the points of friction that are daily created in the relationship between people and images. The notion of images as active nodes, combined with a strong projective attitude, leads them to use multiple modes of expression, from art photography to electrostatic wipes, from meditation spaces to Chinese »cover bands«. The Cool Couple combine artistic exploration with educational work, as sharing creates good karma. They have lectured at NABA (Milan), IUAV University (Venice), AplusA Gallery (Venice), University of South Wales (Newport), IED Turin, ISSP, Riga, MADE Program, Syracuse. They are the founders of the trendy band Rui & Rainbow Dragons, members of POIUYT, a platform for image-based research, and members of the editorial team of Genda magazine.

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artKIT, Glavni trg 14, Maribor

Opening hours: Monday to Friday from 4 to 8 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.