

LAVERONICA

via grimaldi 93
97015 modica (rg)
t. 09321873100
info@gallerialaveronica.it
www.gallerialaveronica.it

Artists against MUOS

Inauguration Thursday, 29 December 2016, 7 p.m.

29 December 2016 – 25 March 2017

Laveronica Arte Contemporanea is proud to present “Artists against MUOS”, a collective exhibition with works by Antenne46, Francesco D’Amore, Francesca Dimanuele, Giuseppe Firrincieli, Guglielmo Manenti, Maddalena Migliore, Matilde Politi, Irene Puglisi, and Maria Domenica Rapicavoli. Along with the artists’ works, there will also be archival documents from the activists of the “No MUOS” group.

For years, in Niscemi – in the heart of Sicily – there has been a courageous but little-known battle. On one hand is the local community and thousands of activists from every corner of the island and the rest of Italy. On the other is the United States Department of Defense, which installed MUOS (Mobile User Objective System), a satellite communications network that can pilot drones for long-distance wars. Because of its high-frequency emissions, the system is accused of seriously damaging the health of residents, fauna and flora over a range of dozens of kilometres. The military area is in a nature reserve, where Sicily’s last forest of cork oaks survives. And the assault on the environment is already scandalous enough for common opinion. But the stakes are far higher: over 100,000 people within the circle of death are at risk for leukaemia, tumours and neonatal malformations caused by the powerful electromagnetic fields. And that’s without considering scenarios tied to the installation of a sophisticated and extremely expensive weapon that will have to be paid off with future wars. What is at stake above all is the survival of our democracies. Because, in the end, that is what this is about. The Italian institutions, which get the last word on this, used a velvet glove with its powerful ally and an iron hand with defenceless citizens. Therefore, in the halls of justice and the offices of ministries there has been an expropriation of fundamental rights that is detrimental to the credibility of a state whose sovereignty is more and more limited, and this undermines citizens’ trust in the police, magistracies and public power. If the social contract that underpins a country vacillates, if the stock of trust is jeopardized, then it will be hard to re-establish a balance and the effects arising from this will be devastating and unpredictable. The recent history of the Middle East and the older one of decolonization should teach us something about this.

The “No MUOS” movement managed to postpone and delay the start-up of the antennas for a long time. But now they are in operation. In January, trials will start against activists, guilty of having defended their life and their land from a military structure that emits potentially lethal radiations. And exemplary sentences are expected. Our personal backgrounds have led us to walk together with the men and women – including several artists – from the “No MUOS” movement. This encounter led to the need to convey this life experience and this struggle by means of an exhibition. On the eve of a moment that is very difficult for activists, the aim of “Artists Against MUOS” is to pay tribute to those who, over the years, have led a grassroots revolt against invisible and visible powers, sometimes using creativity to overcome the silence of the press, to overturn an issue, to rouse the sleeping conscience of those who are indifferent, to unmask the corruption of the systems of power. The exhibition includes archival documents – newspapers, slips of paper,

flyers, press releases – that cover the unfolding of the events, but also videos, photographs, engravings, cartoons and artists' books, between reportages and condemnations, between satire and civic commitment. It is an opportunity to reflect on the path followed and to take stock of the situation. The exhibition has a twofold objective. First, it plans to make the MUOS situation known to a wider audience and allow activists to feel the support and solidarity of public opinion. Because one thing is clear: at Niscemi people aren't fighting to defend their own backyard, but for universal peace. Secondly, we think that political art should be awkward, able to step outside the box, ready to choose which side to be on, thus recovering a role of responsibility that many artists and intellectuals have long abdicated.

Today, none of the "No MUOS" activists are fooling themselves about how this clash will turn out. But every path had to be attempted, just as it was important for art to serve as a witness of this battle of civilization. So that, one day, no one can say that when it all happened, we looked the other way.

Modica, Friday, 9 December
Corrado Gugliotta and Sveva D'Antonio