

FONDAZIONE PRADA PRESENTS EXHIBITION “MACHINES À PENSER” AT ITS VENICE VENUE FROM 26 MAY TO 25 NOVEMBER, 2018

Venice, 9 May 2018 - Fondazione Prada presents the exhibition “Machines à penser”, curated by Dieter Roelstraete. The exhibition will be open from the 26 May to 25 November 2018 at the Venetian venue of Fondazione Prada, Ca’ Corner della Regina. The press preview will take place on Wednesday 23 May 2018, from 10 am to 6 pm.

This exhibition explores the correlation between conditions of exile, escape and retreat and physical or mental places which favor reflection, thought and intellectual production. “Machines à penser” focuses on three major philosophers of the 20th century: Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951). The latter two shared a life-long need for intellectual isolation: Heidegger spent long periods of his life in a secluded hut in the village of Todtnauberg in the Black Forest in Germany, whilst Wittgenstein retreated on several occasions to a small mountain cabin situated in a fjord in Skjolden, Norway. Adorno, on the other hand, was forced into exile from his native Germany during by the Nazi regime, first to Oxford and then to Los Angeles, where he wrote *Minima Moralia*, a collection of aphorisms that, among other themes, reflects on the fate of forced emigration. These reflections form the background to an installation conceived by the Scottish artist and poet Ian Hamilton Finlay in 1987 titled *Adorno’s Hut*, a centerpiece of the exhibition alongside architectural reconstructions of the actual huts in which Heidegger and Wittgenstein wrote their respective masterpieces *Being and Time* (1927) and *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921). These replicas double as exhibition venues within the Ca’ Corner della Regina, containing artworks and documents pertaining to the architectural archetype of the hut as a site of escape and retreat.

As Dieter Roelstraete explains: “these were the places where our protagonists hatched out their deepest thoughts. Isolation, whether chosen or imposed, appears to have inspired them decisively—and over the years their huts have proven to be an inexhaustible source of inspiration in turn for generations of artists, attracted to the fantasy of withdrawal as articulated in its most elemental architectural form.”

The exhibition takes place on the ground floor and on the first floor of the 18th century palazzo, creating an immersive journey that deepens our understanding of these three philosophers and the relationship between philosophy, art and architecture.

Adorno is the protagonist of the first part of the exhibit, in which his American exile is recalled through a large-scale reproduction of a photograph by Patrick Lakey showcasing the interior of the present-day Villa Aurora in Los Angeles, where Adorno and his contemporaries spent time exchanging ideas during the 1940’s. The fate of forced retreat and the larger topic of the relationship between place and thought is explored through the work of artists such as Susan Philipsz, who created a sound installation based on a film score by Adorno’s colleague Hanns Eisler; the photographer Ewan Telford, who portrayed Adorno’s unassuming home in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Brentwood; Patrick Lakey,

whose series *German Photographs* documents the homes and workplaces of several major German philosophers and writers; Anselm Kiefer, who created a model-like sculpture in dialogue with the filmmaker and writer Alexander Kluge, who in turn was a close associate of Adorno's in the final years of his Frankfurt School tenure, and conceived a new video for the exhibition entitled *Kälte ist die Kette Gottes* (Cold is the chain of God) based on his memory of Adorno's interest in cinema.

On the first floor of Ca' Corner della Regina Martin Heidegger's Black Forest cabin is evoked through a remake (rendered on a 88% scale) that contains, among other works, a series of photographs of Heidegger and his wife taken in Todtnauberg from 1966 and 1968 by the photo-journalist Digne Meller-Marcovicz and a set of ceramic pieces by the German artist Jan Bontjes van Beek, along with photographic reproductions of two artworks known to have hung in the original hut, such as a portrait of the regional German poet Johann Peter Hebel. Contemporary work by artists such as Giulio Paolini, Sophie Nys, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle and Paolo Chiasera in the adjoining spaces chart the long shadow cast by Heidegger's thought across philosophies of building, dwelling and belonging, focusing on the quasi-mythical hut in Todtnauberg.

Inside the reconstruction of Ludwig Wittgenstein's small house in Skjolden, Norway, the viewer encounters *Head of a Girl* (1925-1928), the only artwork known to have been made by the Austro-British philosopher, shown here alongside his personal belongings. Wittgenstein's self-imposed exile and lifelong quest for philosophical peace of mind form the subject of artworks created by a Norwegian artist collective comprised of Sebastian Makonnen Kjølås, Marianne Bredesen and Siri Hjorth; Jeremy Millar; and Guy Moreton. A newly commissioned work by Leonor Antunes takes as its partial point of departure Wittgenstein's well-known forays into modernist architecture and concomitant attention to detail. Wittgenstein's cabin is likewise rendered here on a 88% scale—a measure derived from the work of Mark Manders, whose sculptural work is also featured in the exhibition.

Goshka Macuga designed three sculptures for the exhibition depicting the heads of the three philosophers, using their casts to create functioning vases in terracotta, porcelain and rubber. Mark Riley presents three dioramas that reconstruct the natural environment within which the Wittgenstein and Heidegger's refuges are sited (alongside the historical precedent of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's hermitage in Ermenonville). Gerhard Richter's overpainted photographs of Engadin mountainscapes along with the sculptural accompaniment *Kugel III* evoke the intimate space where these works were first shown in 1992: Friedrich Nietzsche's private thinking quarters in Sils-Maria where *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was conceived.

The exhibition also includes a historical section shedding light on the roots of philosophy's long-standing fascination with the figure of the hermit and/in his retreat, focusing more specifically on the legend of the Church father Saint Jerome (347-419), famous for leading the life of an anchorite in the Syrian desert while translating the Bible into Latin. Renaissance paintings and prints dedicated to the iconography of the saint—the patron saint of the exhibition, as it were—are exhibited here alongside a Renaissance studiolo containing,

among other items, first editions of Heidegger and Wittgenstein's writings, its outer walls clad in a site-specific installation by the Scottish artist-poet Alec Finlay titled *Hutopia* (2018).

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue edited by Dieter Roelstraete and published by Fondazione Prada. In addition to the curator's lead essay, the book's 500+ pages contain essays by Shumon Basar and Mark Riley, a long poem by Alec Finlay, and three conversations between artists Leonor Antunes, Alexander Kluge, Goshka Macuga and members of the curatorial department of Fondazione Prada.

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