

Dora Budor

Autoreduction

with Michèle Graf and Selina Grüter, Niloufar Emamifar, Noah Barker, and Ser Serpas
July 16 - September 30, 2021

Progetto occupies a palazzo in Lecce, capital of a province once famous for its tobacco production, and now for its coastline. In this way it was and remains a region central to the psychic economy of Italy: snuff-inhaling northern industrialists were quite literally addicted to Mezzogiorno's agricultural exploits. In field and factory, most tobacco workers were women, known as the *tabacchine*. Employed as the typically cheapest labor, their exploitation exceeded the wage. Devices of domestic domination interpenetrated the production line, one order enforcing the other. Conveyor tables from a tobacco factory, where they sat decommissioned for three decades, have been relocated to *Progetto*'s exhibition rooms. At six meters in length, the chambers scaled for lavish living struggle to contain their industrial proportions. Dominions of production and reproduction, accumulation and expenditure, are grafted in a refutation of architecture as such and the limits there-in. Following the show's closure, the conveyor lines will be renovated and used as dining tables at an agriturismo hotel opened by the inheritor of the former factory.

Atop the palazzo are stone walls of roofless rooms. In four of them, sculptures by Ser Serpas were constructed with roadside debris sourced between Salento's villages. Open sky also hosts a lecture held a week prior to the exhibition's opening. In the palazzo's courtyard Niloufar Emamifar presents *A Partnership For The Future* on the economy of view and the financial liquidity of empty space. The talk unfolds a narrative of twentieth century human-atmospheric relations onto the contemporary monetization of air rights. The palazzo's inner patio will be occupied again three days following the exhibition's opening with *The Besieged Courtyard* by Giovanna Zangrandi (1910 - 1988). A dramatic reading in Italian will occur with intermission, while an English translation completed by artists Michèle Graf and Selina Grüter is whispered to Anglophonic audience members on the balcony above. Zangrandi, a partisan, writes of confliction between her socialist familial upbringing and the fascist education administered in school. Graf and Grüter have annotated the work to account for idioms and emphasize moments of untranslatability. Returning to the rooms of the palazzo, two poems can be read by Graf and Grüter. Purchases compose their readymade diction. And on the ceiling, empty bottles born stars of a different sort. The foil constellations are works by Noah Barker.

Beneath the pitched ceilings of Salento's churches is rotting paper. A cheap alternative to plaster and stone, *cartapesta* has been used for centuries to produce likenesses of departed saints. Largely, the remaining workshops are sustained by selling souvenirs. As a placeholder for one already renovated table at the hotel, the studio of maestro Mario Di Donfrancesco has crafted a conveyor table onsite. Modelled on those of the tobacco factory, its length and detail are determined by available budget and time. Extruded from the stone

palazzo wall the paper table beckons, like Lulu the Tool: what is on the other side? Autoreduction answered with incremental paradise in the conscious lowering of piece rates. When the strategy migrated from factory to city, where it was applied to collectively determine prices, struggle shifted from production to consumption. The tactic proved both flexible and immediate, mirroring the tectonic economic adjustment from industrial investment to property speculation. As a café's smoke-stained walls hold us captive to the charm of now illicit consumption memorialized, the leisure adaptation of a production line sanitizes its legacy.