

PRESS RELEASE

ADRIAN PACI / GIULIANA RACCO

Another Place

Frith Street Gallery, Soho Square (60 Frith Street)

19 January – 13 April 2017

Frith Street Gallery is pleased to announce the exhibition *Another Place* with Adrian Paci and Giuliana Racco. Uniting the two artist's practices are personal histories of resettlement, as well as a mutual concern for ideas surrounding mobility, borders and ambiguous identities. The title *Another Place* is taken from a film by Racco, whose own research focuses on migration and other forms of individual and collective movement across territories. Throughout this exhibition are reflections on displacement as both a physical and emotional state of being, where history is not fixed and lines can be drawn across geography and memory.

Another Place begins with a series of watercolour drawings by Adrian Paci, which originate from a variety of moving-image sources such as Youtube clips and publically accessible videos. Some works depict unknown groups of bathers and swimmers, as well as stills from films by artist Derek Jarman. The soft-focus, ambivalent qualities of these drawings suggest that these images are not objective records of daily life: in fact, the seemingly uncanny bathers are derived from footage of immigrants arriving onto the Italian coast and waiting for days near the sea before being sent away. Other watercolours originate from clips of recorded training sessions from the Albanian army, where exercising soldiers with opened arms simultaneously call to mind acts of surrender or by contrast joyous celebration. By extracting and pausing what was meant to be a clear image of victory and strength, the drawings become records of more ambiguous and mysterious moments, and thus take on new meanings and identities.

The play with source materials continues with Giuliana Racco's black and white film *Mezomaro*, whose title comes from the word meaning "Mediterranean" in Esperanto. The work combines animated chalk drawings, photographs, newspaper clippings and archival images to explore ideas of mobility and citizenship, poetically expanding current global situations to the history of people and geography over time. Drawing on Ludovico Ariosto's epic poem *Orlando Furioso* (1516) - a work which contains both a proto-science-fiction and a battle scene on Lampedusa, where Racco's photographs were taken, - *Mezomaro* references our contemporary context by shedding light on how a miniscule island located between continents is connected to a global crisis situation via the multitude of people from different areas of the world attempting to reach its shores. Here the island, which could be one of many, receives wide media attention as a portal within a journey to other places, resulting in an invisible presence of people who are swept away by military operations almost before they touch land. Also on view is a selection of chalk drawings originating from *Mezomaro*. In these delicate works, fragile lines are made on found blackboards depicting a nebula in outer space, arms stretching in the gesture of throwing, and maps being drawn - only to later be erased.

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The exhibition concludes with Paci's intimate video installation *The Guardians*, a tale of displaced time and caretaking. The work takes its location within a Catholic cemetery of the artist's hometown, Shkodra, where children are paid to clean and maintain the graves of pre-Communist ancestors. Throughout the artist's own childhood this cemetery was in disuse, due to the campaign of the ex-Communist regime to ban all religious symbols, which had peaked in the 1960s. In *The Guardians* we see a space normally associated with death and abandonment coming to life in the youthful presence of its new caretakers. As with many of his works, Paci uses his own history as a starting point before allowing the work to morph into a wider social reality, transgressing geographical boundaries and the confines of memory.

Adrian Paci (b. 1969 in Shkodra, Albania) studied painting at the Academy of Art of Tirana. In 1997 he moved to Milan where he lives and works. Throughout his career he has held numerous solo exhibitions in various international institutions such as: MAXXI - Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome (2015); MAC, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal (2014); Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea – PAC, Milan (2014); Jeu de Paume, Paris (2013); Kunsthau Zurich, Zurich (2010); The Center for Contemporary Art – CCA, Tel Aviv (2009); MoMA PS1, New York (2006) and Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (2005). Amongst various group shows, Paci's work has also been featured in the 14th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia (2014); in the 48th and the 51st edition of the International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia (respectively in 1999 and 2005); in the Biennale de Lyon (2009) and in the 15th Biennale of Sydney (2006).

Giuliana Racco (b. 1976 in Toronto, Canada) has made Europe her home since 2002. She completed her graduate degree in Visual Arts at the IUAV University in Venice, and later worked as an Assistant Professor in the visual arts courses held by Lewis Baltz. She has participated in international research and residency programmes including Spain (*Hangar Barcelona*); Portugal (*Soft Control* at the Fine Art School of the University of Porto); West Bank (*Campus in Camps/DAAR Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency Bethlehem*); Israel (*Jerusalem Center for the Visual Arts*); and has conducted workshops in a variety of environments, including universities, town halls, museums, and refugee camps. Amongst various exhibitions, Racco's work has also been featured in the Lopez Museum, Phillipines, Fundació Suñol, Barcelona, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka, Akademie der Künste der Welt, Cologne, Fotomuseum Winterthur, SESC de Artes – Mediterrane, São Paulo, and Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg.