



Orto Botanico Corsini. Courtesy of Orto Botanico Corsini © Giuseppe

ENDGAME.

Stijn Cole

in conversation with
Editor in Chief

Alice Zucca

with the contribution of
Artist and Curator

Luia Corsini

Endgame is the title of the collective exhibition hosted in Porto Ercole in the spaces of the **Corsini Botanical Garden** and on the initiative of its organization. The choice of this title, which intends to outline the multifaceted and intricate relationship between man and nature, is inspired by the play "Endgame" by Samuel Beckett, whose protagonists ruminate and "complain", embittered by the state of their lives during their last moments when everything is inevitably coming to an end. Our recent times, with the ongoing pandemic, has certainly highlighted the variable nature and ephemeral essence of the relationship between Humankind and the Earth. After a period of quarantine we have rediscovered less chaotic rhythms of life, skies and roads less busy, a more serene existence, more in harmony with the rhythm of Nature of which we, as humans, belong to. But we have a contradictory relationship with it: we admire and celebrate it and at the same time we destroy it for our own gain. An incongruent and unsustainable position. It is in the need for a radical change of views and actions that this exhibition intends to place itself as a spotlight on a very topical problem, the alternative being the risk of finding ourselves, with no way out, at the end of the game. The **Endgame** precisely. And it is this objective precisely the common matrix that guides the work of the various artists, who come together in Porto Ercole, from different continents and with different backgrounds, united here by their commitment to show us the spirit for a better future.

*"Collaboration is at the heart of this project, with conversations unfolding between man and nature, artist and medium. A cross-cultural dialogue between **Manuel Forte**, **Esteban Fuentes de Maria**, **Carlos Garcia**, **Fernando Ocaña** and **Bosco Sodi**, from Mexico, **Agnes**, **Desideria Corsini**, **Henryk Corsini**, **Luia Corsini**, **Marzia Gandini**, **Charlie Masson**, **Pietro Pasolini**, **Malù dalla Piccola**, **Benedetto Pietromarchi**, **Tristano di Robilant**, **Baldassare Ruspoli** and **Alessandro Twombly**, from Italy, **Stijn Cole** from Belgium and **David Worthington** from the United Kingdom, reveals the myriad ways in which man perceives himself in relation to Earth. Whereas **Luia Corsini** and **Ocaña** leave the*

garden, and the elements, to activate their works, Sodi introduces his native earth, Oaxacan-sourced clay stacks, into the Mediterranean landscape. Similarly, Alessandro Twombly works with clay — in an act, he explains, of consciousness. Tristano di Robilant, on the other hand, interprets Endgame through a nostalgic lens; his architectural sculpture, Shade Shelter, offers an opportunity for quiet contemplation”.

The exhibition is curated in collaboration with Massimo Mininni by the artist and curator Luia Corsini and it will be on view until 31st of October. Luia Corsini takes also part in the exhibition with her work, she shared with us her experience and her vision in relation to the exhibition and her family project with the botanical garden in Porto Ercole.

Luia Corsini:

“The garden was founded in 1868 by General Vincenzo Ricasoli, whose innate botanical sense and passion left us with this extraordinary site becoming one of the most important gardens of acclimatization in Italy. The collection consists of over 1300 species of plants spread over 8 acres of land. The species come largely from India, Afghanistan, the Middle East, South Africa, Australia, China, Mexico, and the Americas.

Alessandro Corsini created the Association Orto Botanico Corsini APS Monte Argentario, in August 2020. His idea was to open the botanical garden to public visits and later turn the garden into a center of culture and art, including exhibits, lectures, music and entertainment. For this reason, he asked me to curate a show for the summer of 2021 and so, with the help of Massimo Mininni, we opened the first exhibition at the Sculpture Park “Endgame”.

Endgame aims to address the delicate relationship that exists between man and nature and the consequences of humanity on nature. I also enjoyed challenging the artist and seeing different themes come to light such as spirituality, religion, emotion, marine life and decaying.

While I am an artist and remain as such, I found this deviation into curating fulfilling. The selection of artists began with those of interest from Mexico and Italy, and with the assistance of Georgina Pounds it started to grow organically; she enabled the inclusion of Bosco Sodi who founded Casa Wabi and whose work focuses so much on raw material, as well as other important artists including David Worthington and Stijn Cole. Alessandro Corsini also welcomed the inclusion of established Italian artists, Alessandro Twombly and Tristano di Robilant”.

Stijn Cole

Stijn Cole (Belgium, 1978) is a contemporary artist who works within an oeuvre that uses landscape as a subject matter to depict concepts of time, colour and how humans view and experience reality. Cole's use of media is diverse; he draws, paints, produces sculpture, installation & photographic work. In addition, Cole creates abstract and figurative images without wanting to establish a hierarchy. With all the above, he manages to create a harmonious entity in which content and form reinforce each other and his work testifies to a highly original vision of the world around us. Recurring themes include the horizon as a subjective measure of our looking, time and light that influence the landscape, and the position of the viewer that as a result determine the outward appearance of the work.

"Cole doesn't want to show us the landscape, he wants to immerse us in it and influence our view forever" - Robert Hoozee.

Cole's sculptural work is often an exact replica of parts of the earth's surface. He has previously moulded parts of the French coast, the Mont Sainte Victoire and a French waterfall. The places are chosen for their significance in time, the rocky coastline deteriorates a little further every day under the pounding of the sea so that the sculptures capture a fragment of time, the fountain creates an ever-changing image through the rippling water and the parts of Mont Sainte Victoire refer to their significance for contemporary Western art.



Installation view Endgame @ Orto Botanico Corsini, puerto Ercole - Cancale 1:1, bronze +- 60x90x45cm > credits: Stijn Cole

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4/9- Alice Zucca



Alice Zucca:

Can you tell me about the work on display at the Corsini botanical garden and its dialogue with space?

Stijn Cole:

In the exhibition Endgame I am showing 2 bronze sculptures entitled "Cancale 1:1 #4" and "Cancale 1:1 #5 », as well as a photographic sculpture called "Souvenir 2021". Both could be seen as documentary sculptures: the bronze works are replicas of parts of the Breton coast and the photograph was taken in a nature reserve in Ghent, the city where I live. The photographic image allows me to place what appears at first sight to be an ordinary cutout of a disordered Belgian landscape in the context of a Botanical Garden. This inclusion adds some less appealing species to their collection of carefully chosen Mediterranean plants. The picture is mainly defined by the presence of wild nettles, an invasive species that often supplants nature in Belgium because there is too much nitrogen in the air. Other more fragile species are disappearing and biodiversity is under threat. The monumental photographic image (2 × 3 meters) consists of two parts connected by hinges that give the image a spatial dimension and allow the light to fall on the work in two different ways. Due to the aluminum surface of the print, the colors from the environment are reflected in different ways on the image. This gesture of the folding the image in two gives it a structure, the overflowing cutout of nature becomes a land-scape. The work stands on a table making it seem like an altar in its surroundings.

The two bronze sculptures that I dug into the sloping entrance path to the garden/exhibition are modelled on parts of the rocky coast in Cancale (Brittany), they are fragments that are inundated by the sea twice daily. Shapes sculpted by nature. They are part of a little bay where I always went on vacation 30 years ago, so they have a special meaning for me but also have a more universal significance, they are relics of a landscape that threaten to disappear under sea level. In the expo I place them at different heights in dialogue with the sea.

AZ:

Light is the most important mechanism by which the world reveals itself to our eye, you very much take this into account in your research. What fascinates you about this aspect in general and in relation to the theme of the landscape?

SC:

The very first work I made after graduating was a timeline on which you could read the light intensity of a day from left to right. I was fascinated by the conceptual photography of Jan Dibbets and the works of Stanley Brouwn, and at the time was looking for ways to capture a period of time in a two-dimensional image. It is from this same search that several works have emerged since then. The time aspect that becomes visible in an image because of the evolution of the light condition on a subject, became the subject of my first landscapes. Where in the first works I pointed my camera (obscura) at the sky, I tilted it downwards bringing a horizon into view. This subjective line that corresponds to your eye level, and by extension the position of yourself in relation to a subject, determines, together with the light condition of the moment, how you see the environment/objects. My works are about looking and continuing to look. At first I limited myself to an abstract language of forms, afterwards the depiction of the landscape was added. I see the landscape as an inexhaustible carrier of images and stories on which I can hang my ideas, moreover it is a subject that appeals to everyone.



Stijn Cole, Souvenir 2021, 2021 Inkjet on aluminum dibond 300x200cm, Courtesy of Orto Botanico Corsini © Giuseppe Zanoni Photography

AZ:

One of the elements that fascinates me the most in your work is when a minimalistic digital “reduction to a minimum” occurs which, however, is almost immediately able to recompose itself on a mental level in the eye of the observer as a totalizing image that is suggested by the minimal component. There is a moment in which the “object”, the landscape, becomes subjective and universal at the same time and therefore it is recognizable through the shapes, the concept of horizon, the color, the light just as we mentioned and while they’re not representing the “object” in a realistic sense they tell us about the Real. Can you tell me about this process through your works?

SC:

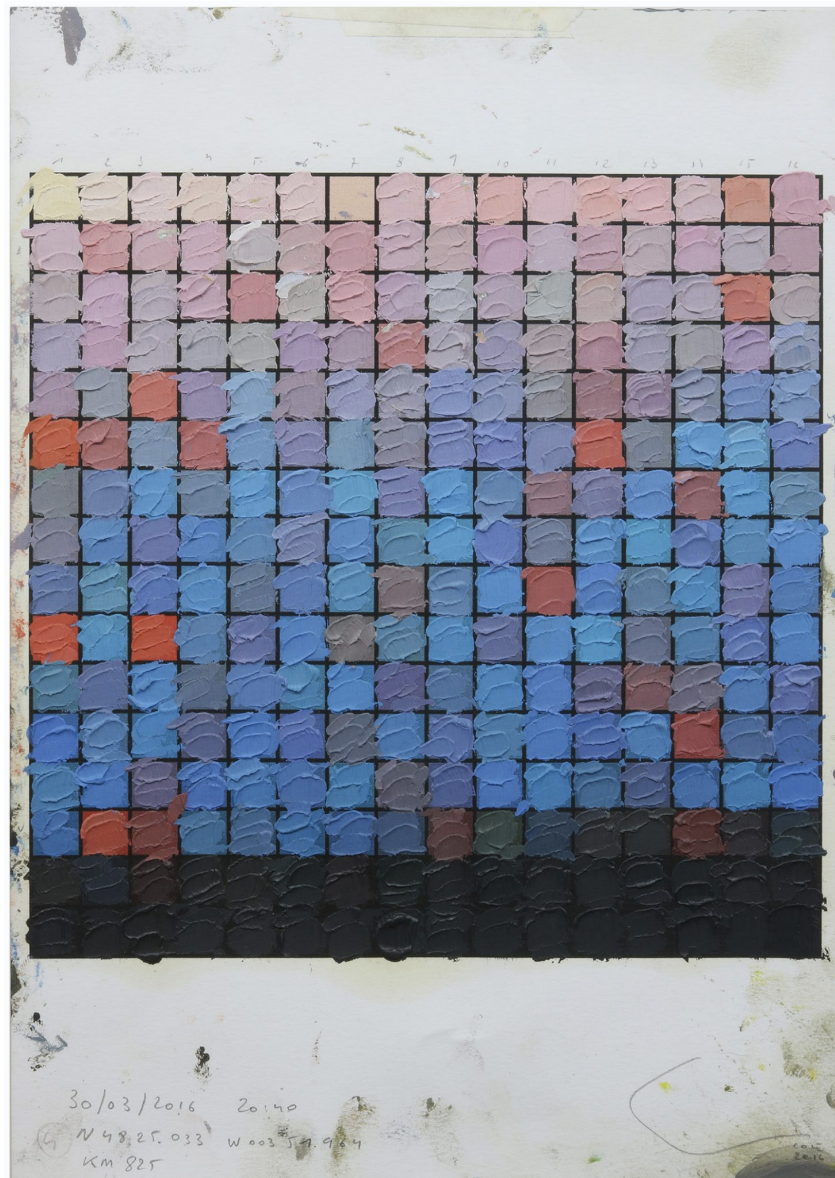
This process sometimes overwhelms me as well; I suspect you're referring here mainly to my "Colorscapes". In those works I start from a landscape photograph and abstract it by listing the colors present in the image in a grid of 16×16 squares from light to dark. The often lighter colors of the sky are situated at the top of the image, the more earthy ones at the bottom, creating a kind of accidental horizon. I think this reaction is due to what I also said above, everyone is addressed by the landscape and everyone therefore has such baggage and frame of reference that viewers are able to see through the abstract image. A viewer already knows the ingredients of my works, they are just presented in a different order in my abstract works. When people see my colorscapes they spontaneously start telling about the time that there was exactly the same light in their garden or somewhere on vacation, they create at that moment a mental image of a color sum that is actually very mathematically ordered and that is the result of a photograph of a totally different moment in a totally different place.



Stijn Cole, Installation view @ Irene Laub Gallery Brussels > 2 Timescapes "60 journées d'été 2016 19:00 > 24:00", Photoprint on Baryth on Dibond 50x150cm > credits: Amélie Bataille

AZ:

You are a multifaceted artist and you stretch from videos, installations, models, paintings and mixed media. In this regard, I find very interesting the use you make of painting, most of your works are conceived in the digital field, where does the choice of the pictorial medium come from?



Stijn Cole, "12 stops to Santiago - Stop 4: 30 maart 2016 20u40", oil on inkjetprint A4, Courtesy the artist

IRÈNE LAUB

GALLERY

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SC:

Over the years I have added more and more media and I try to purify each medium to an essence, just as I do with the works themselves. The drawings are one type of pencil on paper, the bronze sculptures are replicas of parts of the landscape. The photographic works are more about the medium of photography and the support rather than the image itself. Currently, I often work a little less rigidly and sometimes stray further from that strict schema. I started the paintings out of necessity, I was going crazy with the constant repetitive work at the computer to assemble the timelines. I had the "Colourscapes" in my drawer as digital prints for some time but lacked a certain sophistication in those images. For some reason the "Timescapes" which are also just summations of colors didn't lack that tactility. I found it important to leave the grid visible where the different colors are listed because otherwise the images tended too much towards pixelated images and that was not my intention, perhaps that was the cause. Suddenly the idea came to me to make the colors physical with paint. I searched on top of the prints for the exact colors in oil paint. It is the traces of the underlying attempts, the imperfect colors, the stains that appear on the edges of the paper that suddenly give life to those flat prints. I am using a kind of essential painting that is all about mixing and arranging color on a support.

ENDGAME

Corsini Botanical Garden, Porto Ercole, Italy