



## Press Release

The exhibition *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Cards* is curated by Lanfranco Aceti (COTUS) for the Museum of Contemporary Cuts (MoCC). It combines curatorial and artistic methodologies to realize a series of holiday cards that showcase works of art on the North Lawn of the White House in Washington DC. The exhibition is about publicness, paranoia, confusion, and freedom of expression, but more than that is about the chaos of contemporary times. Aceti decided to reconsider these two spaces: a holiday card and the iconic North Lawn of the White House. He placed a column taken from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (that acts as a plinth) on the North Lawn and installed upon it a series of works of art by American and international artists.

The works of art are signposts for three thematic issues that the artist and curator wants to address. The first issue is the lack of freedom within the United States which is bound by fascistic and nationalistic ideologies, impeding any public art that is not conforming to puritanical ideologies and aesthetics of the Left and the Right. The second is to engage with the isolationist political tendencies of the US political body that, while causing chaos and mayhem abroad for the selfish greed of its oligarchs, presents itself as the policing force, the democratic beacon, and the victim of its generous nature. Thirdly, it is moving away from a corporate interpretation of art that has to be consonant to the propaganda of commercial interests that have infiltrated even universities, which once were safe spaces for free speech and aesthetic engagement with social topics.

The Fifth Column is a military expression that stands for saboteurs from the inside. Artists have often been considered at odds with social structures, if not openly against them. More recently, curators have started to experience the censoring arm of universities and museums as it increases the necessity to pander to radicalized, fractured, fascistic, and rabid audiences.

Aceti develops in this context of changes and upheavals an exhibition of unlikely possibilities set in a prominent space: the North Lawn of the White House. The cards as monumental installations to political blunders, social woes, and people's hypocrisy are rooted in a long Roman tradition of graffiti, messaging, and insults. They reinterpret publicness as a freed-from-restraint personal space that can offer viewers a curatorial perspective, a moment of reflection, and venting of frustrations. The works of art installed on the plinth speak of socio-political and financial divides, self-serving partitocratic policies, and erosion of democracy. The holiday cards are a proposition for public space installations and exhibitions which — although unlikely to be realized — are posted and presented to the White House for consideration.



Lanfranco Aceti, *Self-Portrait of the Artist as a Young Revolutionary as Performed by Francesco Sacco*, 2021. Digital photography and mixed media. Dimensions: 100 cm. x 67 cm.

## Lanfranco Aceti, Biography - Curator

Lanfranco Aceti works as an artist, curator, and academic. He is Editor in Chief of the *Leonardo Electronic Almanac* (MIT Press, *Leonardo* journal), for which he has edited more than twelve volumes. He worked as the director of Kasa Gallery in Istanbul, where he exhibited a range of innovative artworks including *75 Watts* by Revital Cohen and Tuur Van Balen (acquired by MoMA) and Paolo Cirio's *Loophole4All* (awarded the 2014 Golden Nica at Ars Electronica). Recently he performed and curated *Hope Coming On* at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, as well as curated *The Small Infinite* at the John Hansard Gallery.

In 2011, he curated the exhibition *Uncontainable* as part of the 12th Istanbul Biennial and an exhibition of digital artworks on the media facade of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb. In 2017, Aceti curated a series of exhibitions and projects including a large public installation on the promenade of the city of Thessaloniki, coinciding with the Thessaloniki Biennial, and curated a public intervention at documenta14. In 2020/2021 he exhibited a large body of works of art at the Venice Architecture Biennale, challenging established notions of white cube and public space. As a result, he is now curating *ad infinitum*, together with Alessandro Melis, the Italian Pavilion 2021 for the Museum of Contemporary Cuts and completing *Empty Pr(oe)mises* for the EMST, Athens.