

Santarcangelo Festival launches the **DREAM SUQ** سوق الأحلام



We had long time ago decided that *FUTURO FANTASTICO* [Isaac Asimov's short tale from 1990 in which our days are optimistically prefigured] would have been the claim for this far-out edition of the Festival, looking back at the past 50 years to imagine the future in 2050... Then the pandemic came and infected every pale attempt of prefiguring better futures. After the initial bewilderment and a never ending re-definition on the colours, stripes, semantics to taint this fateful 2020 edition – that will have a new emergency format shaped by today's uncertainties – we decided to keep this claim.

Why should we give up now to imaginative thinking and utopian visions?

This disturbing scenario was already so widely predicted by countless science-fiction films and novels (as well as by many scientists), that now, immersed in a dystopian syndrome, we felt an inexplicable déjà-vu... and the cruelty of the current reality, for somebody like us grown up with cyber-visions, immediately dyed in the acid colours of many sci-fi illustrations, like this image, created back in days when no one would have imagined the present, and that we chose for this Festival edition.

We are using the past tense here because from now on, inevitably, time will be split between “before” and “after” the virus, and this watershed will remain tattooed on our bodies.

We imagined this invasion of Santarcangelo’s main square through the eyes of a famous and brilliant illustrator, **Franco Brambilla**, who took over the legendary Karel Thole as author of “Urania”’s series covers; we entrusted him with this retro-futuristic illustration. And it is quite emblematic: an intervention on a vintage postcard of Santarcangelo, with the arrival of “friendly” aliens and a giant monocular octopus, not a terrifying creature but rather a gentle one lying on the square, caressing and exploring the neighbourhood with tentacles... This was the image.

This is the image today. It inevitably echoes the recent events and perhaps we could see it now as a clear invitation to live with the monster that entered our lives and will never go away. The intruder is now a part of us and we must learn to value “the virtues of the virus” as Rocco Ronchi writes: “The virus is the symptom of the eternal human condition. In case we were guilty of forgetting our mortality, finiteness, contingency, dearth, ontological deficiency etc. etc., the virus is here as a memento, forcing us to meditate and to make up for our distraction as compulsive consumers [...] For the critical intelligence focusing on the phenomenon, Covid 19 is mainly the name of a science-fiction movie that unearths a previous knowledge.”

In these dark times where sovereigntisms and nostalgia for totalitarian regimes bubble beneath the surface, the lock-down is the perfect incubator for new form of intolerance and a push to let democracy down the cliff, an ideal context to erase the already unacceptably removed issues of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers escaping wars, land-grabbing, homeless and sans papier: those exiled at the borders of the European empire, hostages of Turkish and Libyan persecutors exploiting their lives. There are so many issues, concerns and sources of anxiety and many more will be accumulating soon, and if we stop nourishing our imagination, where the spaces for the fantastic seem to flatten more and more, we ourselves will end up unconscious prisoners of the same orwellian restrictions that freeze us, big data’s oblivious objects turn into miserable moving dots in contact tracing maps... Will the entire West end up in a giant *Panopticon*?

“We cannot know how we will get out of the pandemic, whose conditions have been set by neoliberalism, from cuts in healthcare funding to over-exploitation. We can come out of this definitively alone, aggressive, competitive. But we could also come out of this with a great desire to embrace: social solidarity, contact, equality. The virus is the condition of a mental leap that no political preaching could have produced. Equality is back at the centre of the scene. Let’s imagine it as the starting point for the time to come...”

Commencing from Bifo’s ellipsis, we can start to imagine, virtually, what we wanted to create in July during the Festival in this hypothetical/utopian egalitarian horizon: to rethink and redesign the square as the nevralgic spot of a propulsive force ready to break the edges... to create an overflow, an artistic *Marea* – a Tide (the name of our special project for public spaces) of small and large participatory and free events. This was the dream, who knows if we will be able to make it real this year???

Now the square is empty, as never before... not even its historical market takes place anymore... like all the squares of Italy and slowly of the whole world. This act of removal of the social sphere and the from public space is an unprecedented phenomena.

Santarcangelo Festival responds to this “space-time Ramadan” (quoting Giovanni Boccia Artieri), offering a temporary common space where the commerce of goods is replaced by the exchange of DREAMS (shared in many forms, written, painted, made in solitude or activated in networks)... what do we dream in a time of pandemic, what do we wish for? Let’s put these dreams out in the square, let’s voice them, barter them, let them be the glue and the fuel to start again...

The opposite of panopticon is a SUQ, a concentric shape space impossible to control for its inner chaos. Through these days of suspension, we open the

DREAM SUQ سوق الأحلام of SANTARCANGELO FESTIVAL

www.facebook.com/groups/1086680995021510

“The suq is a place to exchange goods. It develops in public squares following a pattern of a concentric circles”. We take on the spiral architecture of these chaotic and colourful markets of the Arabic world, to create an open and collaborative platform, to invite voices and proposals to be shared and “put in the square” – now that the physical public space is forbidden. It is a **Facebook group**, an open box for proposals-dreams-visions, artistic, artisanal, local and international. An informal labyrinth where to express, exchange, suggest, share knowledge and practices: a market with no currency, or whose only currency is solidarity in the solitude of this moment.

“Culturally, we are not prepared to conceive stagnation as a long-term condition, we are not prepared to think about frugality, about sharing. We are not prepared to separate pleasure from consumption.”

Franco (Bifo) Berardi

Let's try.

We invite you to answer this question (obviously inspired by the series **Flash-Forward**). You can respond in any possible form allowed by the Internet, like texts, photos, videos (no longer than 2 minutes and 17 seconds), drawings, audio recordings... and many more.

IMAGINE SEEING YOUR (FANTASTIC) FUTURE AS IN A PREMONITORY DREAM, DESCRIBE 2 MINUTES AND 17 SECONDS...

To start re-imagining the Festival, we're creating this *Dream Suq* (market of dreams), open to contributions from everyone, including children: it is a tentacular space in which the circulation is triggered by unexpected encounters and relationships between people. We are living dramatic days, we follow the rules, we mourn the losses and we support those who work and fight on the front line... but we won't give up on the fantastic and the imagination. Let's start again imagining the impossible by boarding on a ghost ship: “In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure and the police take the place of pirates.” (M. Foucault, *Eterotopie*). On this nocturnal journey, we welcome premonitions/proposals in the free language of dreams without hierarchy or censure and we imagine to replace trading (devoted to accumulation and the neoliberal paradigm) with other forms of exchange/gift/mutual aid/psychological support/support for the most vulnerable communities...

We invite you to trade your proposals/visions for the near future, borrowing words, signs, ideas or fragments found in other people's "fantastic futures", to activate new sailing trajectories, which will lead us to the realization of a special edition of the Festival, in 2020... forward looking at 2050!

Now more than never we must expand the domestic space of our head, avoid solipsism and experiment instead other forms of communication (as we are already doing internally as a team) inviting a wider community to dream together... **perhaps towards a collective awakening in July? Perhaps making these dreams real bringing life back in the public square?**

We are also thinking of the 2020 edition of the Festival as a platform for reflection, analysis and realization of alternative proposals – and in this case also of (real) economies – to support categories of workers at risk: artists, technicians, organizers at the mercy of the viral storm that has almost wiped out the productive and working possibilities. Let's start from dreams, from great desires, to land later on the pavement of the square from our spaceship... and from there let's plan, on the assumption that nothing will ever be the same.

We have been thinking a lot about the online device to share this, and finally picked Facebook, because it seems the easiest and more accessible channel at the moment. Yet we will find strategies to avoid the inevitable censorship of the system. Also those who do not have a Facebook account can participate by sending the materials to social.santarcangelofestival@gmail.com, we will take care of sharing them for you.

