

Majorana Eigenstates

by Marco Poloni

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Film data

Year:
2008

Format:
HD video, colour, stereo sound

Duration:
45:46 minutes

Synopsis

The Majorana project comprises three films and a set of photographs that comprise an open narrative dispositif. The story fans out from an account of Ettore Majorana, a genius of Italian physics who disappeared at sea in 1938 under mysterious circumstances.

A secret history of sorts, Majorana's journey traverses and mirrors the heavily shrouded story of the creation of nuclear weapons. Majorana's story became a myth after the publication in 1975 of Leonardo Sciascia's novel *The Vanishing of Majorana*. The polemic generated by this publication spurred an impressive number of speculative theories, some more plausible than others, about the causes that pushed Majorana to cover up his tracks. One theory gained much currency over the years: Majorana orchestrated his own disappearance because of his anticipation of the deadly outcome of the discovery of nuclear fission.

In the main film, *Majorana Eigenstates* (HD Video, 1:2.35, Colour, Stereo, 45min46), an actor who interprets Majorana – and who strangely resembles him – synchronically lives in two places: a hotel room in Napoli, where the real Ettore Majorana lived before vanishing at sea, and the cabin of a ship. The use of two cameras with a parallax gap generates a split filmic space.

A second film, *The Sea Rejected Me* (16mm, 1:1.33, B&W, Silent, 4min30) was found at a dealer of used cinema equipment in Tehran. The deteriorated film shows a man on the deck of a ship. The man's resemblance to photographs of the physicist is striking. Like him, he plays chess and writes on what appears to be a cigarette pack.

A third film, *The Sea of Majorana* (Super-16mm onto SD Video, 1:1.66, Colour, Stereo, 8min30), shows a post-nuclear seascape filmed between Napoli and Palermo,

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// Synopsis



co-exist in different places, transcending the laws that link time and space. This elegant idea offers a vast territory for experimentation. It endows classical narrative with an open structure, in which Majorana's uncertain journey becomes a time capsule, a container for narratives that subsequent historicizations can potentially bestow with meaning, and which, in the present context of nuclear weapons proliferation remains surprisingly relevant.

where Ettore Majorana disappeared in 1938. The ambient radioactivity perforates the material support of the film. A voice over reads an excerpt of an essay by Majorana, "The Value of Statistical Laws in Physics and Social Sciences".

A constellation of photographs, Persian Gulf Incubator (28 Archival Pigment Prints, 5 text panels, dimensions variable), narrates the finding of the wreck of the Italian luxury liner M/S Raffaello in the Persian Gulf. The ship was sold in 1976 by Italy to the Shah of Iran, and was sunk by Iraqi jetfighters in 1983, a few miles off the coastal nuclear reactor of Bushehr.

This facility much worries American and Israeli policy makers. In this narrative the ship is a time capsule that journeys over a historical period spanning from the 1973 oil crisis to the events of 9/11.

The theory advanced in this body of work is speculative. Majorana operated a 'quantum disappearance' on himself: a passage from an embodied existence to a multiplication of eigenstates, which can synchronically

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Artist's info

Solo exhibitions

- 2008 Il mare mi ha rifiutato, Centro d'arte contemporanea La Rada, Locarno
Persian Gulf Incubator, Fotohof, Salzburg
Displacement Island, Museum fu.r Photographie, Braunschweig
- 2006 I work with merchandise, concrete things. They understand me straight away, Galerie Christian Roellin, St. Gallen
Displacement Island, Centre de la photographie, Genève
Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, Planet 22, Genève
- 2005 AKA (Also Known As), Project Room, Centre culturel suisse, Paris
The Desert Room, plug.in, Basel
- 2003 Passengers, Kunstverein Freiburg
The Wrong Room, Centre pour l'image contemporaine, Genève
- 2002 Sleepers, Raum fu.r aktuelle Kunst, Luzern
Blind Walk, Galerie des Grands Bains Douches, Marseille
- 2001 Shuttle, Galerie du Douven, Trédrez-Locquémeau, Bretagne
Straderumorincontri, with M. Balduzzi, c/o Care of, Cusano-Milanino, Milano
- 2000 Vis-à-vis, apartment show, org. Vidéochroniques, Marseille
... with some Ordinary Extras, with C. Dupaquier, La BF15, Lyon
- 1999 Changes, Project Room, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil (MACG), Mexico-City
Marco Poloni, La BF15, Monterrey
- 1998 Down There, Palais de l'Athénée, Genève
- 2005 Shadows Collide with People, Padiglione Svizzero, 51. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, Venezia
Me Myself I, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen
Chasm, Busan Biennale 2004, Busan Metropolitan Art Museum, Busan
- 2004 So wie die Dinge liegen, PhoenixHalle, Dortmund
Forbidden, The Third Photo Festival, Gana Art Center, Seoul
- 2003 Truffes de Chine, attitudes, espace d'arts contemporains, Genève
Not Neutral: Contemporary Swiss Photography, Grey Gallery, New York University, New York
Nosotros y el Mundo que nos Rodea, ARCO 2003, Madrid
- 2002 Zeitgenössische Fotokunst aus der Schweiz, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Hallescher Kunstverein, Museum Bochum, Städtische Galerie Villingen-Schwenningen
- 2001 General Document: artcontemporain, e, Palais de l'Athénée, Genève
- 2000 Version 2000, Centre pour l'image contemporaine, Genève
Fuori Sede, Swiss Institute, Roma

Awards

- 2001 Swiss Art Award
2000 Swiss Art Award
1997 Swiss Art Award

Shortlists

- 2006 Albert Renger-Patzsch Award, Museum Folkwang, Essen

Grants

- 2003 Atelier Schönhauser, Berlin
2000 Swiss Institute, Roma

Group exhibitions (Selection)

- 2007 Art en plein air, Môtiers 2007, Môtiers
Landschaft (Entfernung), Wu.rttembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart, Stuttgart
- 2006 Eclipses du réel, Fri-Art Centre d'art contemporain / Kunsthalle, Fribourg
knowing you, knowing me – On complicity with images, Camera Austria, Graz
Reale Fantasien, Neue Fotografie aus der Schweiz / Real Fantasies
New Photography from Switzerland, Fotomuseum Winterthur

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Collections

UBS Art Collection
Schweizerische Nationalbank Kunstsammlung
Museum fu.r Kommunikation, Bern
Helvetia Art Collection
Kunstmuseum St. Gallen
Schweizer Bundeskunstsammlung, Bern
Stiftung fu.r Fotografie, Film und Video, Kunstmuseum Bern
Fonds municipal d'art contemporain, Genève
Media Library, Centre pour l'image contemporaine, Genève

Publications (Selection)

Boris Magrini, L'insostenibile probabilità degli eventi, in: Kunstbulletin 7-8/2008
Joerg Bader, Tom Holert, Marco Poloni, Displacement Island, Kodoji Press: Baden 2008 (forthcoming)
Uta Grosenick, Thomas Seelig, Photo Art, Fotografie im 21. Jahrhundert, DuMont Buchverlag: Köln 2007 / Photo Art, Photography in the 21st Century, aperture: New York 2008 / Photo Art, The New World of Photography, Thames & Hudson: London 2008
Jean-Christophe Royoux, Constellations – Manières de faire des mondes, in: Day after Day, Kunsthalle Fribourg, Fri-Art, 2003 - 2007, Kunsthalle Fribourg, Fri-Art: Fribourg 2007
Day after Day, Kunsthalle Fribourg, Fri-Art, 2003 - 2007, Kunsthalle Fribourg, Fri-Art: Fribourg 2007
Jean-Christophe Royoux, Le récit après sa fin: allégories, constellations, dispositifs / Beyond the End of Narrative: Allegories, Constellations, Dispositifs, in: Explorations narratives / Replaying Narrative, Le mois de la photo à Montréal 2007, dirigé par / edited by Marie Fraser, Montréal 2007
Art en plein air, Môtiers 2007, Môtiers, Môtiers 2007 – Art en plein air, June 2007
Pierre-André Lienhard, Marco Poloni et la chambre des disparitions, in: Kunstbulletin #5, Sept/Oct 2006
Miriam Rosen: Marco Poloni, review in: Artforum International, Summer 2006, New York 2006
Pierre-André Lienhard: Marco Poloni et la photographie cinématographe. Notes pour un suivi d'enquête, in: Passengers, Verlag fu.r moderne Kunst Nu.rnberg, Nu.rnberg 2006

Ed. Urs Stahel, Thomas Seelig, Reale Fantasien, Neue Fotografie aus der Schweiz / Real Fantasies,
New Photography from Switzerland, Christoph Merian Verlag: Basel, 2006
Iris Dressler, Marco Poloni, If You See Something, Say Something, in: Camera Austria International 91, 2005
Michael Newman, Evident Hypotheses: Marco Poloni's Photographic "Scripts for Short Films," in:
Stefan Banz a.o., Shadows Collide with People, Edition Fink: Zu.rich 2005
Pierre-André Lienhard, Edouard Monnet, Marco Poloni, never mind the gap, Verlag fu.r moderne Kunst Nu.rnberg 2004
Busan Biennale 2004, The Busan Biennale Organizing Committee, Busan 2004
Iris Dressler, Hans D. Christ, Katrin Mundt, Silke Albrecht a.o., So wie die Dinge liegen, PhoenixHalle Dortmund, Revolver Verlag: Frankfurt am Main 2004
Self-Portrait, in: tema celeste contemporaryart n° 99, Sept/Oct 2003
Fonds d'art contemporain de la ville de Genève, Collection 1991-2003
Forbidden, The Third Photo Festival, Gana Art Center, Seoul 2003
Urs Stahel, Zeitgenössische Fotokunst aus der Schweiz, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Ernst Wasmuth Verlag: Tu.bingen 2002
Eugen Radescu & Razvan Ion, Photography and Video in Swiss Contemporary Art, in: Artphoto #2 Contemporary Art Magazine, Bucharest 2002
Sarah Zu.rcher, WONDER RED NOW, EDITION 01, Swiss Federal Office of Culture 2002
Massimo Canevacci & Viviana Gravano, Fuori sede, Swiss Institute, Roma 2000
Claire Peillod, Marco Poloni, La BF15, Monterrey 1999
Bertrand Bacqué, Marco Poloni, Palais de l'Athénée, Cahiers de la Classe des Beaux-Arts n° 120, 1998

fine arts unternehmen ag
obmoos 4 / ch-6301 zug (switzerland)
phone +41 41 711 68 20 / fax +41 41 711 54 15
filmbox@artisant.com
www.fineartsunternehmen.com

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arts
unternehmen**
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