



PRESS RELEASE

Formafantasma: *Seeing the Wood for the Trees*

Kunsthaus Hamburg
20 May – 31 July 2022

Opening

19 May 2022, 5 pm

Press preview

In the context of the Triennial of Photography on Wednesday, 18 May 2022, 10 am (Halle für Aktuelle Kunst, Deichtorhallen) or upon request: Elena Weickmann, presse@kunsthaushamburg.de, Tel: + 49 40 335803

Wood is not just dead fibre. Inscribed in every tree is a chapter of history of the earth's climate. Trees register the slightest change in the environment and also record what humans do on earth. But ever since we have declared the forest as a commodity, we tend to neglect the fact that trees not only provide fuel and building material, but indeed form the fundamental basis of our atmosphere.

The exhibition *Seeing the Wood for the Trees* at Kunsthau Hamburg features three components of the extensive research project *Cambio* by the Italian design duo Formafantasma. In the form of film-based visual essays, they trace the development and regulation of the global timber industry that emerged in the nineteenth century, especially in colonized regions. Alongside the prevailing perception of nature as a raw material and commodity, it is the relationship of humans with their ecological habitat that is examined and mirrored by means of historical, scientific and documentary photographs, film excerpts and text sources.

The two visual essays *Cambio* (2020) and *Seeing the Wood for the Trees* (2020) highlight the role international regulations and authorities play in controlling the timber industry and their impact on the global climate crisis. The works explore the question of how a broader understanding of materiality can induce a sustainable design approach and influence our relationship to the environment. The films succeed in drawing a line from the natural properties of wood to the abstract but pervasive implications of exploitation, colonialism and consumer culture.

An additional film produced purely with laser technology, *Quercus* (2020), was developed in collaboration with the philosopher Emanuele Coccia. From the perspective of the forest, its philosophical narrative contests the human sense of superiority, describing instead the multiple ways in which we as humans depend on trees. The laser scanner that served to create the visual material for this work was originally employed in the field of cartography and archaeology, but recently has also been used in the timber industry for selective clearing. In an immersive audiovisual installation, the film allows viewers to delve into the world of plants.

Formafantasma is a research-based design studio investigating the ecological, historical, political and social forces shaping the discipline of design today. Whether designing for a client or developing self – initiated projects, the studio applies the same rigorous attention to context, processes and details. Formafantasma's analytical nature translates in meticulous visual outcomes, products and strategies.

Curator: Katja Schroeder

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ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME

Book presentation *The Town*

2 June 2022, 6 pm

Stefan Canham (photographer)

Artist talk: *Formafantasma*

3 June 2022, 6 pm (Online via Zoom)

Moderation: Tulga Beyerle (Director, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg)

Lecture: *The Mediated Plant*

3 June 2022, 7:30 pm

Teresa Castro (Associate Professor, Film Studies, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle)

Lecture: *Forest protection and the colonial aftermath*

23 June 2022, 7 pm

Jutta Kill (Biologist)

Kindly supported by

Gefördert aus Mitteln des



**Hamburger
Klimafonds**

Ein Projekt der Hamburger Klimaschutzstiftung und der Behörde für Umwelt, Klima, Energie und Agrarwirtschaft (BUKEA)

We will gladly provide you with press material upon request.

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