

RAIDEN ||||| **PROJECT**

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Raiden is a non-profit project created to promote all forms of applied arts and to provide artists, curators, writers and academics with an opportunity to live and create new bodies of work in unique and iconic locations around the world.

The project takes the shape of a six-week residency that culminates with an exhibition. Raiden is designed to travel to different locations, to always inspire our guest artists in different ways, and to always reinvent itself.

Our mission is to promote contemporary art and foster multi-disciplinary dialogues between artists and cultural institutions. Our goal is to build a collection that leaves a mark on time, a trace for future generations. The resulting art collection also forms a vital cultural asset for future interactions. Raiden Project offers artists a forty-five day residency program and the opportunity to work in an inspiring natural environment to create artworks that will be a vital counterpoint to its permanent collection.

The first edition of our residency program will run from September to October 2020 in Siena; Tuscany, where our guest will stay at the 19th century estate "la Poderina". The exhibition of the works conceived during the residency will take place in a location provided by the University of Siena; with the objective to create a strong cultural bond between this historical institution and the onsite installation.

Raiden Project was born in 2019 from the association of Tommaso Foggini, Nicolas Martin and Filippo Pecora. Three individuals driven by a true passion for the arts, and each one already involved in different ways in the creative industries. They chose to apply their savoir-faire and network developed across their personal and professional experiences to launch an ambitious artistic project, which operates always in different contexts, every time with a dedicated critical approach and logistic solutions.

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RAIDEN PROJECT #1 ***WESTERN MONUMENTS BY COLIN SNAPP***

Raiden Project presents *Western Monuments*, the first Italian solo exhibition dedicated to artist Colin Snapp (1982, Lopez Island, USA). Following the first edition of RAIDEN residency, the exhibition will take place at the Tepidarium of the Botanic Garden in Siena from August 23rd to September 24th 2021.

Colin Snapp's photographs, videos, and sculptural works investigate the mediated visual experience through which we perceive and record the world around us. Embracing a Baudrillardian attitude towards globalisation, tourism, and simulacra, Snapp's works invite visitors to take a step back and recognize valuable remembrances. Focusing on the present North American landscape through caricaturing touristic perspectives, the artist reminds us that the way we look at and represent reality is never objective. Screens, frames, and lenses are filters that do not coincide with the essence of things but rather they open up to uncanny prospects. Snapp's artistic process takes its cue from daily-life images to then disclose subtler meanings. The act of photographing or filming becomes a conscious ritual of translating reality, a way of defining an unprecedented conceptual landscape. Far from any morbidity, his voyeurism takes on analytical and scientific features.

In the frame of this exhibition, the artist leads visitors through an installation of eight large photographs and the video *Western Monuments*, which was internationally premiered on the occasion of the 58th October Salon, Belgrade Biennale 2021.

Over the forty-five days immersed in the natural environment of the XIX century estate *la Poderina* in Tuscany, the artist has been able to complete his ND studies, initiated in Berlin in 2017. The 2021 series features images conflating photos of various architecture and signs with reminiscences from past societies of Europe and Africa. The photos were shot throughout the western United States. After taking the photograph, the artist would print the image, place a glass neutral density camera filter on top of the print, and re-photograph the image creating a dual layer in which the photograph and the photographic device become singular.

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The procedure becomes the outcome while the tools of creation become part of what has been created. Through this assembler process, artist questions our contemporary screen culture. No matter whether we look through glasses, social networks, or advertising billboards, we are constantly exposed to filtered and distorted reality.

The 12-min film *Western Monuments* - from which the exhibition takes the title - spurred from an intense experience the artist had in North Africa a few years ago. He was particularly struck by the kitch-like similarities that the shopping malls of Southern California have to the historic sites in Jordan and Egypt. His parafictional attempt was to frame the malls in a way in which it would be almost impossible to tell the difference between the two landscapes. Once the photo series was completed, Snapp came back to those juxtapositions to produce the film. Moving back to Washington in 2020, he started filming at the local mall where he grew up to show it in a way that could possibly glorify its history in the same way people might do with an important monument. COVID-19 allowed the artist to access the malls in a different way, as the shops were deserted yet still open to the public. The soundtrack accompanying it has been composed with artist Mauro Hertig, meshing up sound recordings from the mall with a reversed Taylor Swift's hit. This created an almost ghostly prophetic scenario that ended becoming a core point. Thus, the filmic work is a farewell homage to the past while remaining locked in the present.

The exhibition is kindly hosted by the University of Siena with the aim to establish cultural bonds between this historical institution and the artist's in situ installations.

Text by CURA.