

## **A Difficult Heritage: Visions from the Family Archive**

“A Difficult Heritage: Visions from the Family Archive” is a solo exhibition by Laura Fiorio, realized in collaboration with Mario Margani, curated by Ginevra Ludovici and Giulia Menegale. The show will open on 6th November and last until the 1th December, 2023. The opening of the exhibition will be followed by a public program taking place between Footnote – center for image and text, Kralja Milutina 34, Beograd 11000 Serbia, and Remont Gallery.

According to American historian Ann Laura Stoler, the term aphasia indicates the inability to speak about someone’s past, especially in relation to colonial power relationships. How do we come to terms with a difficult past, often neglected both at a personal and a collective level, even if relatively recent in time?

In trying to answer this question, Laura Fiorio’s solo show “A Difficult Heritage: Visions from the Family Archive,” realized in collaboration with artist Mario Margani, sets out to make visible the taboo narratives of Italy’s colonial past, departing from the domestic imaginary of family archives, pictures and documents.

The work at Remont Gallery is part of Fiorio’s long-term research project, “My Fascist Grandpa,” in which she problematizes the involvement of her grandfather, who fought in the Italian army during the fascist occupation of Ethiopia (1935). As a way of coming to terms with her own family history, she developed, together with Margani - whose grandfather was also involved in the occupation of another Italian former colony, in this case, that of Eritrea - a critical methodology that is choral, performative, and interdisciplinary, and that involves the use of the photographic medium, not merely conceived as a historical document, but rather as a trigger for critical discussion. Thus, the work does not only comprise photographs but also live projections, collages realized with alternative photographic techniques, and a public workshop.

In Fiorio’s practice, photography is primarily a multiplier of points of view rather than the technological support of an imposed narrative. Drawing upon theorist Tina Camp’s proposition of a “disordering and disruptive archival practice,” the research invites to find strategies to deal with those materials that often are referred to as evidence of the so-called “difficult heritage”. Building upon the work of academic Sharon Macdonald, a key advocate for this terminology, the concept of difficult heritage revolves around “unsettling histories.” These narratives refer essentially to a past that is recognized as meaningful in the present but that is also contested, as it doesn’t neatly align with the values and identities of the groups we associate ourselves with. At the same time, these narratives still form integral components of our personal histories and national identities. Dealing with these dissonances means, in many cases, directly facing a sense of collective amnesia and aphasia, which could potentially disrupt a solidified and, often convenient, portrait of ourselves and open up to social differences and conflicts. Fiorio’s artistic practice sits in this uncomfortable position, namely, where the heroic narratives disseminated by museums, cultural institutions and public entities reveal themselves as no longer tenable. By connecting a multiplicity of micro-stories and activating architectures and bodies as living archives, the artist suggests working toward healing processes and re-appropriating those places and narratives that have been consciously obscured or misspelled.