

Europe Matters: visions of a restless identity

The artistic direction of the festival – **Tim Clark, Walter Guadagnini** and **Luce Lebart** – draws on **the idea of Europe** and its people for the 2023 edition of the festival.

Is there any such thing as a common European identity? To what extent does myth and memory shape or cement our sense of collective belonging? And how can contemporary photography foster a response to the challenges and circumstances through which European citizens live today?

Considering the relationship between **national identity** and **democratic community**, as well as the **multicultural realities** of every European country today, we need to negotiate between existing as distinct nations of the continent versus a culturally homogenous population. As Peter Gowan and Perry Anderson have said: 'empires of the past threaten to dissolve into postmodern flatlands swept only by the surf of the market.'^{*} Furthermore, Europe is no longer considered the normative centre from which history is written.

These complexities and difficulties of capturing the nature of the European community are addressed with a selection of photographic projects that focus principally on **people and identities** in order to confront the politics of inclusion and exclusion and the presence of history and culture in the present moment.

Notions of belonging and solidarity as well as fragility and disquiet come to bear in works that offer, but are not limited to, a democratising portrait of the **UK** amidst difficult times; human rights protests in **Poland**; fictional documentaries set in small towns in **Germany** showing historical apparitions; Afrodiasporic lives summoning colonial pasts in **Portugal**; edible wild plant pickers on the fringes of **Paris** that radically reimagine our appreciation and dependence on nature; and visual love letters to the city of **Odesa**.

Identities persist but spirits are restless.

^{*}The Question of Europe, edited by Peter Gowan and Perry Anderson (Verso, 1997)