

Eagles of Europe

Background

The eagle is a symbol present at one time or another in all states and territories of Europe throughout history until present time. It is by far the most politicized bird and a symbol of the struggle for power that has taken place on our continent. The unification process of EU is also a process of negotiation of power, one that is weighed down by various national and historical aspects, heavy with symbolism and emotion. All these various aspects always play key roles in any attempt at transforming the political perception of the roles of people and states involved in the negotiation. Power symbols take on different meaning (sometimes used by commercial enterprises as brand logos for example) and change their shape as they are redesigned in order to reflect contemporary aesthetic standards (the German eagle). After just a short research, it becomes evident and therefore intriguing that meanwhile the eagle has been changing its form in time, it has kept its position in the line of prominent power symbols of the different political groups in Europe. As far as political symbols go, it is possible to say that Europe is „united“ around one symbol – the eagle, in all its diversity of shape and significance. (By the way, guess what is the official symbol of Tyrol...)

The project of PODE BAL is a multi-level project examining the role and potential of the eagle as a symbol in today's Europe, trying to unite around a mutual history full of conflicts. The aim of our project is to study the various potentials of the eagle as a symbol and explore the reactions of the public to its many forms and meanings.

Eggs – installation on the bridge



This phase reflects a very local aspect of the political potential of the eagle. As there is a debate whether the eagles that were on the bridge by the present Eurac building in the 30's should or should not be reinstated, it becomes evident how much emotion this symbol carries. Although in this particular case it is connected with a problematic part of (not only local) history, it becomes a focal point in a contemporary political negotiation between the two largest national groups living in Bolzano. The typically European sensitivity to publicize symbols connected to former totalitarian ideologies is overcome and the Fascist eagle can become a symbol of contemporary national identification.

We intend to install eggs in the place where the old eagles might return as an inquiry into the emotions and associations that are dormant under the surface of this dialog. The egg is a symbol of the beginning of something about to come to life. It is hard to tell what will hatch from the egg. It is a symbol of constant beginning and birth of



something new. The installation is a reminder of the power of symbols and besides being in its way a warning, it can also be read as the possibility to begin anew, instructed by history.

We are convinced it would make sense to keep this installation as a permanent part of the bridge. As a part of this project level, we would like to initiate an official proposal to the city as well as to organize a petition that citizens may sign if they would like to keep this installation. (Although we are not very optimistic this will happen, the eggs installation can become a more serious issue approaching the local problem of the return of the old eagles from a new direction. As a proposition for a permanent solution of the bridge decoration, the project can spark interesting and serious discussion. This part of the project would be ideal for collaboration with Eurac scientists, who could be involved in the proposition on official level, in the petition event and could finally evaluate the public reactions.

Eagles on glass –

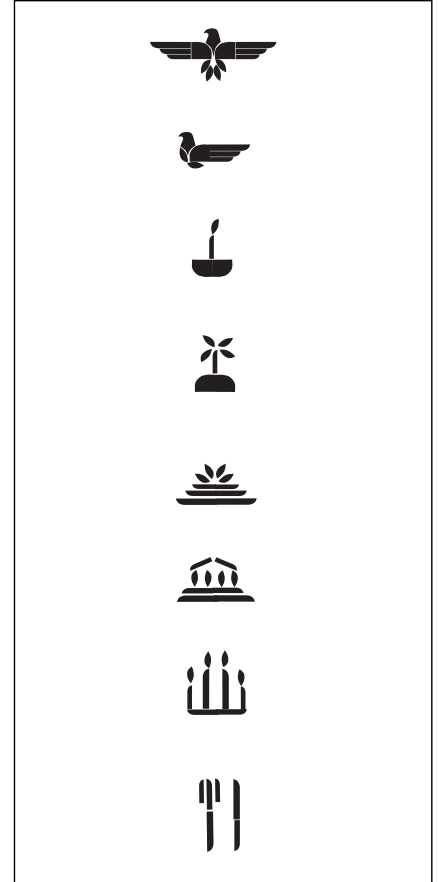
urban intervention in public spaces in Bolzano



Two historical eagle icons (the fascist and the nazzi) will be placed on the public bus stops and other convenient locations in the way it is usually done to protect the glass. This way a utilitarian decoration normally showing silhouettes of generic birds will become politicized, reflecting the two sides of the historical conflict, that are absurdly still at tension many decades after in the south Tyrol. It is also a demonstration of the potential political abuse of the most banal and seemingly non-political aspects in society. This phaze of the eagles project also demonstrates how easily and often unwittingly symbols permeate our everyday lives without our notice.

Eagle Puzzle

– interactive installation in public space



examples of possible variations of composition of the mobile objects

This Interactive installation is conceived for the front of the Eurac building (or in any other suitable space in public – a square for example). The installation consists of a number of mobile objects of various shapes and sizes.

It is possible to sit on them, to play with them or even ride them. It is also possible to compose them into various formations to create different pictograms. One of these pictograms is again the eagle (abstracted from different historical eagle icons and while resembling them not completely identical with any); another possibility is a dove, for example. The Eagle puzzle will be designed in a way that many other pictures can be constructed, depending on the creativity of the user.

The symbolic function of this phase of the eagle project is clear, emphasizing, for example, the diversity and complicity of every symbol and all that it embodies,

the potential to use different individual parts to create various and sometimes diametrically opposed interpretations and also the potential seriousness involved in every „innocent“ play. The installation is a series of deconstructed symbols with wide possibility to design other shapes and symbols. The interactive nature of the mobile objects will also let people use their own creativity to construct different shapes that are not accounted for.

It is partly an experimental project examining the reactions of its users. The interactions with the installation can be recorded on video from the above tower and it will be possible to see the frequency of certain repeated compositions. Cuts from the video can be shown inside the Eurac tower. (This could be an interesting opportunity for creative involvement of the Eurac scientists)

Eagles inside the Eurac

– Inside the Eurac tower installation



This phase of the eagles project is based around an installation of around a hundred images of eagle symbols from European history and present. The eagles will be presented with a number system and visitors can identify them with the help of a printed guide. Another, more demanding variation consists of using a lighting system where each eagle image can be illuminated and identified by the description attached to the pertinent switch at a provided control panel. (This we have not decided upon yet.)

In this phase, the visitors will be asked to fill a questionnaire, evaluating a chosen number of European eagle symbols according to their aesthetic and political value. They will also be asked if they recognize the particular eagle symbols. This part of the project is designed to retrieve data from the Bolzano gallery visitors about their opinions about the eagle icons and can be

further processed with the involvement of the Eurac scientists. The questionnaires should be composed in collaboration with the scientists. We will provide a proposition and expect feedback in order to come up with the best and most useful version. The results of the public feedback can be presented during the last days of the exhibition.

The Eurac space can also be used as a base for presenting the proposition of the Eggs on the bridge as a permanent installation and can serve for collecting signatures for the petition. Video from the Eagle puzzle can be presented there and documentary photos from the Eagles on glass also. This part of the project Eagles of Europe is still open and should be finalized according to discussion with the involved scientists. The idea is to present new information for the visitor and let her/him express their opinion about this ubiquitous European symbol.