

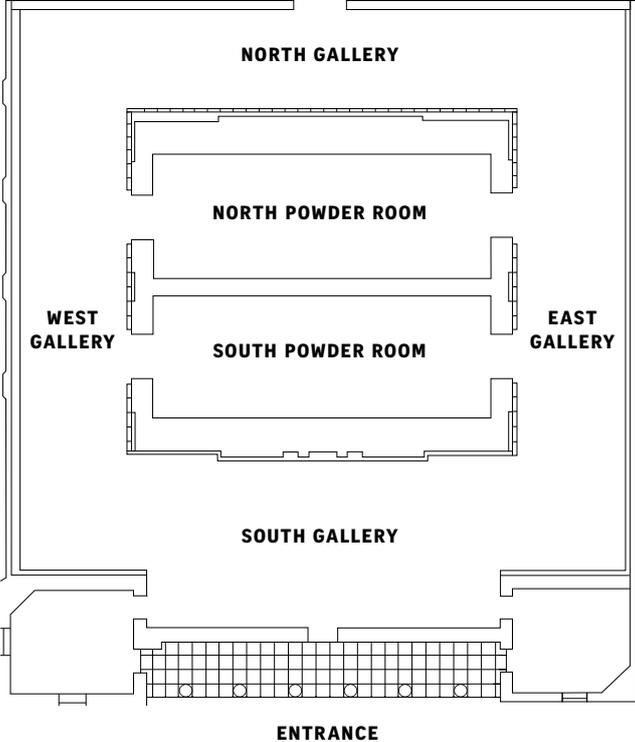
FORMAFANTASMA

CAMBIO

4 March _____ 17 May 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Formafantasma (Andrea Trimarchi and Simone Farresin, b. 1983 and 1980, Italy) are designers who dissect the ecological and political responsibilities of their discipline. Their holistic approach reaches back into the history of a particular material used by humans, out towards the patterns of supply chains that have developed to support and expand its use, and forward to the future of that material's survival in relation to human consumption.

Cambio, from the medieval Latin *cambium*, 'change, exchange', is an ongoing investigation conducted by Formafantasma into the governance of the timber industry. The evolution of this form of commerce over time, and its tentacular expansion across the globe, has made it difficult to regulate. It grew out of the bioprospecting that took place throughout colonial territories during the nineteenth century, becoming one of the largest industries in the world both in terms of the revenue it generates and the impact it has on the planet's biosphere.

The earliest objects in the exhibition are samples of rare hardwoods first exhibited in the Great Exhibition of 1851, a few hundred metres from this building, some of which come from trees logged to the point of extinction. The newest are the exhibition displays and seating designed by Formafantasma, all of which were made from a single tree blown over in a storm in northern Italy in 2018. Contained in every piece of wood is an archive of climatic change and

the movement of natural materials around the world.

Cambio also references the cambial layer, a membrane that runs around the trunk of trees, producing wood on the inside, a record of the tree's past, and bark on the outside, enabling it to keep growing. Like the rings of a tree, the central spaces of the exhibition present data and research in the form of interviews, reference materials and two films made by Formafantasma in response to their research, while the perimeter spaces offer a series of case studies that provide insight into the way wood is sourced and used. Each of these investigations represents a collaboration with experts from the fields of science, conservation, engineering, policymaking and philosophy. Together, they move from a microscopic analysis of wood and its ability to store carbon dioxide to a metaphysical understanding of trees as living organisms.

This multidisciplinary exhibition highlights the crucial role that design can play in our environment, and its responsibility to look beyond the edges of its borders as a discipline. The future of design can and must attempt to translate emerging environmental awareness into a renewed understanding of the philosophy and politics of trees that will encourage informed, collaborative responses.

SOUTH GALLERY

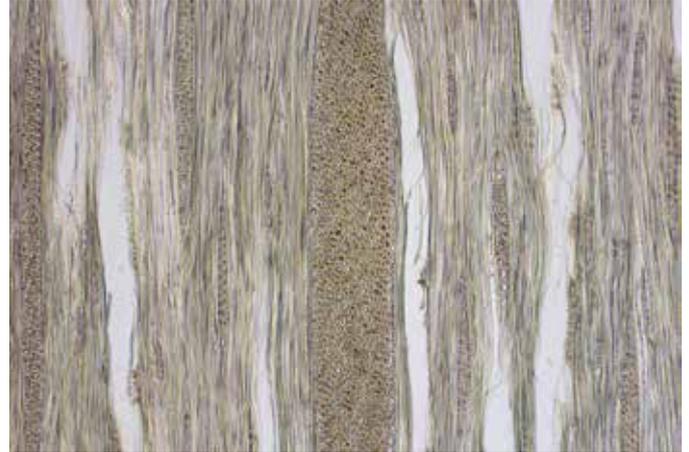
The exhibition opens with two pieces that introduce the physical matter of wood and its properties; a two-screen projection, and two sections of a tree trunk. Together, they offer a re-evaluation of trees – as sources of information, constantly recording global climate change, as the solution for mitigating these changes by storing carbon dioxide as they grow, and as a warning against over-management and monocultured forests that are more vulnerable to intense weather events. The smell, developed by smell researcher and artist Sissel Tolaas, evokes the wet earth and flora of a forest, offering an immersive reminder of what is at stake when we lose this environment.

EAST GALLERY

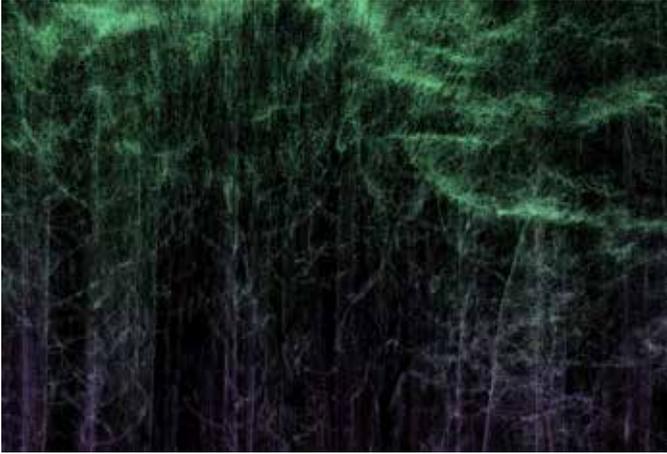
This section of the exhibition presents forensic research undertaken by Formafantasma with a number of different scientific institutions into the data that can be found in wood. Following on from the coring procedure shown in the first gallery space, wood products are investigated as holders of carbon dioxide, as records of their origins even while they undergo carving, pulping (for paper) or fire (for charcoal). The analysis of these mundane objects, many of which are still produced from protected species, can help to regulate logging practices around the world, and offer manufacturers, designers and users better information about the impact of their material choices.

SOUTH POWDER ROOM

Constructed in the format of a visual essay, this film investigates how the industry of timber has evolved over time. It asks how a networked understanding of materials can be applied to a more holistic approach to design, and draws connections between timber's physical materiality and the abstract but pervasive conditions of exploitation, colonialism, and consumerism.







NORTH POWDER ROOM

One side of this central space is dedicated to a film that focuses on the governance of the timber industry and how this is structured today, touching upon the major European and global regulations and regulatory bodies involved in it. The four reading points on the other side, meanwhile, have been designed by Formafantasma, and offer direct access to a website that holds reference materials collected by the design studio over the course of the past eighteen months. These include filmed interviews with the specialist collaborators that informed the projects on display in this exhibition, reading materials, reference images and links form a living archive of the designers' research-led practice. Together, the resources in this space aim to offer a greater level of transparency, both in the research and thinking of design practice, and in the structure of a global industry. Access the website in the gallery or offsite at: www.cambio.website

NORTH GALLERY

The objects and images on display in this space have all been sourced from the Economic Botany Collection in Kew Gardens and the storage spaces of the V&A (shown in the film at the end of the gallery). The wood samples from Kew were first displayed in the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the International Exhibition of 1862, close to this building, and were intended to be used like a catalogue of the British Empire's timber resources. The V&A can also trace its history to these exhibitions, but rather than holding raw materials, it has amassed a collection of furniture and objects that record the application of many of these species of wood by designers and makers. Real and virtual images are overlaid in the film at the end of the space, pointing to the missing links that connect an object with its place of origin, and highlight contemporary design's ongoing appetite for an endless library of materials.

WEST GALLERY

The combination of images, text and film in this section of the exhibition takes a view of forestry that moves beyond the extraction of resources and attempts to understand the complex ecosystems that forested regions contain. It does so by bringing together approaches to the governance and management of both European and Amazonian forests, and compares changes in these approaches over time and from different geopolitical perspectives.

LIVE PROGRAMMES & EVENTS

FORMAFANTASMA IN CONVERSATION WITH REBECCA LEWIN

5 March, 7pm

On the occasion of *Cambio*, Formafantasma will be in conversation with Rebecca Lewin, to discuss the research and development of the project.

Full details via serpentinegalleries.org

SATURDAY TALKS

28 March 2020, 3pm

Natalia Grabowska, Assistant Curator with Dr Caroline Cornish, Honorary Research Associate, Royal Holloway

9 May 2020, 3pm

Rebecca Lewin, Curator, Exhibitions and Design

BSL interpretation is available upon prior request for all our Saturday Talks. For more information visit: serpentinegalleries.org/bsl

DIGITAL GUIDES



Get closer to the art by downloading our free app. Visit the App Store or Google Play and search for “Bloomberg Connects” or scan the QR code. Look out for numbers next to selected artworks and use the digital guide to explore the exhibition further.

IMAGES

1 and 2. Typical anatomical characters of *Fagus sylvatica* (Beech)
Commissioned from: The Thünen Centre of Competence on the Origin of Timber, Hamburg, Germany

3. Formafantasma, stills from *Cambio: Visual Essay*, 2020. Green screen in Bosco del Chignolo, Montemerlo, Italy

4. Formafantasma, still from *Seeing the Wood for the Trees*, 2020. Stack of legal documents to counteract illegal timber trade.
Video: Johanna Seelemann

5. Formafantasma, video still, 2019. Sawmill of the Magnifica Comunità di Fiemme, Ziano, Italy

6. Formafantasma, video still, 2019. Forest felled by storm Vaia in 2018, Val di Fiemme, Italy

7 and 8. Terrestrial light detection and ranging scan (LiDAR) of Clingmans Dome Forest, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, United States.
Data collected by the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI), ForestGEO plot, 2019
© Formafantasma. The data was collected by the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI), VA, US, ForestGEO plot. File provided by Atticus Stovall.
Photographer: Gregorio Gonella

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