

Fatamorgana (2016–2019)

**Project**

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Ciao Ilaria,

I hope you had an enjoyable holiday season and that my letter finds you well.

I'm at Yaddo, a retreat for artists located on a 1.5km estate in Saratoga Springs, New York, for the moment and am particularly pleased with my return to these grounds. The #2 Elaide Foppa studio is a real treat. On the 14th of January I'll ride the Amtrak to Montreal for a screening of *Extinction* (2018) and a talk at McGill University.

Following our past correspondence I've been organizing the contents of *Fatamorgana* (2016–2019) for Mousse Publishing.

Fatamorgana was due to unpredictable circumstances an unfortunate project. From this perspective the upcoming publication is a meaningful gratification to all the collaborators involved.

*Fatamorgana* is a project comprehended between 2016 and 2019. The project contemplates the theatre play *Fatamorgana* (2017), the film ©*Fatamorgana* (2018–2019), the publication *Fatamorgana* (2018), the sound installation *Affektenlehre* (2018), the film *What do we talk about when we talk about Fatamorgana* (2018), and this publication *Fatamorgana* (2019).

Fata Morgana is the Italian name for Morgan le Fay (meaning "Morgan the Fairy"), a sorceress of medieval legends. This sister of the legendary King Arthur is sometimes portrayed as the ruler of the island paradise Avalon and is said to have had a number of magical powers, with which she caused a great deal of trouble. Among her powers, say some versions of the legend, was the ability to change shape, and she has been blamed for causing complex mirages over bodies of water, especially in the Strait of Messina. Today we know that such optical illusions are really caused by atmospheric conditions, but we still sometimes use "fata morgana" as a synonym of "mirage."

"Fata Morgana," Merriam-Webster.com, accessed January 5, 2019.

Fata Morgana is a complex form of superior mirage that is seen in a narrow band right above the horizon.

Although the term Fata Morgana sometimes is applied to other more common kinds of mirages, true Fata Morgana is different from both an ordinary superior or inferior mirage.

Fata Morgana mirages significantly distort the object or objects on which they are based, often such that the object is completely unrecognizable. A Fata Morgana may be seen on land or at sea, in polar regions, or in deserts, however, a Fata Morgana may only be observed on hot days. It may involve almost any kind of distant object.

Often, a Fata Morgana changes rapidly. The mirage comprises several inverted (upside down) and erect (right side up) images that are stacked on

top of one another. Fata Morgana mirages also show alternating compressed and stretched zones.

*Fatamorgana* is a political parody, in which historical and contemporary personalities narrate post-WWII global history and geopolitics, through a web of explicit references and direct citations. Hanan – a Muslim cousin of Molly Bloom – finds herself, not sure how, in Beirut's waxwork Hall of Fame museum after its closing hours. Like the most virtuous Penelope this woman waits for her husband; she appears to have set a date with him; but he has not arrived; where can he be? The project comprises various interdisciplinary detours and productions built around key structural themes and involving multiple collaborations.

*Fatamorgana* is a speculative comedy. The main theme in the project is that of sense, illusion and truth. The project presents the deity Fata Morgana as the goddess of illusion whose main role is to deceive humans. The allegorical dimension involves a gradual coming to awareness of these illusions. The key is to educate the mind to see the truth in these appearances, rather than imagining that these illusions exile truth to a sphere somewhere beyond it, unattainable by human cognition. Hanan, a character that inhabits some of the project's productions, is convinced that her contemporaries suffer from a myopic fixation on empirical particulars that momentarily transfix the mind; but these particulars are only ever transient, and while one is fixated on them, one fails to see the deeper truth.

Below you will find the opening and closing notes of the project:

"The concept of the progress of the human race in history is not to be separated from the concept of its progression through a homogenous and empty time. The critique of the concept of this progress must ground the basis of its critique on the concept of progress itself.

"It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural. Only dialectical images are genuinely historical – that is, not archaic – images. The image that is read – which is to say, the image in the

now of its recognizability – bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all language is founded. Awakening.”

Walter Benjamin

The project was developed and produced between 2016 and 2019.  
During this period it was constantly being updated.

The transformation of the world is illusory.  
The world is to be deciphered.

The only existing history is the history of problems.  
History demonstrates the chaos of human life.

Humanity has never been different from what it is.  
The future is an expectation unfulfilled.

There is no historical difference.  
Redemption can only be found in repetition.

Exhausted from its autophagy.  
The project will remain unfinished.

XXX

*Fatamorgana* (2016–2019) by Salomé Lamas, produced by Lamaland in coproduction with BoCA – Biennial Of Contemporary Arts, Les Films du Bal

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