

VINCENT STRAUB

THE LAST CHAIR: DOCUMENTING EUROPE

JUBEL FESTIVAL 06 SEPTEMBER–07 SEPTEMBER 2019

How can we strengthen democracy in Europe? How can we better identify the needs, concerns, and ideas of European citizens regarding European Union (EU) identity and their place in the EU's future? These questions are at the heart of the Jubel European Democracy Festival.

By providing a platform for citizens, civil society organisations, and public institutions to interact, the festival takes an innovative approach to fostering

democratic dialogue. As part of this process, the festival incorporates a diverse number of activities—ranging from happenings to games and debates—in order to enable greater citizen participation and decision-making.

In The last chair: documenting Europe, Vincent Straub responds and contributes to this process. The exhibition invites the viewer to take part in a constructive exchange centered around an imagined narrative in which

Europe and the EU are on the verge of destruction. In this hypothetical narrative, it is the task of citizens to document the last objects, things, places, and people that they associate with Europe before it vanishes.

The 12 images that form the exhibition are the beginning of this archival process. Each image consists firstly of a photograph of a particular object or thing, ranging from a chair to a cheeseboard, that the artist

personally associates with Europe. Each photograph was taken by the artist in various places around Europe, from small villages to major cities, and is meant to symbolise the 'last' known documentation of that particular object before Europe 'vanishes'.

The second element of each image is a quote from an unidentified, contemporary nationalistic politician. Each quote highlights how current populist political discourse is a danger to establishing common values that transcend borders; thereby making the imagined evaporation of the EU seem more imminent, especially given scholarly debates in international relations about

the need for Europe to forge a common transcendental identity if it wishes to remain relevant on the global stage in the 21st century.

Visual inspiration for the images is taken from a range of sources, including the campaign posters used by nationalist political parties, which often seek to undermine the EU.

The exhibition concludes with an open call which invites viewers to send in their own photographs of 'last' objects, things, places, and people they associate with Europe. The artist will then curate the submitted images in an online archive of 'last phenomena'. Each submitted image-and the implicit ideas

values associated with these images-will then be analysed in order to understand what common themes and values bond Europeans. Through this process the artist seeks to collaborate with the public and begin a dialogue about what European identity really means for ordinary citizens on a personal level.

Vincent Straub is a research assistant who works in the medium of digital media. Between 2015-2018 he studied in London. During that time he took part in group exhibitions in Tate Modern and Stedelijk Museum organised by the Tate Collectives and Blikopeners.



@vincent_straub

SUBMIT YOUR PHOTOS

SUBMIT YOUR IMAGES OF OBJECTS, THINGS, PLACES, AND PEOPLE THAT YOU ASSOCIATE WITH EUROPE BY SENDING THEM TO THE FOLLOWING EMAIL ADDRESS:

DOCUMENTINGEUROPE@GMAIL.COM

YOUR PHOTOS WILL FORM PART OF A ONLINE ARCHIVE, CURATED BY THE ARTIST VINCENT STRAUB, WHICH WILL DOCUMENT WHAT OBJECTS, THINGS, PLACES, AND PEOPLE ORDINARY EUROPEAN CITIZENS ASSOCIATE WITH EUROPE. THE KINDS OF BELIEFS, IDEAS, AND VALUES ASSOCIATED WITH THESE IMAGES WILL THEN BE ANALYSED BY THE ARTIST TO REVEAL WHAT BONDS US.