

## ***Foundations***

Artwork by Paolo Cirio. May 15h 2019.

The artwork *Foundations* reflects on the aesthetics and ontologies of conceptual art concerning social processes and systems. The artwork itself formulates an aesthetic identified by Cirio and takes the form of a visual essay articulated with abstract flowcharts. Informed by system, cybernetic, and communication theories, *Foundations* aims to trace both the history and character of art that examines social fields as information structures, reckoning with today's complexity in the age of algorithms, big data, and the Internet.

*Foundations* consists of a series of sixteen prints, creating a network of associations with paired words to delineate the aesthetics theorized by Cirio. The prints of abstract flowcharts with terms and geometrical shapes illustrate relations, taxonomies, and archetypes of aesthetic qualities, materials, and functions. One additional print charts a timeline of seminal conceptual art history, situating Cirio's research in a curated selection of historical artworks, publications, and exhibitions to complement his aesthetic theory.

**A publication presents the curating and research process for this project, bringing together the selected timeline, bibliography, the abstract flowcharts of aesthetic values, and an introductory text by the artist Paolo Cirio with the art historian Lauren van Haften-Schick.**

Centered around the fifty years since the defining of *System Aesthetics* in 1968, and the following exhibitions *Information* at MoMA and *Software* at the Jewish Museum in 1970, *Foundations* furthers this research with related moments from the mid-20th century. *Foundations* focuses on the ontologies of conceptual art examining social fields, rather than the making of images, forms, or gestures driven by ideas. This research specifically looks at the aesthetics that expanded the concerns and materials of art into the social processes forming society. It reflects on the genesis of the growing intersections among the domains of art, economics, politics, law, sociology, media, and technology.

Each of the historic art moment selected has elements that can be associated to specific works of Paolo Cirio. Distribution of information affecting social systems, social utopias, political systems analysis, the diagram as art form, the use of mathematical equations in art, participatory artworks, semiotic analysis of information, institution critique, etc.

**Large-scale installation of *Foundations* presented at Giorgio Persano Gallery on May 24<sup>th</sup> 2019**

The artwork *Foundations* is also presented as a maze-like installation with large-scale prints on clear and mirror film. A metal structure supports prints of abstract geometric diagrams with printed words on thin films. This sculptural installation evokes the sensation of being inside a network of aesthetic values. The paths and mirroring create a multi-dimensional and non-linear flowchart that the audience can experience and explore. The mirrored interior surface beneath the prints distorts and gives depth to the images. As an immersive sculptural flowchart, the installation *Foundations* creates endless paths that allegorically refer to the fragmented form of networks and generative algorithms. The audience is offered the visual perspective of being transported into the flows, dynamics, and tensions found within networks and flowcharts. Ultimately, the labyrinth of pathways refers to the aesthetic theory of the artwork *Foundations*, seen as a network of interlinked relationships programmed to create work-in-progress flows and connections among aesthetic values.