

# Performing Pictures



## solar-powered kinetic chapels

Animated saints and renewable energy for contemporary venerative practices.

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*Performing Pictures is a Stockholm-based artist duo.*

*We explore and develop responsive film art from a number of formative limitations in time and space.*

*Our art works consist of personal renegotiations of the channeling 'contract' made up by/within established video/movie formats (the feature film, the TV series, the YouTube-video-blurb, the art video loop in a gallery).*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**MARCH POLLINATORS WORKSHOP STHLM**  
Reiterating the map, the journey. What is a sacred place? Who is the contemporary pilgrim?

**APRIL 11/4 CHANGING PLACES: A VISIT[ATION] TO ZEGACHE** Seminar at Konstfack together with Prof. Karin Becker, Stockholm University

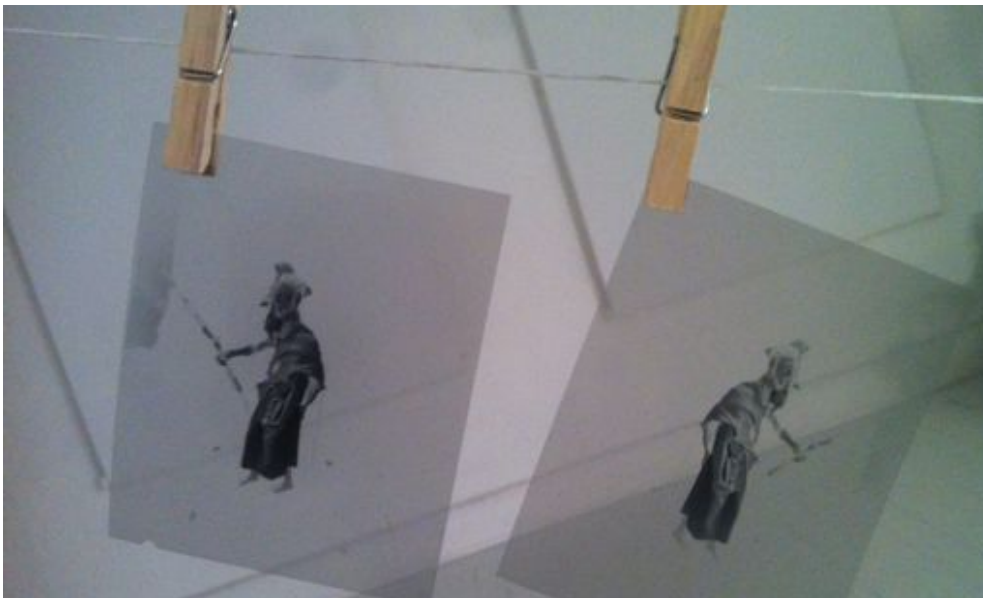
**MAY OPENING SPRITMUSEUM**

**(OVER)ARCHING ZEGACHE**  
Oaxaca, Mexico

**JUNE THE MUSEUM AS AN INFORMATION SYSTEM**  
Chair of Conference, Petrozavodsk, Russia

**JULY POLLINATORS PILGRIM TOUR**  
A green bike trip from Poland to Croatia

for details: [www.performingpictures.se](http://www.performingpictures.se)



## NEWSLETTER 1 2012

### venerative artefacts and narrative objects

**Welcome to our first newsletter of 2012. We had a marvellous 2011 and an even more intense, challenging and interesting year lies ahead of us.**

Performing Pictures has spent the last three years working with devotional practice and new forms of venerative artefacts in the village of Santa Ana Zegache, Oaxaca, Mexico. Through two projects funded by the EU Cultural Programme and thanks to the support of Konstnärnsämnden, Kulturrådet and Stockholms Stads Kulturförvaltning,

we continue our examination of historical continuity and the transformation of sacred places, the changing configurations of the sacred and social order in the structures of villages and cities and their histories as sites of contestation over cultural and national identity.

In this newsletter we will present some of the ideas underpinning this work, and also give some glimpses of upcoming events.

# the reinvention of venerative places

**Archaeology and anthropology renders interpretative frameworks for the meaning and origin of “saintly places”, while modernity and religious reform strive for the purification and re-interpretation of rites and sites. There are conflicting views on sacred topography and ritual practice – especially in relation to local economy.**

Popular communal and religious traditions that deviate from authoritarian, top-down progress are opposed by the cultivating project of modernity. The disciplinary role of enlightened liberalism is conveniently paired with economic reform where communal resources have been forcefully transferred into individual properties.

The Church adapted to secular challenge through liberal-conservative alliances and nonaggression pacts. The clerics restrain from criticizing the socially deteriorating effects of liberal economics, as the properties of the Church are exempt from liberal reforms. The liberal-conservative idiosyncrasy is upheld by the common enemy of socialism.

However, sites of saint veneration have not been eradicated by the process of modernization. If anything, religious inventiveness has intensified. The re-ritualization of place resists modernity in relation to the 'de-spatialization of the social' and the 'de-socialization of place'. Cult practices contest another side of modernity: dogmatic religious orthodoxy. For the outsider it may appear that the Church would embrace all signs of increased belief, but in fact any system of “experts” needs to shield itself from superstitions and false interpretations.

Cult practices and venerative sites are *popular* expressions of grass-roots religiosity, and they are always initially questioned by Church authorities. Visions and apparitions usually occur among poor, uneducated people - as such they need to be scrutinized. It is both an issue of class and gender, since most of the visionaries are women.

In our practice we look at religious inventiveness in relation to digital media and locality. If there is one vehicle that

has pushed the modernization process to its fullest, it is media. For Performing Pictures it is an interesting challenge to use digital media in relation to locality as an artistic material for resilient forms of resistance and worship.

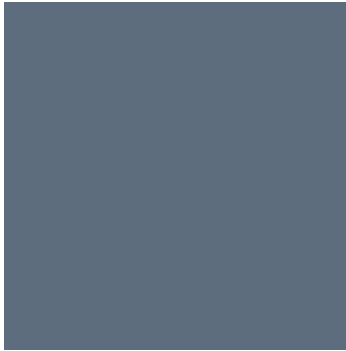
In our work we focus on the following issues:

- \* historical continuity and transformation of sacred places
- \* the economy of saintly places
- \* the changing configurations of the sacred and social order in the structures of villages, cities and pilgrimage sites
- \* practices of saints veneration as sites of contestation over inwardness and externality, private and public spheres, and piety and morality.
- \* globalized and “transnational” sacred places and references to locality beyond the limits of physical sites.
- \* saintly places and their histories as sites of contestation over cultural and national identity.



*In modern societies, we tend to have a geological model of the role of culture. We treat it as a soft surface layer of human existence, on top of the hard material and economic realities which determine our lives. Culture is treated as superstition or as entertainment, a way to distract or protect ourselves from those serious realities which we can do little to change.*

*Dougald Hine*



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## kinetic chapels

### solar-driven veneration

**We have finished our first kinetic chapel on the island of Rab, Croatia. The installation is as a gesture of reconciliation – personal as well as communal. It is also a commemoration of our grandmother Dorica, who taught us nonconformism; and to appreciate paradox.**

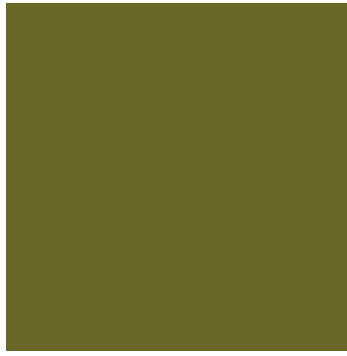
Reconciliation lies within the fact that all who participated in making this chapel are themselves paradoxes: progressives and traditionalists at the same time, and fairly complex side characters in a story that has long been unfolding.

The practice of faith establishes a narrative space within the mind of the believer; each day of the calendar or even each decade of the Rosary has a special character or scene ascribed to it. The believer ponders upon these images, creating meaning through ongoing recollections of sequential imagery.

Places are given names according to churches and chapels built to commemorate the protagonists of the faith.

Thus we end up with a \*narrative topography\* giving meaning and orientation in both time and space. It is exactly this (and not the false security of traditions nor the anaesthesia of the dogmas) that begs for a practical continuation in our times.

*The chapel features an animated saint, developed through stop-motion technique using sequences of film negatives exposed through a large-format pinhole camera. The kinetic chapel is powered entirely by solar power.*



# finding our way home

## the transforming power of cultures

### EITC: Euroaxacan Initiative of Transformative Cultures

EITC is a European-Mexican collaboration running until the end of 2013. EITC connects art with traditional – as well as future – crafts, while bridging the gap between the digital, mediated and corporeal worlds. The overall aim is to be a catalyst of socio-economic transformations by means of transcultural production. EITC is initiated by Performing Pictures and run in collaboration with Talleres Comunitarios de Zegache, FoAM, nadine, Space Makers Agency and Cuartielles

[www.euroaxaca.org](http://www.euroaxaca.org)

**A company of artists from Europe and a company of artisans from Oaxaca set out to meet each other. Over two years of journeys and collaborations, these partners will make and grow things together, create rituals and events, street art and venerative objects, share ideas, inspiration and hospitality.**

We choose as our guides a strange assortment of figures: the saints of the church of Santa Ana Zegache, the revolutionary icons stenciled on Oaxaca's street corners, the spirits of the Maguey and the Maíz, the homecoming of the artist Rodolfo Morales, the intellectual fire of Ivan Illich, and the archetypal trajectory of the Hero's Journey.

We begin and end with the Dia de Los Muertes: "the dead who," as John Berger tells it, "are less forgotten in Mexico than anywhere else in the world." And so, in all our journeyings, we renounce the modern superstition that the past is, or ever could be, left behind.

We seek a way beyond the liquidation of culture, and of time itself, which has accompanied the project of modernity. Where it has striven for development, we seek *comunidad*; where it has sought to do good, we seek to live well. And, in the unexpected encounters which follow, we hope to find something that has the feel of a way home.

**Artists in Transience**

In its Humpty-Dumpty way, the professional art world talks about passing visits as ‘residencies’; yet ‘to reside’ means ‘to remain behind’.

There must be a more grounded language in which we could talk about all this, but perhaps we can at least recover a little from our disorientation by speaking instead of ‘artists in transience’? These transients will be our guests in Europe: glass-makers, street artists and restorers of sacred objects from Oaxaca, we invite them to join us in new collaborations in our cities and towns.

**Gatherings & Conversations**

Throughout the course of the two years, we will host a series of events with partners in Oaxaca and around Europe: times of reflection and festivity, seminars and symposia. These will be an opportunity to share our work with others as the project unfolds.

**Collaborations & Explorations**

Our core activity over the two years will be a series of collaborations with the artisans of **Zegache** and **Xaquixe**, the street artists of **LaPiztola** and other partners in Oaxaca. Within these, we plan to explore:

- the weaving together of modern electronics and traditional crafts
- closed-loop scenarios around the chameleonic plant of the Maguey
- the exchange of mobile gardening units between Brussels and Oaxaca
- the sacred and profane transformations of the Maíz
- the social process through which veneration is brought to life
- stories of cultural migration and homecoming in Europe and Oaxaca

At the invitation of the Municipality of Zegache, the work of several of the partners will culminate in the creation of a new entrance to the pueblo, including a pair of chapels and an archway.

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*At the heart of our project is the transforming power of culture: the insistence that our stories and symbols, our various senses of the sacred and the profane, are not a shallow surface over hard material and economic realities, but tectonic forces, capable of unsettling everything we know.*



# the patron saints of sta ana zegache

**The patron saint is Santa Ana, the mother of Mary, grandmother of Jesus. Today the church bearing her name constitutes the artistic, cultural and spiritual landmark of Santa Ana Zegache. Twenty years ago, this 16th-century building, and all of its artwork, was in ruins. The church had a hole in the roof, rain poured in, and the interior crumbled in bits and pieces. Santa Ana Zegache is an indigenous pueblo of 2000 inhabitants in Oaxaca, Mexico. The people farm the scorched land or seek jobs in the city; boys become men by emigrating to the U.S. The women are often exposed to social control, waiting for their fiancés or husbands, who might not come back.**

The Community Workshop of Zegache, established in 1997, brought in conservators who trained 10 local women ("those who wait") in various techniques of restoration. Some years later the women had restored the church to its past splendor - a masterpiece of "Indian Baroque". The pueblans could once again take pride in their cultural heritage - a change that was brought by themselves and not imposed on them by professionals from outside. Today the Community Workshop consists of 17 members, both women and men. One altarpiece remains to be restored; there are commissions from neighboring churches and collaborations with contemporary artists as the Community Workshop runs a gallery in the city.

Performing Pictures first visited the Community Workshop of Santa Ana Zegache in November 2008. Facing the social impact of the church-restoring Community Workshop, we decided to gear our work towards devotional and venerative artefacts, a natural extension of Performing Pictures' visual and public installation-based practice. Invited by the ever-so enthusiastic director and conservator, Georgina Saldaña Wonchee, Performing Pictures started a long-term collaboration with the Community Workshop. Several interactive video shrines with animated saints and apparitions are the result of the artistic, cultural and technical exchange. Together with the artisans we have shaped new outlets for venerative practice that combine crafts with media technology, electronics and animation.

Religious (re-)inventiveness plays a crucial role in the cultural resilience of the indigenous population of Oaxaca. The venerative practices of Zapotecos, Mixtecos and Nahuas, though firmly Catholic in their faith, have repeatedly challenged the sacrament-orientated hierarchies of the Hispanicized clergy. An entire wave of indigenous-controlled image cults and pilgrimage sites was part of an apparitionist movement during the late 19th century.

Gustavo Esteva, the founder of the Universidad de la Tierra, claimed that the work of Performing Pictures in Santa Ana Zegache is only possible within the context of an indigenous community. Interactive video shrines and altarpieces with animated apparitions of La Virgen and saints, technically enhancing the image cult experience and imaging new venerative artefacts, is part of the indigenous religious (re-)inventiveness.

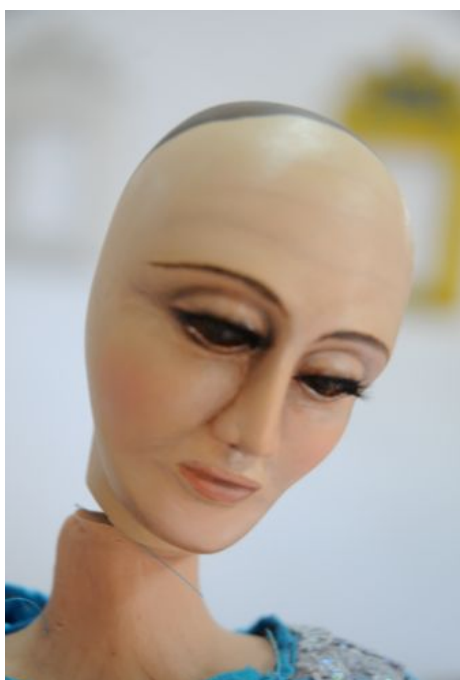
Santa Ana, or simply La Patrona, was the subject for Performing Pictures' latest Zegache workshop in November, 2011. The artisans of the Community Workshop deployed their wood-carving and traditional painting skills into making vivid replicas of the heads and hands of La Patrona and Mary. The animation armature was constructed using a steel ball-and-plate system for

the joints. The remaining body parts were also carved in cedar wood as the joints were covered with plasticine for continued flexibility. Clothes were made in the workshop as well, and we ended up using real hair for one of the dolls (!).

A stop-motion studio was set up in the priest's quarters in order to make the animation which consists of more than 500 still images, where Santa Ana is teaching her daughter to read. The animation was transferred as an app to an iPod touch and placed within a small shrine especially crafted for these kinds of devices. We envisaged the mini-shrine among many other things as the last stop for laid-off smart-phones - to be used as venerative artefacts.

Following this occupation with venerative artefacts, renewable energy has become an increasingly important issue for Performing Pictures' work. Venerative objects should generate energy, not consume it! Gearing up for larger edifices, the next phase is the construction of two kinetic chapels at the entrance of Santa Ana Zegache. The second chapel, commissioned by the president of the municipality, will contain the second patron saint of Zegache, el Dulce Nombre.

Building starts in mid-2012.





# peregrini +

## greenpowered dimensions of pilgrimage

**A pilgrim is a kind of performer; the passing through is as important as reaching the sacred goal; all details matter.**

**Whereas tourists and business travelers are merely present once their final destination is reached, the pilgrim takes on the road as a means of his/her expression.**

Since the vast bulk of our world could be described in terms of in-between spaces (between the hotel and the beach, or between the lobby and the conference room), the pilgrim is the one who will connect the dots through forgotten lands and bear witness to untold stories.

In the topography of global interest economy described above, most of us are redundant. Transactional traditions and rituals have been replaced by insular, postmodern identity politics and fundamentalism. Soft values are replaced by hard values. We listen to the ones who know, not to the ones who believe. It is in such a world that the pilgrim becomes more important than ever.

The Peregrini Society will summon the potential of New Technologies in an Old World. An ever so important human activity such as traveling (connecting ethnicities

and social groups, hopefully preventing conflicts, wars) has to become something more than the fast forwardness of airborne transportation with disastrous environmental imprints. The Travel in the version of the Peregrini Society (re)becomes an endeavor, and a sweet one.

Following old pilgrim roads, the Peregrini Society will travel through Europe – from Poland to Croatia in July 2012, on custom-made bicycles. These vehicles will embrace the old aspect of muscle-powered transportation with the new means of storing energy and using it for communicative purposes, such as mobile data communication or simply lighting up the darkness of the roads with LEDs and low power-consuming displays.

Everything is used and re-used, and as little as possible is disposed of; using the generated electricity of traveling pilgrims as well as making road installations out of scrap.

The bicyclists act as documentarists, attempting to establish a new genre of socio-anthropological art and storytelling.

### peregrini society

The peregrini are a part of a growing network of cultural practitioners, with their core in the Resilients project. 'Resilients' are people of all ages preparing for uncertain futures, by experimenting with resilient forms living & working as a form of artistic practice.

The Resilients project collects, creates and shares these emergent practices, while grounding them in historic cultural roots. The project aims to establish a support structure for resilient culture in Europe, starting with a programme of activities in 2011-2012, supported by the Culture programme of the EU.

The Resilients consortium includes 2 artlabs, 3 artist-run organisations & an academic institution; FoAM and nadine (Belgium) Zavod Projekt Atol (Slovenia), Performing Pictures (Sweden) Future Textiles / University of the Arts London (Great Britain), and Time's Up (Austria).



Offspring Taking Off is on tour with the traveling exhibition TA PLATS!. Now at Ludvika Konsthall – next stop Sandviken.

Art is a meeting point which overrides age, gender, ethnic background and functional capacity. The exhibition TA PLATS! presents contemporary art with various forms of expression encouraging activity and movement. Art appealing to several of our senses. Art which is audible, visible and tactile.

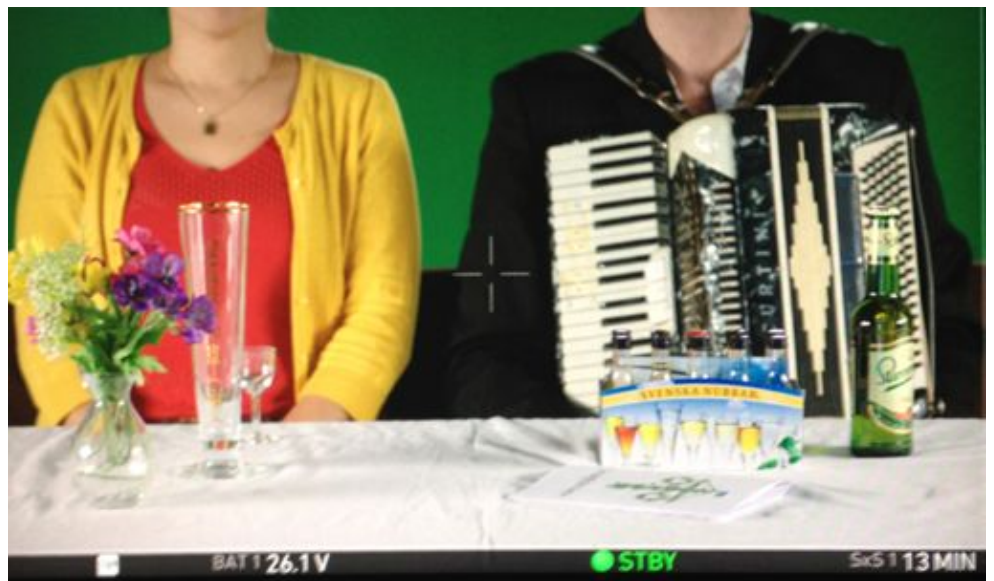
## Performing Pictures Manufacturing at Spritmuseum

Performing Pictures Manufacturing is our branch for commercial work. In May, Stockholm will inaugurate a new museum, which interlaces intoxicants, art and the experience economy.

Located near the old dockyards of Djurgården, the Spritmuseum will accommodate exhibitions treating "The Spirit(s) of Sweden" and our complicated relationship with alcohol. We are honored by the invitation to create two of the exhibition's interactive installations.

In one corner, we are building a bar which houses the Drink Quiz – a rousing interactive quiz with a poltergeist-inspired physical interface and light phenomena. In another corner, museum visitors will be able to partake of Happy Campers – a hilarious "film-disguised-as-a-computer-game" that takes place inside a caravan on Midsummer Eve – somewhere in Sweden.

With a lever and a steering wheel, the museum visitor is able to scroll over a laid table. The shots are neatly lined up, but the guests, both friends and strangers alike,



crowd together. As the glasses are emptied, an awkward silence begins to settle over and among the guests. The result is a story of

intrigues and entanglements in a cross between a Bergmanesque domestic drama and a Tati-esque physical comedy.



We've been apped!

Don't miss the app of our "Men That Fall" for iPad and iPhone released by Magasin 3 .

Read more at:

[www.magasin3.com/apps](http://www.magasin3.com/apps)

We thank the EU Culture Programme 2007-2013, The Swedish Arts Grants Committee, The Swedish Arts Council and Stockholms Stads Kulturförvaltning for making our work possible.



SWEDISH ARTS COUNCIL



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