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Palinsesti



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Palinsesti
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Palinsesti 2016

13 November 2016 – 8 January 2017
San Vito al Tagliamento (PN)

Project by Giorgia Gastaldon

Fracturae

Curated by Giorgia Gastaldon
Palazzo Altan

Mind the Map

Time's Up
Curated by Davide Bevilacqua
Castello

Punto Fermo: Giorgio Valvassori

Curated by Antonio Garlatti and
Giorgia Gastaldon
Essiccatoio Bozzoli
Public spaces in San Vito al Tagliamento

Promoted by

Comune di San Vito al Tagliamento
Assessorato Beni e Attività Culturali

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*This exposition is dedicated to Renzo and
to all those who worked and work for any
kind of Reconstruction.*



Comune di San Vito
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2016 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of contemporary art exhibitions that have been organised since 1992 at the historic sites of San Vito al Tagliamento, a small town of art, music, and culture.

In San Vito contemporary art is enthusiastically welcomed and finds a safe harbor to reach, the right location where it is possible to develop ideas and thoughts, and to foster research oriented to the future.

For this occasion, I would like to emphasize the number twenty-five, because I think it is legitimate to highlight the fact that the style of what is contemporary has always been one of the most fundamental peculiarities of our town by design and not by chance and it is what has helped to make it a unique place. Moreover, I would like to show how all this is combined with the constant necessity of long term attention for our community.

After all, a purely statistical and numerical verification certifies the scarcity of exhibitions that can be praised for being so enduring and capable to survive and confront the hard times that culture lives in these years. These are considerations that need to be taken into account for a narrative of the events that proves to be effective.

In hosting its twenty-fifth edition, *Palinsesti* thus remains faithful to its original intent: to introduce the contemporary while respecting the historical, and, at the same time, to exalt its importance and social function. To know where we come from in order to choose where we go! Furthermore, by now, the exhibition is also characterised by another purpose, which emerged during a following phase almost as a necessity and in conjunction with the crisis lived by the world of art and of the museum system: I am referring to the issue of capitalisation of contemporary research, which is an additional and more recent cornerstone of what *Palinsesti* offers. Particularly in 2016, the permanent acquisition of a series of art works by Giorgio Valvassori, who personally displayed them in historic and public sites of the town, is of central importance. Thanks to this intervention the process of enhancement of San Vito's heritage goes on little by little, so that, today and in the future, the contemporary can find its place among our walls.

The Mayor

Antonio Di Bisceglie

Introduction

Giorgia Gastaldon

«The title of this exposition intentionally highlights the necessary, but not always evident, relationship between contemporary art and historical and cultural substratum. The definition of *palinsesto* (in English “palimpsest”), as a manuscript of parchment where the original text is scraped out for the writing of a new one, is a good metaphor to define contemporary art which, while creating itself, is constantly aware of historic sediment as a necessary condition of its evolution».¹

This is the beginning of the first catalogue of *Palinsesti*, written ten years ago. In 2006 the exposition made its first appearance, taking over from *Hic et Nunc*, a “workshop for visual arts” founded by Angelo Bertani in 1992. Its purpose was clear: to investigate the relationship between a series of «hostile aptitudes», such as «past and present, memory and oblivion, absence and presence».² Such a good purpose, rooted in the title of the event, has always been the starting point for the work carried out by all the curators who came in succession over the years, and today – which marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of contemporary art in San Vito al Tagliamento – it represents the basis of all the proposals of the exposition.

The present edition starts from Palazzo Altan with a group exhibition dedicated to the subject of the earthquake, exactly like in the first edition of *Palinsesti*, in honour of the 40th anniversary of the quake that occurred in Friuli in 1976. The exhibition *Fracturae* wants to pick up the thread of the project of 2006, symbolically entitled *Sismologie* (*Seismologies*). On that occasion the focus was mainly on the way in which art «can contribute to the formation of a collective memory, by creating a symbolic visual form which can be shared and by establishing a ritual of communal identification».³ Whereas, this year, the exhibition wants to draw attention to the relationship between man and tragedy. As a matter of fact, the word *frattura* (in English “fracture”), which entitles the exhibit, aims not only at representing, in a visual way, the image of the fault caused by the earthquake, but also the idea of the break: the idea that a known situation changes because of a sudden and catastrophic event such as the earthquake, but also the way in which society rebuilds itself in the aftermath.

¹ *Perché “Palinsesti”*, p. 9. When not stated otherwise, translations are by the authors and translators of the catalogue.

² *Ibidem*.

³ A. Del Puppo, *Sismologie. Distruzione e costruzione nell’arte contemporanea*, p. 15.

The relationship between artistic investigation and the observation of changes which devastate the world as we know it is the cornerstone of the second exhibition, which is displayed in the spaces of the Castello. *Mind the Map* is a project created by the international artistic group Time's Up and its aim is to reflect upon the phenomenon of mass migration. Through a series of narrative installations, visitors personally live the tragedy of migrants' journeys towards hope. They are invited to question the reasons why the idea of a European Community and of freedom of movement in Europe are challenged, and then to examine the economic interests and responsibilities that European citizens have towards migrants and their countries of origins, and finally, to consider where the final responsibility for these continuous tragedies lies.

The exhibition is completed by the award *Premio In Sesto* which, in its eighth edition, confirms its renewed international formula that provides for the participation of artists who come from the Euroregion Alpe-Adria, and particularly, this year, from Trentino Alto Adige, Croatia and Friuli Venezia Giulia. This section is supplied by a solo exhibition by Michele Spanghero - winner of *Premio In Sesto* in 2015 - on display at Fondazione Furlan in Pordenone.

During the twenty-fifth anniversary of contemporary art in San Vito al Tagliamento, the work of capitalization of the contemporary within the historic sites of the town continues. As a matter of fact, the usual detailed study of the work of an artist present in the collection *Punto Fermo* focuses on Giorgio Valvassori in Essiccatoio Bozzoli. The presence of this artist's works, however, is not limited to the expositive site, but covers the entire territory of San Vito as well. Thanks to a permanent installation of works collocated in different historic sites of the town, the already rich and important historical and artistic heritage of San Vito gains new, fundamental stratifications, recalling again the meaning of "palimpsest", which this exposition has chosen for itself since its first edition.

Fracturae

Giorgia Gastaldon

«**Fracture, n.** <French *fracture*, < Latin *fractūra*, < *fract-* participial stem of *frangere* to break. 1. The action of breaking or fact of being broken; breakage; *spec.* in *Surg.* (the earliest use), the breaking of a bone, cartilage, etc. 2. a. The result of breaking; a crack, division, split; †a broken part, a splinter. 3. The characteristic appearance of the fresh surface in a mineral, when broken irregularly by the blow of a hammer. More fully, surface of fracture».¹

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Intentions

«**Earthquake, n.** <earth n.1 + quake n. [...] Compare also *terremote* n. and Latin [*Tērrae mōtu(m)*] and French forms cited at that entry . 1. A shaking or movement of the ground; *esp.* a violent convulsion of the earth's surface, frequently causing great destruction, and resulting from movements within the earth's crust or from volcanic action. 2. *fig.* Any event or experience thought to resemble an earthquake or its effects; *esp.* a major disturbance or upheaval; a traumatic or intensely emotional event».²

«Those who were there, on 6 May 1976, measure time in a very precise way: there is a time before, a time during, and a time after the earthquake».³

Fracturae is a group exhibition, set up forty years after that tragic event. This project is a proper occasion for the memory of that time “during”, but it also aims mostly at reflecting on the time “after the earthquake”, that characterised and changed the destiny of the territory of Friuli Venezia Giulia so much.

¹ Oxford English Dictionary, www.oed.com

² *Ivi.*

³ G. Messetti, *Il mio terremoto*, p. 55.

«After forty years, I think that the experience of the earthquake still has one more chance in order to remain a source of living creation: not passive and repetitive memory, but the transformation of memory into narrative re-invention. We need fresh narrators and different narrative themes».⁴

This exhibition does not display historical documents or photographs of the time, nor have direct witnesses been consulted. On the contrary, *Fracturae* presents five “fresh narrators”, and just as many – or even more – “different narrative themes”. Voice is left to the artists and their task is to guide us through a reflection on themes that are still unfortunately relevant: tragedies (earthquakes, then and now) and their potential prevention, reconstruction, the overcoming of every crisis confronted by society and determined by destiny, humankind, or Nature, the conflictual and, at the same time, sublime relationship between humanity and the natural world.

«For part of the sample and part of the population, the “chasm” provided the occasion to let territorial and historic anguish coincide; the latter particularly implied by the instability of an uncertain future».⁵

As highlighted by the title – *Fracturae*, from Latin “break, fragment, splinter, chipping, fracture – this group exhibition investigates the theme of the “fault”, the physical as much as the existential breaking of land.

«The ability to never let go, to hold on and stay motivated despite difficult situations. The spirit of sacrifice and the unarrestable ability to stand up again. And the ability to never give up hope, against all odds. Today all these abilities are grouped and labelled as “resilience”. In ancient times this very characteristic was called “strength of soul”, a concept that almost coincides with one of the four cardinal virtues, fortitude (*fortitudo*)».⁶

Tragedy – as well as crisis, in all its meanings – can be considered as an occasion for the improvement of the society that confronts it. The works displayed in this exhibition speak to this idea: how what immediately appears as turmoil can become an incentive for the lifting of unbearable weights, for mending hopeless sprains, and to be able to grow again, even when it seems impossible.

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Fracturae

«Fault, n. <Middle English *faut(e)*, < Old French *faute* (feminine) (also *faut* masculine) = Provençal *falta*, Spanish *falta*, Portuguese *falta*, Italian *falta* < popular Latin **fallita*, a failing, coming short, < **fallitus*, popular Latin past participle of *fallere*: see fail v. 9. *Geol.* and *Mining.* a. A dislocation or break in continuity of the strata or vein. Also, a flaw or dislocation in ice. Cf. French *faille*».⁷

«There it is, another tremor», «she feels the earth opening under her hand. Like lips slowly opening up. She falls on all fours and forces her eyes to see in the darkness. A crack is slowly opening in the soil».⁸

Geografia temporale XXVII (2014), a work by Sophie Ko, appears as a monochrome: a framed glass beyond which lands of pure pigment open out. This chromatic substance – powder which is pressurised within a massive laboratory slide for the observation of its behaviour – is traversed by collapses, telluric movements, falls, landslides, gaps, “fractures”, “faults”.

«Therefore even the whole world is not wide enough for the soaring range of human thought, but man’s mind often overleaps the very bounds of space. When we survey the whole circle of life, and see it abounding everywhere in what is elegant, grand, and beautiful, we learn at once what is the true end of man’s being».⁹

«Do you know you were seated above an armoury? Down there, I don’t know how many kilometers, there is a fault».¹⁰

In the works by Sophie Ko, what art historians and restorers consider a gap to be promptly filled for better conservation of the work – the detachment of the pictorial film, the flaking of the paint – becomes visual grammar and aesthetic inquiry. *Craquelure*, abrasion, “cracking”, the detachment of the pigment: these are the cornerstones upon which the artist hinges her research. Matter becomes, in her works, “geography” that confronts the fundamental laws of the Universe and of Nature: gravity – which causes constant change in the work due to the continuous falling of the pressurised powder – as well as time, witness of these permanent changes.

«The vibration lasted sixty seconds. It faded until it disappeared completely, even though many would swear they still felt it under their feet for some hours. Nothing remained in its place. The earth mixed cards and people».¹¹

In *Polaroid* (2013), a series by Paolo Meoni, everything is upside down: what is supposed to be below comes out, and what should be *recto* is *verso*; thus visitors are only left with the observation of reality from a new van-

4 G. P. Gri, *Quarant’anni*, p. 12.

5 R. Strassoldo, B. Cattarinussi (eds.), *Friuli: la prova del terremoto*, p. 351.

6 P. Trabucchi, *Tecniche di resistenza interiore. Sopravvivere alle crisi con la resilienza*, p. 14.

7 *Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com

8 S. Sacher, *L’amore profondo*, p. 102.

9 (Anonymous) Longinus, *On the Sublime*, p. 68.

10 M. Mattiuzza, *Ci bastava un prato*, p. 22.

11 R. Brollo, *L’effetto di una farfalla*, p. 85.

tage point. These “polaroids” are “opened”, “peeled apart” by the artist: he who is supposed to preserve the process of development of the picture deconstructs it. The result of this “fracture”, of this wise “breaking”, is a diptych based on the photographic coordinates of positive/negative, “another” image, different – and more surprising – from the one that would have been obtained by developing the same polaroid: an unexpected and abstract orography.

Resilience

«Resilience, n. Probably a borrowing from <Latin *resilientia*; Latin *resilient-*, *resiliēns*. I. Literal applications. 2. a. Elasticity; the power of resuming an original shape or position after compression, bending, etc. b. *Mech.* The energy per unit volume absorbed by a material when it is subjected to strain; the value of this at the elastic limit. [...] II. Figurative uses. 5. The quality or fact of being able to recover quickly or easily from, or resist being affected by, a misfortune, shock, illness, etc.; robustness; adaptability».¹²

«Disaster is a unifying force for at least four main reasons: a. it is a danger which is external to the system and thus, conflicts that are internal to the system disappear when confronting it; b. it produces extremely clear and evident problems, easy to understand by everyone and to the solution of which everyone can contribute, thus contrasting what, under normal conditions, would be defined as the “opacity” of the system; c. it permits the introduction of innovations in terms of ideas, values, behaviours, institutions, technologies; d. since everyone who shares a common biological nature is affected by disaster, it suspends differences in terms of social class, profession, etc».¹³

«He came from one of those towns that no one among us had ever seen alive, intact. When we got to know them, they were already made of powder and stones, with wooden beams stuck in the hay and in the soil, with roofs crushed on the floor. When we got to know them, they were already made of silence, of houses half open to show motionless rooms, empty beds, abandoned tables, pots and ancient wardrobes, mattresses upon which no men slept anymore but debris. Towns that were just names to us, streaming on tv screens that had never been switched off, mysteries that had been solved only within their own disaster».¹⁴

In works such as *Esercizio n. 8/Greetings* (2015), Caterina Rossato patiently dismantles what exists – that is to say, the postcards she collects with the attitude of an archivist and cuts into smaller parts – in order to build what does not exist: her impossible but plausible meta-landscapes, derived from the rigorous juxtaposition of those paper fragments. The “dismantling” of many landscapes, previously documented in pictures, leads to the resilient “reconstruction” of a new geography which is additional and imaginary, but not less real.

¹² Oxford English Dictionary, www.oed.com

¹³ C. E. Fitz, entry “Disaster”, p. 683.

¹⁴ P. Camuffo, *Giordano*, p. 47.

«The question is always the same: why going back to live where earthquakes shake the earth, where volcanoes erupt or tsunamis swell?». «Despite a solid amount of scientific knowledge, we still lack a proper culture of natural events». «Generally speaking, we insist on calling “natural calamities” those disasters that are actually only the result of the action or presence of man»: «natural calamities do not exist, only the natural development of an active and dynamic planet exists, along with our ability to acknowledge it».¹⁵

«Preliminarily, a natural calamity is only potentially catastrophic, since its anthropic characteristics is what make it so. A natural calamity is perceived as such only because of the consequences it creates for the functioning of human societies».¹⁶

Simple confession (2016) by Christian Fogarolli investigates fundamental themes such as the relationship between man and nature, between man and science, and between nature and science. The starting point for this work is an anti-seismic valve, projected by visionary scientist Pier Luigi Igghina. Today, questions about the chances for science of preventing so-called natural calamities are more topical than ever. How far does human control extend over nature? How much can control over natural phenomena be considered positive and harmless? What consequences do we face when technology that has been created for good falls into the “wrong hands”?

«If it is true that it is not in our power to control the volatile tides of change, we can certainly learn to build better ships. And we can learn to project and re-design organisations, institutions, and systems that prove to be able to better confront disasters, to work effectively in a wider variety of conditions, and to pass from one situation to another one more smoothly».¹⁷

On Sublime

«Sublime, adj. (A) and n. (B)< (i) Middle French, French *sublime* (adjective) excellent, admirable, perfect [...] (ii) classical Latin *sublīmis* (also *sublīmus*) high up, elevated, high, (of breath) shallow, panting, tall, lofty, aspiring, grand, elevated in style, majestic, exalted, noble, eminent, illustrious [...] probably < *sub-* sub- prefix + *līmis* (also *līmus*) oblique. B. n. 1. With *the*. a. The grand and elevated style in discourse or writing, esp. when used to express noble ideas. b. That quality in nature or art which inspires awe, reverence, or other high emotion; the great beauty of grandeur of an object, place, etc. c. That which is grand or noble in human nature or life; moral or spiritual excellence. 2. An example of the sublime; a sublime feature, quality, or aspect of a person or thing; a sublimity. Now *rare*. 3. Sublime quality; sublimity; (also) the emotional state evoked by the sublime. 4. With *the*: the highest degree of; the height of; the acme. Now *rare*».¹⁸

«The Sublime, therefore, is linked with the contemplation of the spectacle of mighty and raging Nature, unleashed against men and the things that men build

¹⁵ M. Tozzi, *Catastrofi. Dal terremoto di Lisbona allo Tsunami del Sudest asiatico: 250 anni di lotta tra l'uomo e la natura*, p. 10.

¹⁶ F. Walter, *Catastrofi. Una storia culturale*, p. 19.

¹⁷ A. Zolli, *Resilienza. La scienza di adattarsi ai cambiamenti*, p. 13.

¹⁸ Oxford English Dictionary, www.oed.com

without its aid (ships sunk by tempests in the oceans, cities destroyed by volcanic eruptions, churches collapsing over praying worshippers, as happened during the earthquake in Lisbon on 1 November 1755)».¹⁹

In *Abisso Plutone (Aria buia)* (2015) Silvia Mariotti photographs the geological phenomenon of foibas. The artist lingers on the threshold of these terrifying chasms capturing the horror and fear, and, at the same time, the irresistible attraction that these ravines provoke in us as observers. Darkness both scares and fascinates us, who have put ourselves in danger to pursue knowledge since the times of Icarus and Ulysses.

«Foiba, n. (Italian.) 1. A deep wide vertical cavity or the swallow point of a river at the beginning of its underground course. 2. A natural vertical shaft in soluble rock, tending toward cylindrical shape; it may or may not reach the surface. A dome pit».²⁰

«The man who `fore the unknown trembled,/ Its mere reflection came to love;/ Great heroes burning he assembled,/ To equal that great One above./ From all archtypal Beauty the first ringing/ {You} made in Nature to resound in singing./ The passions' frenzied, wild stress,/ The lawless whims of fortune,/ The instincts' and the duties' press/ You set with your acute emotion/ On straight-edge to their destination./ What Nature in her great and grand procession/ In widespread distances has torn apart,/ Becomes in play, in song's expression/ Coherent, easy to impart./ (...) When swarthy hand of destiny,/ What she before your eye had raveled,/ Would not before your eye untie,/ Then life to the abyss did fly,/ Before full lovely circle traveled--/ Then you did draw, with bold, audacious might,/ The arc still further into future's night;/ Then hurled yourself and never quivered/ Into Avernus' swarthy ocean wave/ And there the life that fled discovered/ Beyond the urn, beyond the grave».²¹

With *Nuits saint nuit* (2010) Paolo Meoni invites us – insignificant inhabitants of the world – to observe what appears to be the immensity of a nocturnal sky. However, the luminous dots we observe in the photographic prints are not actually stars, as we thought, but daylight creeping through the holes in the metal walls of a small building where the artist himself hid. Our sight is deceived because for us darkness is always a symbol of night: of what we cannot see and, therefore, know.

«Major effects of the Sublime are present everywhere the power of widespread darkness triumphs, invincible to daylight and only partially crossed by artificial illumination. Since it is not just a colour, Black is the very substance of this powerful emotion. Meteorological darkness or a sky darkened by clouds or by bad weather, for instance, therefore induces melancholy, a form – although diminished – of aching of the body and of a painful feeling in the soul».²²

19 G. Panella, *Storia del sublime. Dallo Pseudo Longino alle poetiche della Modernità*, p. 89.

20 Oxford English Dictionary, www.oed.com.

21 F. Schiller, *The Artists*, in Friedrich Schiller, *Poet of Freedom*, IV, p. 39ff.

22 G. Panella, *Storia del sublime. Dallo Pseudo Longino alle poetiche della Modernità*, p. 93.

In *White, Studio n. 1* (2016), a video by Caterina Rossato, we watch a motionless mountain landscape while it is being slowly consumed by a cloud or by thick fog invading the observer's field of vision. The observer is swallowed by the clouds like in a painting by Caspar Friedrich: suddenly Nature reveals its overwhelming power that man – by himself – confronts with such limited resistance.

«Beyond darkness, the Sublime is deprivation. It is, in fact, *emptiness, solitude, and silence*».²³

23 Ivi, p. 84.

Christian Fogarolli



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Christian Fogarolli, *Simple confession*, 2016
iron, plastic, lead, 150x70x70 cm
courtesy of the artist

With *Simple confession* – a work specifically created for this exhibition – Christian Fogarolli conducts his personal investigation into fundamental themes such as the relationship between man and nature and man and science. Simultaneously, he continues exploring the features and the role of knowledge and research, meant as the motors of human existence.

Simple confession is an installation that originates from a specific earthquake neutralizer ("valvola antisismica" in Italian), a device conceived and created by a visionary researcher whose theories hinged on scientific as well as philosophical basis: Pier Luigi Ighina (1908-2004). During his life, Ighina elaborated numerous theories in physics and created different machines aimed at confronting problems linked with human survival on earth, such as atmospheric calamities and earthquakes. The "valvola antisismica", as it can be easily deduced from its name that can be literally translated as "anti-seismic valve", was invented to prevent seismic tremors: as it is said, the town of Imola – where Ighina worked – was spared from an earthquake in 1985 thanks to one of these machines.

In his installation, Christian Fogarolli recreates the double tetrahedron structure of this "valvola sismica": in Ighina's original design, part of the machine is stuck into the ground, while Fogarolli chooses to show the whole solid in its entirety and in its formal purity, which almost resembles an abstract sculpture. Moreover, the artist completes the installation by adding a track that can be listened to from a pair of earplugs coming out from one of the solid's sides. This parascientific work thus includes a violin execution of a track by Francis Thomé (1850-1909), whose title *Simple Aveu* ("simple confession" in English) has been borrowed by Fogarolli for this work. Music is present under two forms: auditory and visual. The first one has already been described above, while the second one consists of a pierced paper roll, approximately 10 metres long: a piano roll – a storage medium used in the beginning of the twentieth century to operate automatic pianos (pneumatic player pianos). This roll also looks like an abstract vision and, moreover, its appearance is more similar to a seismograph record rather than a sheet music.

Christian Fogarolli presents us with a mysterious object that, following the best tradition of the artistic sublime, combines aesthetic beauty (music, "sculpture", the piano roll) with the fear for one's personal safety (the destruction caused by a quake and the very human attempt to prevent natural calamities).

[GG]



Sophie Ko, *Geografia temporale XXVII*, 2014
pure pigment, 140x75 cm
courtesy of Galleria Renata Fabbri

Sophie Ko

Geografia temporale XXVII (2014) by Sophie Ko looks exactly like a painting: it has the dimensions of a painting, it is framed, covered by a protective glass, and it hangs on a wall. At first glance, however, no picture characterises it or appears on its surface but after a few seconds, when the eye indulges on a more subtle view – like when entering a dark room – and thanks to a more careful observation, recognisable, clear signs become evident.

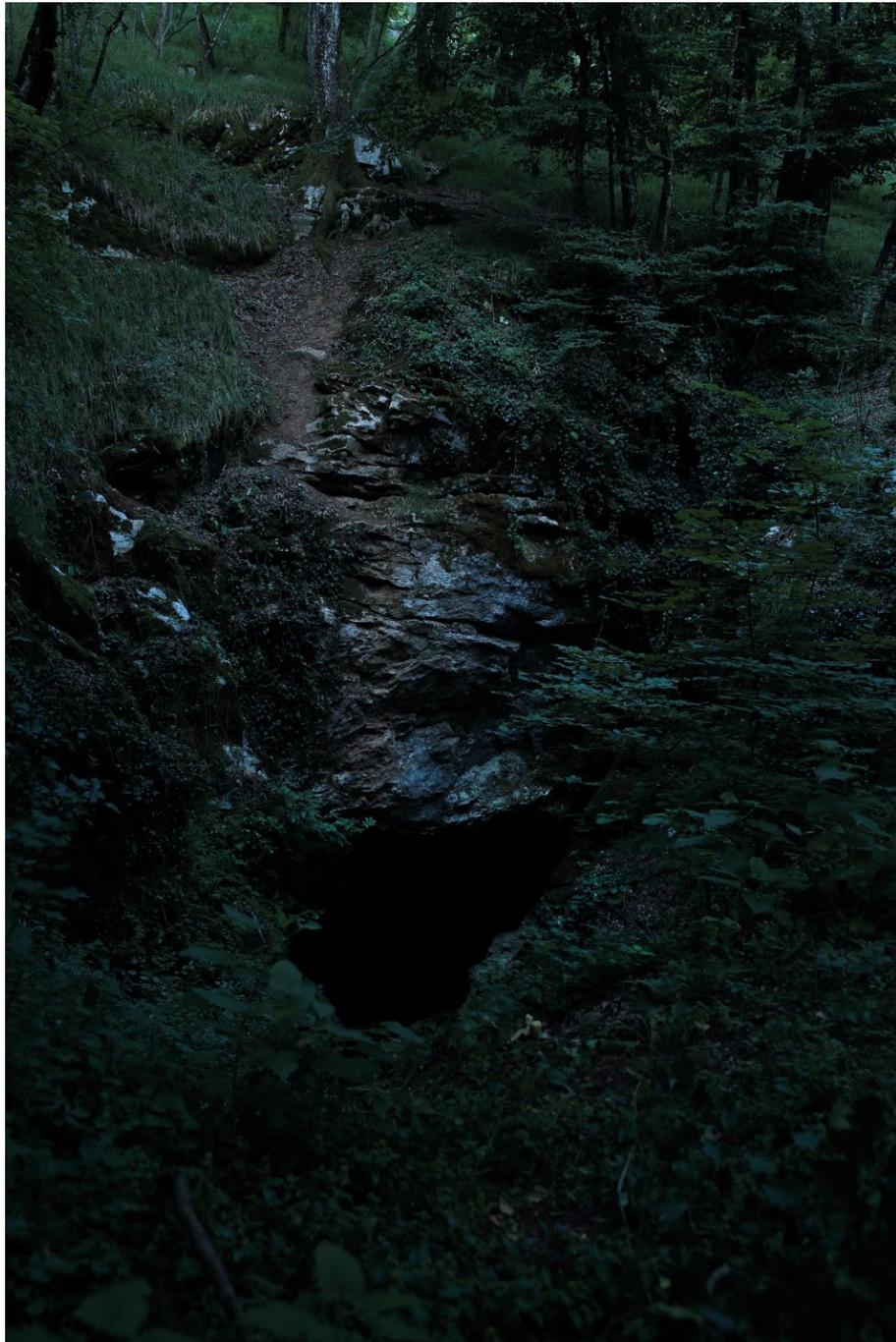
What visitors see is not a monochrome – meant as a painting characterised by a uniform single colour – but rather a sort of container of a very subtle powder, pressed behind the glass: pure pigment, as it can be read on the caption. However, this coloured powder is less homogeneous than it seems: it is certainly pure, since it is evident that there is nothing but powder beyond the glass, but it is not spread in a uniform way. Thus the work can be actually considered as a monochrome, as it is characterised by a single colour, but is also animated by important “events”: falls, orographic representations or, as suggested by the title, “geographies”, that provoke both bewilderment and reassurance.

The space identified by the work is actually a “geography”: a territory where the eye is free to happily roam; an Eden where the sense of sight, continuously put to test by an incredible amount of pictures and images that assault it daily, can be eventually nurtured and pacified.

This work is actually a space. Like every space it is exposed to numerous external fundamental forces that regulate the universe, such as gravity and time. Gravity, for instance, is continuously affecting the material of which the painting is made, therefore, from time to time, a fragment of pigment falls: it detaches from the surface on which the artist had put it, ending up somewhere else, decided by casualty. This gravitational phenomenon is inevitably linked with a temporal dimension, which really occurs rather than being represented within this particular work of art. “Geographies” of “time”.

It is from this perspective that the painting needs to be interpreted as a geographical map that documents its territory’s changes, without the need to be constantly re-written: an orography made of pigment in continuous development that can simultaneously narrate itself and its past.

[GG]



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Silvia Mariotti

In *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870), Jules Verne states that «nature's creative power is far beyond man's instinct of destruction». It is with a similar assumption in mind that Silvia Mariotti explores the beauty of natural sublime over the horror of human history in a cycle of works entitled *Aria buia*.

Abisso Plutone (Aria buia) (2015) consists of a photographic documentation of a foiba, which is a deep doline, a geological phenomenon typical, along with crevices and caves, of the Kras region. However, as it is well known, foibas hold a double connotation. The first one is linked to the geological phenomenon of terrestrial morphology and is fascinating for its peculiarity, since it can only be found in certain areas of the earth, defined as "karstic" from the name of the geographical region between Friuli Venezia Giulia, Slovenia, and Croatia, where the scientific characteristics of this natural occurrence were first studied.

The second one, equally famous, is sadly associated with the historical facts of Second World War, when these sinkholes became the unaware protagonists of human tragedies.

Silvia Mariotti reacts to this double phenomenon like a tightrope walker by playing with elegance and balance between these historical and geological echoes.

The idea of natural sublime is thus combined with a historical thinking on the contemporary age, generating a double, subliminal terror in front of us. On the one hand, the horror towards nature's magnificence, which causes both irresistible dismay and awe; while, on the other hand, the horror towards human violent fury, which in its turn determines not only feelings of terror, but also of shame and contempt. The image of the foibas also produces a reflection on the concept of time. As a matter of fact, these vertical holes are the result of millenarian geological forces and, at the same time, witnesses of a tragic past that is still very close to the present. These faults, these "fractures", represent wounds that cannot be healed, either within the karst area and in our memory: only their moving beauty, magnificently immortalised by Silvia Mariotti, can possibly save us from oblivion and despair.

[GG]

Silvia Mariotti, *Abisso Plutone (Aria buia)*, 2015
cotton Inkjet paper on dibond,
box frame, 163x109 cm
courtesy of the artist

Paolo Meoni

Paolo Meoni has been investigating the topicality and status of photography for a long time, particularly by means of the two media of photography and video (especially meant as “picture in motion”), more than often combined among each other in a relationship of chiasm and dialogue. Sometimes Meoni obtains a photographic effect from a video-sequence, as it is the case of *Bound* (2008), other times the photographic image becomes the subject of photography, like in *Reind* (2011), or snapshots are being “animated” like in *Unità residenziale d’osservazione* (2009).

However, along with photography and video, Meoni also adopts “other” instruments of investigation, although these different media are still characterised by a certain degree of “indexicality of photography”, whose creative potentialities are exploited in a metalinguistic way, as with the use of a scanner in *Streams* (2007) or in *Volumi* (2013).

In the triptych entitled *Polaroid* (2013), both the symbol of the polaroid *prêt-à-porter* and photographic mimesis are denied. By dislocating and reversing polaroid films exposed to light during the stage of development, Meoni stresses the physical and chemical dimensions of photography in what is a clear reference to the photographic process. The aesthetic result of this operation recalls aesthetic abstractionism or pictorial informalism, and denies every possible connection with reality.

In *Nuits saint nuit* (2010) – a series that borrows more than the title from an omonymous dreamlike anthology by Michiel Leiris – Meoni loosens the relationship of similarity between sign and referent, while playing with the former’s nature of mark and highlighting its aesthetic dimension: pure scopic pulsion, now become epiphany, is immortalized in an illusion of sparks spread against darkness, suspended between reality and imagination.

Meoni, born in 1961, lives and works in Prato, a city that has certainly influenced his interest in the insistent representation of the ongoing changes that affect metropolitan outskirts due to industrial development (or retreat).

[GC]

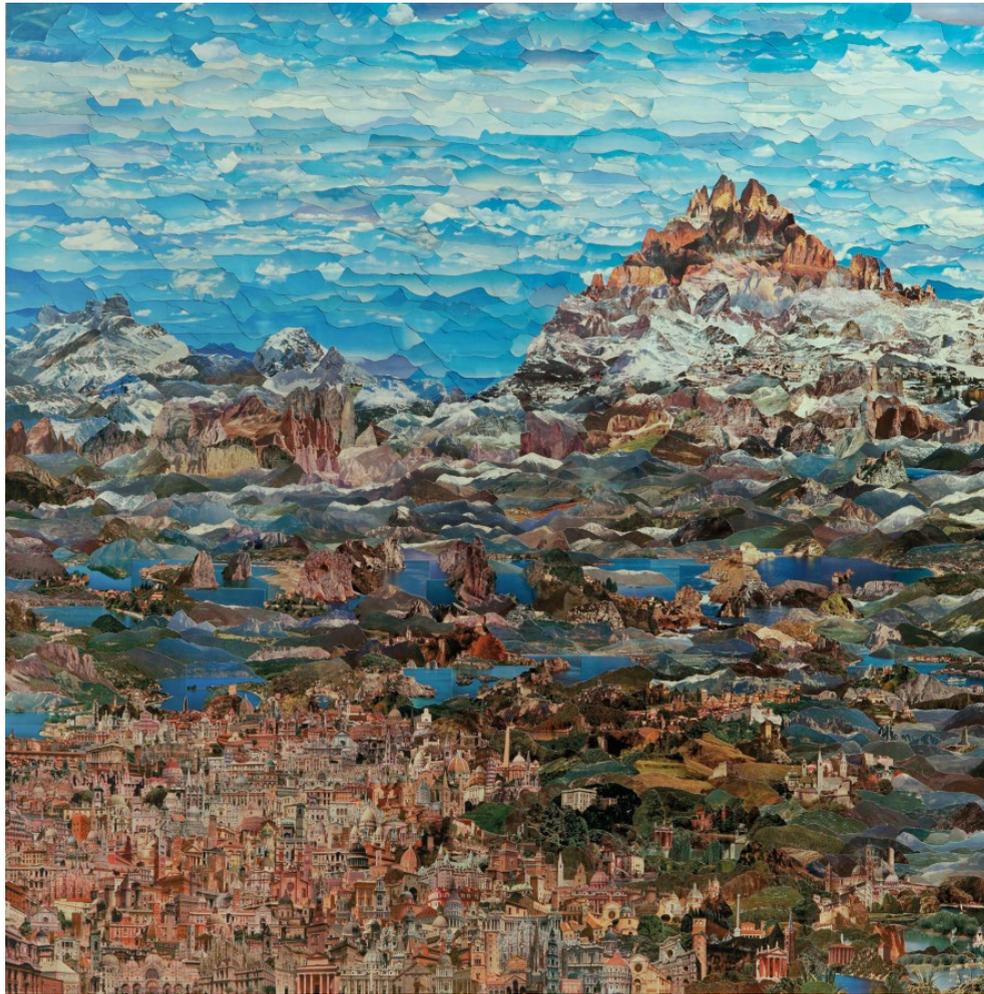
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Paolo Meoni, *Polaroid*, 2014
polaroid print, 9x10 cm
courtesy of the artist

Caterina Rossato



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Caterina Rossato's artistic investigation is inhabited by a certain phenomenological obsession for photographs that are only captured by the eyes, that exists and persists beyond scopic vision, beyond pure perception, in our mind. Her analogical and digital compositions aim at bringing to life these immaterial images by means of a sort of composite vision.

This particular process of creation is at the basis of works such as *Esercizio n.8/Greetings* (2008). The artist collects old postcards, meticulously organised according to shape and colour, and literally cuts them into orographic profiles, topographic details, natural and anthropic entities, such as mountains, valleys, houses, monuments, roads. Cut outs are then assembled according to a strict aesthetic and chromatic logic and subsequently distributed and arranged along a scale of different perspective levels.

The material and tangible result is a collage of pictures, a view almost in the style of Piranesi, a landscape that can be defined as virtual in Bergsonian terms, rich in memories and representations that blur into each other. An imaginary geography, set against a plausible horizon but deprived of any relationship between time and space, despite being the product of multiple details taken from reality. Postcards function as forms of allomnesia, déjà vu, *faux souvenirs*. Souvenirs, *mnémophile's* memory-objects, fetish objects meant to trigger memory, or, in other words: *greeting cards*.

Caterina Rossato's works often involve the observer by means of an "activating" sight, triggered by inferences, interferences, identifications, and estrangement effects. Thus, in a similar way, the visitor is asked to decipher the white and disturbing entity – cloud or fog – that crosses the fixed landscape in the video *White/Studio n. 1* (2016).

Caterina Rossato's work is characterised by a rigorous method balanced between variation and repetition, strongly influenced by many years of piano and music practice.

[GC]

Caterina Rossato, *Esercizio n.8/Greetings*, 2015
wooden board, postcards, 150x150 cm
courtesy of the artist

Mind the Map

TIME'S UP

Daide Bevilacqua

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In 2015 the complicated theme of migration streams captured the attention of the public around Europe and brought to light a contemporary dramatic crisis of the new millennium: the European crisis of migrants.¹

In neighboring Austria, a precise event launched the crisis: on 27 August 2015, at the edge of an Austrian highway, about fifty kilometers south of Vienna, 71 corpses, belonging to men, women, and children who wanted to reach Europe fleeing from civil war in Syria, were found in a truck.² Since that moment, the phenomenon of migration into Europe through the Balkan route has fully manifested its tremendous dimensions in Austria and has drawn the attention and the fears of European governments and citizens. The Balkan route, however, is not the only way into Europe: there are many other courses which were marked by similar individual stories shocked by wars, famine, and poverty. Italy, for instance, is the first arrival point of the central route of the Mediterranean, which is composed of the stream of boats that travel from the coasts of north Africa to the Italian and Maltese coasts through the Sicilian Channel. A big accident which shook public opinion on sea crossings and turned them into important arguments also occurred in Italy: the sadly famous "tragedy of Lampedusa".³

1 Also known as the European crisis of refugees.

2 Über 70 tote Flüchtlinge im Burgenland: Miki-Leitner will Anlaufstellen an EU-Grenze, in "Der Standard", 28 August 2015. When not stated otherwise, translations are by the authors and translators of the catalogue.

3 The "tragedy of Lampedusa" occurred on 3 October 2013 a few miles from Lampedusa's harbour, where a Libyan boat transporting migrants sank, resulted in 366 deaths and about 20 missing persons. There were 155 survivors, 41 of whom were minors. See *La strage di Lampedusa, polemica sui soccorsi. Indagati i migranti nel giorno della commozione*, in "Il Corriere della Sera", 5 October 2013.



Time's Up, *Mind the Map*, (exhibition view Praga), 2016
mixed materials, various dimensions
courtesy of Time's Up and Österreichisches Kulturforum – Prague

Mind the Map, a narrative environment which describes the movement of migrants across the Mediterranean and the European policies about migration, requests and concessions of asylum, is structured and organized beginning with stories of the sea across this route by the artistic collective Time's Up.⁴

Time's Up is a group of artists with a very flexible structure. It defines itself as a "laboratory for the construction of experimental situations" and is composed of a central nucleus surrounded by many friends and collaborators who contribute, with their abilities and interests, to the realization of many projects signed by the group. For more than twenty years, Time's Up has been active in Linz, Upper Austria, and, during its life, it has built a network of institutions and international partners with whom it conducts long-term research projects. These complex analyses find their representation in many forms: exhibitions, installations, performances, publications, conferences, and laboratories.

Mind the Map is a narrative environment in between exhibition and theatre performance without actors. The exhibition consists of a series of installations which describe the imaginary but plausible story of Christine Kollan, daughter of a rich Austrian business man, who lives in Napoli and often sails with her sailboat. During a sea excursion, the main character runs into a migrants' boat in danger and, following her good sense and

4 www.timesup.org.

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Time's Up, *Mind the Map*, (detail), 2015
mixed materials, various dimensions
courtesy of Time's Up



Time's Up, *Mind the Map*, (detail), 2015
mixed materials, various dimensions
courtesy of Time's Up

A Talk with Time's Up

In your works the participation of the spectator is central, not to say fundamental. In Mind the Map he/she is involved in first person in a kind of cathartic process which forces him/her to investigate thorny themes and he/she is invited to take a position on them.

Starting from the first projects we developed together, we have always tried to involve the visitor in a very physical way. We have never been interested in working in a purely digital or virtual world: it is not big enough for us. Therefore, we have immediately converted flows of digital information into physical space: multichannel acoustic installations, tangible objects, large wide video projections... we try to go beyond computers.

Our main purpose is to turn passive visitors into active ones. The more they get involved, the more information, thoughts, and emotions they experience from our installations.

Recently a lot of other artists are approaching the theme of migration, often by playing with the aesthetic and the rhetoric dimensions of tragedy. In Mind the Map you deal with migration in an unusual way: tragedy is present, but it is not on display. You talk about European citizens, not about refugees. Why did you choose this approach?

Somebody criticized us because the exhibition cannot possibly have the same power in Greece. The story is not told from the point of view of a Greek citizen or of a migrant, but from the point of view of a central European citizen, because it is the only one we know. We cannot pretend to be migrants because we cannot fully understand them. Doing so would be inappropriate and misleading. From the beginning of the project the decision was very clear: taking the point of view of migrants was not allowed.

How did you build the story? How much of it is invented and how much could be true?

The interesting thing is that there is no proof that a private ship, while sailing on a pleasure cruise, ran into migrants and saved them. Organizations or fishermen usually do it. The rescue by a private citizen, however, should be a likely event, or at least it should be possible, but it has never happened. In our opinion this fact is unusual, because statistically it should have happened. Therefore, we have structured the part of the rescue and the imprisonment around the actual experiences of fishermen. Everything we say is true: being unfairly arrested happened and keeps happening to Tunisian fishermen. Moreover, once released after three to six months of

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Time's Up, *Mind the Map*, (installation view in Nantes), 2015
mixed materials, various dimensions
courtesy Time's Up

detention, they find only the frames of their ships which have been looted and damaged by them. Thus fishermen are left with enormous debts to pay in order to rebuild their ships. Their entire existence is destroyed just because they did the right thing, because they saved some people from drowning, which is, besides, one of the laws of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The death of the family was the second stage we dealt with. Also in this case there are a lot of contemporary examples. A lot of industries which produce fencing create similar ethical problems. We invented only two facts about the Kollan Fencing: the company becomes responsible for barbed wire imports in Europe - some industries did it but we did not find any documentation that proves it - and it is the first to use "Belgian Gates" - the trunk traps used by Nazis in Normandy - as avalanche protection. There is no proof that this last thing has ever happened, this is the only thing totally fabricated in the story.

Anyway it is plausible. In fact, the architectural structures which "stop something physically threatening" are not numerous and your story is not that far from the reality.

There are a lot of examples of *de-weaponization*, that is, the concept of using military weapons or technologies as tools for activities during a period of peace. As it is said "swords to ploughshares".⁵ There are just as many examples of *weaponisation*, that is the opposite change: the barbed

5 The proverb is from Isaiah 2:3-4.

wire which was used to separate cattle, at some point becomes a weapon. So, back to the story, the main character has to find a balance between her situation and the military history of her family.

Up until now Mind the Map was shown in Linz, Nantes and Prague, which are three nations with extremely different immigration policies. What was the reaction you perceived? Did you notice any singularity in the way the audiences of different nations interpreted the exhibition?

Generally, during the two and a half years of production, the attention on the theme has increased, although it is through no merit of our own. When we started, migration streams were already there, but they had not captured the attention of public opinion and of the media as they do now, constantly appearing on the front page.

In September 2015, in Nantes, visitors asked how we could create the project in such a short time. They thought that the exhibition was the answer to the beginning of the refugee crisis and then that it had been completed in just three or four weeks. Many of them thought that it was a true story and asked where Christine Kollan lived.

Of course we invested a lot of energy in making the plot as realistic as possible: the newspaper clippings we used are printed on real newspaper, with the typical formats and fonts... but we did not expect a similar reaction. The experience in Prague was also interesting, because the Czech Republic has a completely different history of migration policies. Some of the visitors remembered that very little time had passed since the Czech Republic had opened its borders, and now, suddenly, Europe is building fences again and barricades between the nations.

What about San Vito...We are very happy to display *Mind the Map* in the nation where most of the story we tell is set. After many changes in the European policies about migration and in the public perception of the theme, with overall tendencies which are even more terrifying than the tendencies which stimulated the project, we are still asking the same questions: which society, which world do we want to live in? What can we do to change them into something we like? How can we make our world a better world?

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Time's Up, *Mind the Map*, (detail), 2016
mixed materials, various dimensions
courtesy of Time's Up and Österreichisches Kulturforum – Prague

Punto Fermo

GIORGIO VALVASSORI

Giorgia Gastaldon

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Áskesis (2002), from the Greek word for “ascension”, is a work by Giorgio Valvassori present in the collection *Punto fermo*: two wooden parallel bars, covered with acacia thorns, placed next to two red velvet rings. It is evident that neither of these pieces are here employed with gymnastic purposes: the parallel bars are blocked by a beam and the thorns discourage their being grasped, while the rings are placed too low and are too fragile for the performance of any exercise whatsoever. The title, next to these two objects, gives the first key to unlock the meaning of the work: as a matter of fact, the Greek term “*áskesis*” originally defined the exercise and the practice necessary for the mastering of a technique, such as that of athletes, for instance.

Thus a first contradiction starts making its way through our observation of the work and uncovers part of Valvassori’s philosophy of art: we are precluded such exercise, such practice, at least in merely physical terms. In being so recognisable, however, these objects invite us to deny their use, their appearance and to reconnect our thinking, that is to say, through a form of contemplation, to rejoin their etymological roots. The history of European civilization saw the meaning of the word “ascension” change from the sole exercise of the body for the training of the mind to the Christian concept of control over and detachment from the body, of self-training in the light of salvation; in the same way these objects remind us of the complicated cultural relationship we establish between body and mind, between discipline and liberation.

Valvassori’s poetics could be set in the straightforward and paradoxical dialectics in which *Áskesis* lies as well. The visitor transcends the magnetism, the representational quality, the fascination provoked by the installations created by this artist in order to embrace a more general reflection, discovering that if these objects can be transcended

it is thanks to their polysemic nature, their ability to establish even contradictory cross references.

On the other hand, Valvassori considers art as a practice constantly wavering between two irreconcilable necessities: that of a discipline that needs a certain degree of technique and, on the other hand, a permanent liberating power that does not want to be constrained by too much practice. For these reasons and many more, Valvassori is certainly one of the most emblematic artists of his generation. Since its appearance on the artistic scene towards the end of the '70s, his work has always been characterised by the refusal of a one-way preference in terms of techniques, and by a polysemic and open idea of iconicity and, or, of executive process. Time after time, over forty years of his career, and according to the unitary principle of a freedom of action, Valvassori has reinvented his own work, transforming it according to the sensitivity of the different contexts and moments in which he operates. Valvassori's personal exposition is set up around the collection *Punto fermo* and it particularly focuses on the artist's careful attention to location.

Other installations have been placed in Essiccatoio Bozzoli and other places in San Vito al Tagliamento, chosen from among some of the most relevant works of his artistic career, and they reveal their ability to relate to new contexts and, at the same time, to transform those settings, to turn them into a rope stretched towards imagination and ready to be grabbed. Valvassori's presence at Palimpsesti 2016 is not just a temporary event. We strongly believe that among the many results of an exposition, especially when it is characterised by such continuity as is the case with Palimpsesti, there is the necessity of promoting those artists who belong to the "territory", in order to show how much they are able to trespass those very boundaries. Thus, the presence of Valvassori's works in San Vito al Tagliamento also coincides with the acknowledgement of a double consequence: on the one hand, there is an artist who was able, already forty years ago, to introduce new practices and new approaches towards sculpture and beyond, especially in a geographical context that delayed such a process, and, on the other hand, there is a town that, more than twenty years ago, opened its doors to contemporary art.

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Giorgio Valvassori, *Áskesis*, 2002
wood, thorns, iron, velvet, various dimensions

CONTEMPORANEA[mente]

Giorgio Valvassori in San Vito al Tagliamento: artistic dialogues between past and present

Antonio Garlatti

Recently, the archeological area of the Palatine hill in Rome hosted an exhibition entitled *Par tibi, Roma nihil* (Nothing is like you, Rome), taken from a quote by the Bishop of Tours, Hildebert de Lavardin, who visited the city around 1100.

The aim of the exhibition was to put the prestigious cultural heritage of ancient Rome in relation with works by famous contemporary artists. Even if, beginning in the twentieth century, the Avant-gardes wanted to break with the past, contemporary art has never ceased to be compared with ancient art.

However, in the context of this relationship, which is sometimes incidental and sometimes forced, it is important that historic sites do not become a mere setting of a present where art is self-referential.

In San Vito, the permanent installation of a series of works by Giorgio Valvassori tries to establish a dialogue between the past (monuments and historic sites) and the present (installations and works by the artist) in order to open the town to new artistic expressions.

Leaving aside the caustic statement by Umberto Eco, who affirmed that «everything can have mysterious similarities with everything»,¹ in an hypothetical itinerary, we liked the idea of connecting, in meta-historical terms, the container to the content.

Therefore, looking at the Loggia Comunale, located almost at the center of the main square, and, more precisely, looking up to the ceiling with wooden beams, we see a sort of big nest, geometrically composed of open cells, which contains a spherical and dark nucleus with a mantle of hairs. With *Begreifen* (Grande nido - big nest in English -, 2009) Valvassori counterposes, through his usual destabilizing strength, the rationality of the structure to the deep isolation of a primordial body. The limitations of

¹ U. Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum*, p. 139.

the human being, of his reason (the nucleus), bumps into the fitful desire to know, to plan, to dominate, and to absorb everything (the open nest). Therefore the title of the installation, *Begreifen* (to understand), also acquires an opposite semantic meaning.

On the other hand, the Loggia Comunale, already documented in 1298 but rebuilt in the first half of the fifteenth century, counterposes in a similar way the emptiness of the open space to the fullness of the room on the first floor. In the former, corn seeds and vegetables were sold in the markets - established in 1341 - and Jews had their pawnbrokers, while the latter, once the meeting place for the "Magnifica Comunità di San Vito", has now been transformed into a social theater, in the style of Venetian ones. The Loggia Comunale also used to contain the courthouse and the records office and so has been a site of conflict for centuries.

Not far from this building, on the opposite side of the square, there is palazzo Altan-Rota, which was built, in the style of Venetian manor houses, in the second half of the 1400s by Count Matteo Altan di Salvarolo and is presently used as the municipal seat.

In the hall on the second floor, which possibly dates to the first half of the nineteenth century (around 1845-1850), the art-work *Sfere* (1983), composed of terracotta globes, is displayed on the Venetian terrace floor. The globes, all similar but not identical, proudly show their diversity. Some of them are whole while others have holes, cuts, and decorations which dig circular or irregular grooves into the surface highlighting their emptiness, the negation of matter. Nothing is similar, everything is unraveled in a continuous alternation between positive and negative spaces, in which the surrounding space also actively participates. The painted walls frame the panorama of Friulian and Veneto territory as an architectural scene with wide curtains, while the ceiling, which has a central octagonal multilinear cornice, is open to allow glimpses of the blue sky.

The garden behind the palace is composed of elements in the Italian style, such as symmetric walkways, a circular fountain with water lilies, and stone statues, as well as elements of the English garden, such as trees growing wild and shrubs irregularly placed, ruins (the angular tower of the town walls dating back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries). In the high trees of the garden a new kind of caterpillar, not yet classified nor studied by men, has spun large cocoons away from prying eyes. Light, seeping in through their golden tangles, highlights those precious twines of strings. Curiosity is strong: what will arise from that metamorphosis? Through *Paradiso* (1990), Valvassori leads us to reflect upon the origin of things, where everything is pure and immaculate like the garden of Palazzo Altan-Rota. At the same time, however, he incites us to improve like those cocoons, to ennoble ourselves, to protect every precious gift we receive and to protect nature, in order to make it a new Eden. Even if humankind tries to dominate it, to trap it, to imprison it with iron stocks as in *Inferno* (1994), nature will continue to grow and live in a sort of

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hortus conclusus (enclosed garden).

During the Renaissance many parts of the historic centre of San Vito were used as gardens and parks. As a matter of fact, this is what Girolamo Cesarino, a writer from San Vito, wrote in 1582-1583, in a historic treatise in the form of a dialogue *Dell'origine del castello di San Vito* (About the origins of San Vito's castle): "What will I say about the gardens of private houses? And what about the many vegetable gardens? As far as concerns this subject, we do not have anything to envy in the other noble cities of Italy, and of the entire world".²

Moving to the Italian garden of palazzo Tullio-Altan, a seventeenth-century palace, we find the art work *Senza titolo* (1989). The semi-circular garden, designed in 1692 by the architect Domenico Rossi, is adorned with a statue by Bortolo Cavalieri and decorated with frescoes by the German painter Anton Joseph. The Italian garden and the English garden are separated with boxwood trees, and encircle an iron sheet bent in an arc, slightly lowered on one side, which instills an evident feeling of tension in the observer. This initial tension is softened by the sound of the first notes, which are spread through the air in a sweet melody harmoniously reproduced by that scenographic baroque acoustic machine - once used by the Altan family "to recite and to play music".

Finally, in piazzetta Stadtlohn, whose name alludes to the twinning with the German city of Westphalia in North Rhine, we find the installation *Boudoir, Separé* (1991). A wing, slightly wavy, composed of vertical iron planks, interrupts our gaze. It tries to create a sort of private, intimate place inside an open space such as the square. It tries to produce a boudoir, where the observer can watch the installation through the soul and not through the mind, far from rigid frames and easy prejudices. It is almost like re-experiencing that sense of interior calm which the Dominican Fathers of San Lorenzo found in the quietness and spiritual peace of their cells and of their monastery, delimited by grates, built next to the current square around the end of the fifteenth century.

In a hypothetic and artistic journey through past and present, we tried to give the spectator the possibility to connect works from different ages at the same time (in a contemporary way: "contemporaneamente"). In this process, the contemporary dimension of the works by Valvassori, acute observer of location and environment, has been put in relation with San Vito's historic and artistic buildings and artifacts, which, transcending the chronological limit, now live in an endless and timeless dimension that art truly desires. *In dubiis libertas* (freedom lies in doubt).

2 G. Cesarino, *Dell'origine del Castello di S. Vito*, p. 53.



Giorgio Valassori, *Sfere*, 1983
terracotta, Ø 60 cm
(picture by Michele Tajariol)

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Giorgio Valassori, *Inferno*, 1994
shaped iron,
Ø 38, 45, 60, 80, 90, 99 cm



Giorgio Valassori, *Paradiso*, 1990
iron, copper
185x55, 109x47, 49x37, 39x33 cm
donation of Laura Safred

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