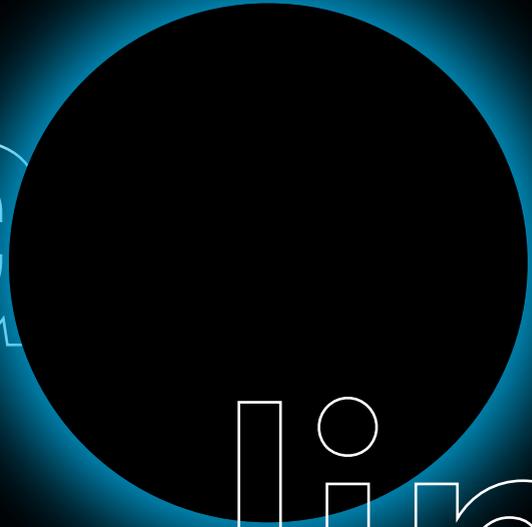


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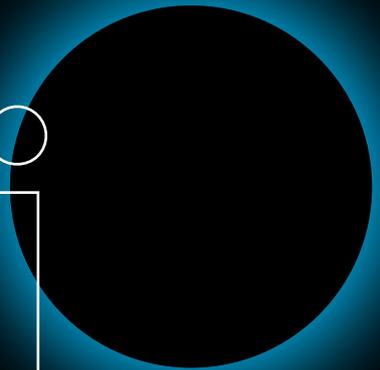


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# Palinsesti 2018

13 November 2018 – 7 January 2019

San Vito al Tagliamento (PN)

a project by Giorgia Gastaldon

## NOTTURNI

**Melancholia** – Silvia Mariotti

**Atlas** – Maria Elisabetta Novello

curated by Giorgia Gastaldon

Castello

Chiesa and Santa Maria dei Battuti

## Ciò che resta del fuoco

curated by Giorgia Gastaldon

Castello

## PUNTO FERMO: Paolo Comuzzi

curated by Giada Centazzo and Antonio Garlatti

Essiccatoio Bozzoli

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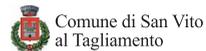
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I believe that I can well interpret the feelings of the entire community by offering my best wishes to this edition of *Palinsesti*, for the tenth anniversary of the *Premio In Sesto*: in fact, it was 2008 when the then curator Denis Viva – to whom we send our greetings – started an innovative journey by inviting artists to present a project for the installation of a sculpture in historical places in our town, thus grasping the sense of a virtuous dialogue with the municipal administration. An ambitious process, in the general context of the exhibition, that combined historical-artistic enhancement and research, and aimed at the improvement and knowledge of contemporary art. This process began with a new understanding among cultural actors, civic administration and the public, which resulted in the unique and now well-established, practice of the popular and democratic vote for the selection of the winner.

Having reached this milestone today, the prize is confirmed by its international formula. Indeed, three artists from three different regions of the Alps-Adriatic Euroregion are competing: Veneto, North Rhine-Westphalia and Carinthia.

This year, 2018, is also relevant for the *Punto Fermo* collection, with the publication of the catalogue of the works that are part of this civic collection.

It is also nice to underline that this edition returns, among the locations of the exhibition, to the Complex of the Battuti. The Church of Santa Maria, with the "most beautiful sky in Friuli" painted by Amalteo, is the exhibition site of an addition of the two solo exhibitions dedicated to the nocturnes, while the inner court is the site dedicated to the installation of the work winner of the *In Sesto Prize*. It is evident, therefore, that the festival *Palinsesti* continues to be among the most important expressions of what we can define the signature style of the project "San Vito town of art, music and culture". Furthermore, back when no one would have imagined, we have already tried to effectively practice what is now known as the "valorization of cultural heritage in terms of tourism", by creating opportunities for continuous new discoveries within the cultural heritage already in existence. It is from this programmatic approach, aimed at promoting artistic expressions, that arises the creation of a new cultural heritage, in an attempt to become a leader in the Region for initiatives that promote contemporary art practices: in the present, for the future.

The Mayor of  
San Vito al Tagliamento  
**Antonio di Bisceglie**

# INTRODUCTION

Giorgia Gastaldon

With its rich program of exhibitions and events, the contemporary art festival *Palinsesti* has reached its thirteenth edition in 2018. This year, once again, national and international artists are involved in five different locations distributed between San Vito al Tagliamento and Pordenone.

As marked by a long-established tradition, the main event of the 2018 edition of *Palinsesti* is represented by an experimental expositive project, which aims at analysing an existential and aesthetic theme by means of the tools of contemporary visual research. For this edition, the exhibition that has been set up is entitled *Notturni* and consists of two solo exhibitions. In this project, two Italian visual artists, Silvia Mariotti and Maria Elisabetta Novello, whose research is internationally recognised, confront each other in a game of proximity and difference. The project, whose title means *Nocturnes*, is curated by Giorgia Gastaldon and is organised into two solo exhibitions, which explore the theme of man's relationship with the universe, considered as spatial and temporal infinity, but also as the place of the "unknown", of spirituality, of the origin of everything, as well as of possible catastrophe.

The solo exhibition by Silvia Mariotti is entitled *Melancholia*, after Lars von Trier's 2011 film of the same name. In this project, conceived and realized specifically for the historical spaces of the ground floor of the old castle of San Vito al Tagliamento, the theme of the universe is addressed as a place of the unknown and of an always-possible catastrophe. The atmosphere recreated by the artist is one of suspension and restlessness: an aftermath scenario of spatial breakthrough that "imitates" and reconstructs a visit to a night garden. In this space, the visitor is invited to face, and eventually solve, some of his/her most hidden existential doubts, in a poetic path of acceptance of our precariousness and existential transience.

This first proposal is countered by Maria Elisabetta Novello's solo project, which develops in several locations and with different schedules and methods. The title of this exhibition – *Atlas* – wants to highlight the ancient human practice of resorting to celestial maps and to the reading of the stars in order to seek orientation through overland and overseas journeys. Here the night sky is interpreted as the paradigm of the elusiveness of time and space, but also, simultaneously, as a place of knowledge and orientation. *Atlas* is also the title of a site-specific installation created specifically for the floor of the Church of Santa Maria dei Battuti: a work in which Novello's contemporary research relates to the famous frescoes by Amalteo, in a short circuit between history and present, above and below, top and bottom, front and reverse. Novello is also the author of a performative project entitled *Ciò che resta del fuoco* (*What remains of fire*), created in collaboration with the contemporary

dance company AREAREA. The performance is scheduled as a corollary to the exhibition and it reflects on the theme of light and darkness by reading fire itself, involved in the action of the performers, as a primordial and ritual element. In this way, *Palinsesti* also continues its activity, started in 2017, of production of performances poised between artistic action and contemporary dance. With this practice, the festival also intends to support the excellence of contemporary dance in the Region, allowing the artists to create performance projects that will then continue and be replicated in other exhibition contexts, both national and beyond.

Furthermore, this year the work of investigation focused on the collection of contemporary art *Punto Fermo* continues in the spaces of the Essiccatoio Bozzoli (a former cocoon drying room). This collection was assembled in 2011, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of contemporary art in San Vito al Tagliamento, with the intent to make eternal what is contemporary today and will tomorrow be part of the historical memory: for this reason, it collects the works of some of the most representative artists active in the region. In 2014, the collection was permanently placed in one of the rooms of the Essiccatoio Bozzoli where, in a continuity of intent and space, an annual survey on the activities of the artists represented in the last editions of *Palinsesti* has begun. In 2018, it was decided to focus on the visual research of artist Paolo Comuzzi, with a solo exhibition curated by Giada Centazzo and Antonio Garlatti. Thus, the work *Incontri quasi possibili lungo gli assi cartesiani* (2011), conserved in the *Punto Fermo* collection, is placed in direct dialogue with the audio-visual installation *Diario d'impermanenza*, created specifically for this edition of the exhibition. This work, which is unprecedented, allows us to combine, in a spatial and conceptual proximity, the artist's previous production with his most recent reflections.

Finally, the event is completed by the Premio in Sesto /In Sesto Prize - curated by Michela Lupieri - an initiative that, having reached the important milestone of ten editions, has confirmed and consolidated its international formula. Once again, this year, the Prize aims at its ambitious and usual commitment of promoting the meeting and exchange between international artists and the regional territory. The participants for the 2018 edition come from North Rhine-Westphalia, Veneto and Carinthia, respectively. The choice has fallen on these geographical areas because they are included, with Friuli, in the Alps-Adriatic Euroregion and in the twinning network of San Vito al

Tagliamento. The award follows its usual formula: each of the three artists proposes a project of sculpture and installation designed for the garden behind the church of Santa Maria dei Battuti and the public will be able to express their preference, thus establishing which is the work to be carried out in the coming year.

This section is also accompanied by a solo exhibition by Mathilde Caylou, winner of the 2017 edition of the same prize. This solo exhibition takes place in the spaces of the Fondazione Furlan in Pordenone and is curated by Giada Centazzo.

«Nature contains the elements of colour and form of all pictures – as the keyboard contains the notes of all music – but the artist is born to pick, and choose, and group with science, these elements, that the result may be beautiful – as the musician gathers his notes, and forms his chords, until he brings forth from chaos, glorious harmony»<sup>1</sup>.

J. Whistler, 1885

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

The main expositive project of the 2018 edition of *Palinsesti* is *Notturni* (Nocturnes) and it consists of two solo exhibitions by Silvia Mariotti and Maria Elisabetta Novello which are dedicated, as the very title suggests, to the analysis of the aesthetic and existential paradigm – typical of European Romanticism – of the nocturnal, conceived more as a field of study and research than as a standardised element that is structured into static ways and static poetic forms.

Therefore, we are not in the presence of a project that wants to “define” and establish fundamental points of an apparently distant aesthetic formula: on the contrary, these two exhibitions have only the ambition to “suggest” contemporary and future developments starting from this term – musical, poetic, pictorial – apparently so obsolete and outdated. This project builds a thematic continuity with the collective expositions which were organized as part of the past two editions of *Palinsesti* (*Fracturae* in 2016 and *Mirabilium archiva* in 2017), precisely for the use – in a contemporary art festival – of an aesthetic paradigm typical of the nineteenth century, such as that of the “sublime”. As a matter of fact, in 2016, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of Friuli’s major earthquake, the theme of the earthquake was considered, in the collective exhibition *Fracturae*, in relation to the paradigms of the sublime and resilience.

The following year, with *Mirabilium archiva*, the relationship between the needs of contemporary art, archival research and the natural world was examined, looking at how humans have always been connecting with the planet Earth. As a counter melody to this last project in particular, the 2018 exhibition thus focuses on the ways with which people have always equally observed the sky, the universe, and the astral world: the quintessential places of (spatial and temporal) infinity, of the unknown, of spirituality, of the final catastrophe that is always possible and imminent.

The two invited artists – Silvia Mariotti and Maria Elisabetta Novello – were selected for this project because they had already chosen to analyse the theme of the nocturnal independently in their activity and in their past

<sup>1</sup> J. McNeill Whistler, *The Ten O’Clock Lecture*, Public Lecture, Prince’s Hall, Piccadilly, London, 20 febbraio 1885.

artistic research. However, on this further occasion, both exchanged views, with this same leitmotif, resorting to different and original shades and perspectives. The final results – that is to say, the two solo exhibitions entitled respectively *Melancholia* and *Atlas* – highlight how a common theme could lead to considerations that are very distant and different from each other, although their outcomes maintain a consistent rigour of research and a total coherence with the proposal.

Therefore, the *Notturni* project becomes an experiment on the experience of contemporary art, more broadly conceived. On the one hand, it demonstrates the existence of aesthetic paradigms that become existential, thus going far beyond single fashions and ages. Secondly, this project also reveals the circumstance in which paths, researches and different theoretical sparks can lead two artists belonging to a common generation to reflect on the same theme, following the same prompt given by the same curator, to reach completely different conclusions and outcomes. The curator-artist relationship thus established is one of mutual growth and mutual exchange, but it also requires total respect for the autonomy of the ideational and creative process. Therefore, the exhibition develops a hybrid and double nature, and it must be “viewed” keeping this in mind. As a matter of fact, the theme – and title – *Notturni* is the “hat” under which the two solo expositive projects must be read – and under which they developed. Indeed, the two projects deliberately remain two independent and different “objects” and events, and for this reason they come equipped with their precise and autonomous titles. Behind this – spatial and conceptual – partition of “names” and “titles” there also lies a partition of assignments. The general title of the exhibition was selected in the curatorial study while the two artists were entrusted with the header of the two solo projects: thus they were called to participate, in first person, in the ideation and definition of their own expositive project in a clear attempt to make the curatorial activities of *Palinsesti* more fluid and shared.

*Notturni* is also deliberately an all-female project, both for the artists invited, and for the writer of this text. This choice is not militant, it does not aim to create “protected areas”, it does not follow the dynamics of “female quota”. In a really more trivial way, this decision comes from a simple observation: for thousands of years the study of space and the observation of the universe have been exclusive prerogatives of the male gender – scientists, philosophers, astronomers, sailors – and we are obviously all aware of how the artistic world has been a men’s prerogative as well, for hundreds of years. With *Notturni*, the goal is to overturn this thousand-years-old status quo, favouring an “other” point of view on the same scientific, aesthetic and existential questions.

## NOCTURNE: SOME DEFINITIONS AND A FEW PRECEDENTS

The term “nocturne” first originated in the musical field and it derives from the German locution *Nachtmusik*. In 1700, this expression referred to a composition “destined for night in gardens or in courts of princes and rich patrons, on the occasion of worldly parties or during banquets”<sup>2</sup>. The first ones to use this term as a title of compositions were Joseph and Michael Haydn, followed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms and so on. Then, during the nineteenth century, the genre of the nocturne became a “form of composition of a fragile and pathetic nature, of slow moving, where the dreaming sensibility of the romantic soul found one of its most moving expressions.”<sup>3</sup> The nocturne, a “form of free inspiration”, became particularly well known with the nineteen pieces of the same name written by Frédéric Chopin: as a matter of fact, he introduced some compositional models for the genre which were later carried on by other composers such as Robert Schumann and Giovanni Sgambati. Therefore, in the nineteenth century, the nocturne became the place of the romantic “pathos” par excellence, leading to the transformation of a compositional activity into an atmosphere, such as in the case of *Tristan und Isolde* by Richard Wagner, of an expressive musical spirit into a specific mood<sup>4</sup>.

From this moment on, this term went from the musical context to the pictorial one and in 1871, James Whistler first started the custom of titling some of his works in this manner, such as *Nocturne: Blue and Silver – Chelsea*<sup>5a</sup>. Whistler defined the nocturne mainly as an excuse rather than as a subject for his art: an expedient used to free himself from the obligations derived from the painting’s content and thus being totally free to focus on the painting itself<sup>6</sup>. As a matter of fact, the title Nocturne was always applied to works of landscapes and never to portraits or study of shapes. Nevertheless, in this series by Whistler, humanity is always present and, simultaneously, always absent. As a matter of fact, references to human

2 R. Caggiano, *Notturno*, pnn. Where not stated otherwise, all translations are ours.

3 *Ibidem*.

4 The musical drama *Tristan und Isolde* was written by Wagner between 1857 and 1859 and it was staged, for the first time, in 1865.

5 J. McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne: Blue and Silver – Chelsea*, 1871, oil on canvas, 50,2x60,8 cm, Tate London, cfr K. Lochnan (curated by), *Turner Whistler Monet*, exhibition catalogue, different locations, October 2004 – January 2015, Tate Publishing, London, 2014, pp. 148-149

6 «I have, perhaps, meant rather to indicate an artistic interest alone in the work, divesting the picture from any outside sort of interest which might have been otherwise attached to it. It is an arrangement of line, form, and colour first; and I make use of any incident of it which shall bring about a symmetrical (that is, balanced or harmonious) result. Among my works are some night pieces; and I have chosen the word Nocturne because it generalizes and simplifies the whole set of them» J. McNeill Whistler, *Cross-examination in the Trial of Ruskin for Libel*, in “Daily News”, London, 26 November 1878.

existence are consistently present, because those painted are anthropomorphised spaces such as shores, gardens and parks, but Whistler's artificial objects and buildings are always desolate, perhaps abandoned, as in a posthumous scenario. Obviously, Whistler's nocturnal works had some precedents in art history, and were followed by further developments. As a matter of fact, pioneers of the nineteenth-century genre of the nocturnal surely were Caravaggio, with his innovative enlightenment installations, and Rembrandt, with works such as *The Night Watch* (1642) – now preserved in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam – and *The Storm on the Sea of Galilee* (1633)<sup>7</sup>. Among the many who followed in Whistler's footsteps, we want to mention John Singer Sargent and Vincent Van Gogh, painters of works such as *El Jaleo* (1882) and the internationally known *Starry Night Over the Rhône* (1888), respectively<sup>8</sup>. The nocturne had a conjugation in literature as well and, in particular, in poetry. In this sense, the *Hymns to the Night* by Novalis – a poet, theologian and philosopher who is considered one of the most important proponents of the German Romanticism of the end of the eighteenth century<sup>9</sup> – are fundamental, but also *Canto Notturmo di un pastore errante dell'Asia* (1829-1830) by Giacomo Leopardi. In particular, in this literary work, the Moon is asked, in vain, about the human condition. The night sky reveals itself as the place where all inexplicable mysteries lie. These inexplicable mysteries are connected, in the first place, to the meaning of our single and collective existence, the "where do we come from" and "where are we going" that underlie the projects of Silvia Mariotti and Maria Elisabetta Novello.

## MELANCHOLIA

«That Nature is always right, is an assertion, artistically, as untrue, as it is one whose truth is universally taken for granted – Nature is very rarely right, to such an extent even, that it might almost be said that Nature is usually wrong – that is to say – the condition of things that shall bring about the perfection of harmony worthy a picture, is rare, and not common at all»<sup>10</sup>.

J. Whistler, 1885



Silvia Mariotti, *Volume Notturno (Blu nerastro)*, 2018  
 polistirene dipinto, neon, ferro verniciato, 90x90x150 cm

*Melancholia*, the title chosen by Silvia Mariotti for her own project, takes inspiration from the film of the same name by Lars von Trier (2011), but it represents also, and perhaps especially, the real key of interpretation for all the works exhibited here and for the path they create for the visitor to undertake, thus pushing him/her towards a process of self-reflection and self-transformation.

*Melancholia* is the fantasy name of a huge planet which, at the end of von Trier's movie, collides with planet Earth, thus proclaiming the latter

<sup>10</sup> J. McNeill Whistler, *The Ten O'Clock Lecture*, Public Lecture, Prince's Hall, Piccadilly, London, 20 febbraio 1885.

<sup>7</sup> The current location of this work is unknown: as a matter of fact, it went missing after the theft of 1990, when it disappeared from the rooms of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, where it was preserved.

<sup>8</sup> Sargent's work – preserved in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston – clearly recalls, in his luminist installation, a dramatic effect typical of Caravaggio. *Starry Night Over the Rhône* is now in the collections of the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

<sup>9</sup> *The Hymns to the Night – Hymnen an die Nacht* – were published, in the first official edition, in 1800 and they represent the only finished poetic cycle by Novalis printed while he was still alive.

definitive destruction and the inevitable extinction of mankind. With this reference, the exhibition immediately reveals itself for what it is and for what it aims to be: an exhortation to keep in mind – and to accept – the caducity and the precariousness of our existence, both as individuals and collectively. Therefore, universe and space are presented, in this situation, as the places of that powerful unknown which, within the romantic “sublime”, attracts us and, simultaneously, terrifies us.



What the artist recreates – in the spaces of the ground floor of the Castello – is an atmosphere of suspense and anxiety: a kind of posthumous landscape where human presence, at this point vanished, is suggested only by the fragments of fallen sculptures, as “fallen” to the ground is also a piece of sky, solid and dark, because of the precariousness and the collapse of the normal magnetic field of our atmosphere. As a matter of fact, in a process of spatial and architectural breach, the artist leads us into a garden which is not visited during the day, as would be our routine, but during the night. Therefore, the park – which is the main theme in the film *Melancholia* too – is that place where, in an almost equal and pacific relationship, man and nature coexist. In a post-disaster setting, such as the one described here, the absence of human beings leaves room for the natural element which, slowly but unavoidably, begins to grow again, also regaining control of

all the artificial places which had previously been the almost exclusive prerogative of men.

Coherently with the theme of the renaissance garden and with the “Anglo-Saxon” spirit recreated *ad-hoc* for this project, Silvia Mariotti evokes the

Silvia Mariotti, *10 parsec*, 2015  
 stampa lambda su duratrans, neon, 150x100 cm

so-called *Pope's Grotto* as a further source of inspiration.

Alexander Pope was an English poet and garden architect, particularly interested in the theme of the Italian Renaissance garden. In his property at Twickenham, placed along the Thames in West London where he moved in 1719, he built a grotto, a tunnel whose purpose was to connect the land plot where he had erected his house in a Palladian style with its gardens, properties separated from each other by a public street<sup>11</sup>.

The grotto was a rarity in England in that period: as a matter of fact, although being vastly present in the tradition of the Italian and French Renaissance garden, it was not so widespread in Great Britain. However, according to Pope, this object was a “necessity”, a fundamental space for meditating and creating a sort of “domestic hermitage”. Pope's grotto, in line with his Italian references, was not a narrow, dark, abandoned and forgotten space: on the contrary, this tunnel was characterised by lights and sparkles, caused by the abundant rococo decorations created exclusively with reflective materials such as rocks, flints, metals and shells. Moreover, two slabs of glass whose purpose was to reflect light and the waters that flowed nearby were placed inside, thus creating an effect of breach within the space of the cave, the same artificial breach equally proposed by Mariotti in her “artificial park” of *Melancholia*.

In this simulated garden, the visitor is forced to face – and resolve – some of his existential doubts, in an escalation that starts from the single questions of the individual to questions regarding the future of the whole planet and of the entirety of mankind.

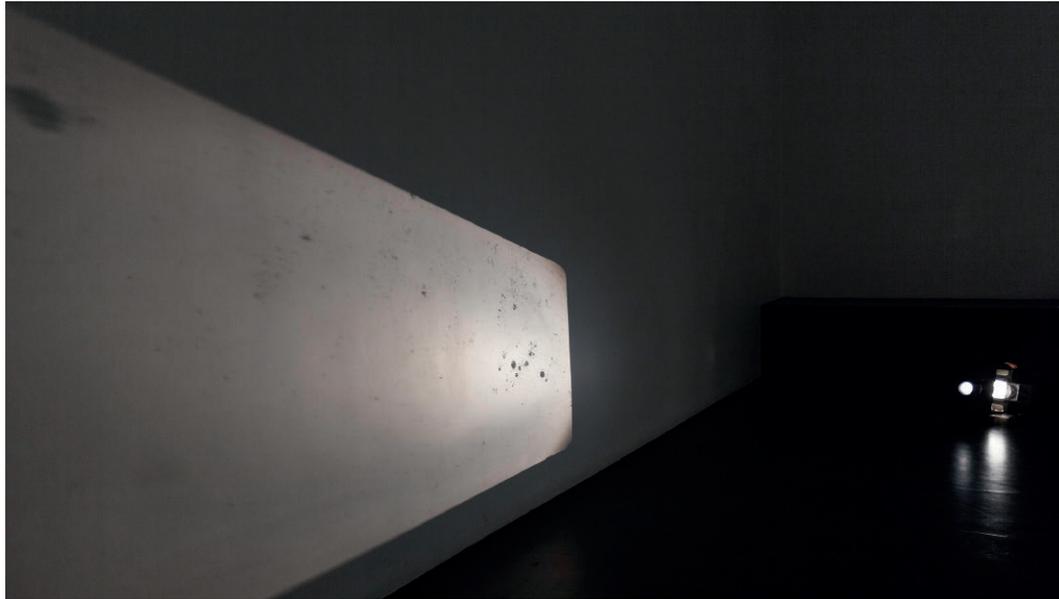
Eventually, this is solved thanks to the mediation of poetry, which becomes the most suitable context for the exercise of memory and recollection, as well as the perfect place to further strengthen and appreciate the metaphysical sense of our existence.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Pope's Grotto. A source of inspiration and contentment 1720 – 1742: <http://www.twickenham-museum.org.uk/detail.php?aid=9&cid=1&ctid=2>.

## ATLAS

«What are you doing, moon, up in the sky? What are you doing, tell me/ Silent moon?/ You rise at night and go, Observing the deserts; Then you set./ Aren't you ever tired/ Of playing the eternal byways? Don't you get bored? Do you still want/ To look down on these valleys?/ The shepherd's life/ is like your life. He rises at first light/ Moves his flock across the fields, and sees/ sheep, springs, and grass; Then, weary, rests at evening/ and hopes for nothing more./ Tell me, moon, what good/ is the shepherd's life to him, Or yours to you? Tell me: where is it heading/ my brief wandering,/ your immortal journey?»<sup>12</sup>

G. Leopardi, 1829-1830



Maria Elisabetta Novello, *Polveri*, 2018 (particolare)  
installazione site specific, proiettori, diapositive e polveri

*Atlas* is the title chosen by Maria Elisabetta Novello for her expositive project, which takes place – in a fragmentation of times, modalities and places – in the 2018 edition of *Palinsesti*.

The term “atlas” has had numerous and different meanings, uses and interpretations throughout history. For example, originally, Atlas was a character of Greek mythology: a titan, king of Mauritania, considered to be the first to study the science of astronomy. According to Homer, he was one of the giants who supported the columns that the sky rested upon, preventing it from “falling” on the Earth: as a matter of fact, he has always been represented, in Western iconography, as a man who carries the entire globe on his shoulders<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> *Night Song of a Wandering Shepherd in Asia*, 1829-1830. Translated and annotated by Jonathan Galassi; Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> P. E. Arias, *Atlante*, in *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica*, 1958.

In astronomy, Atlas – or 27 Tauri – is the name of a triple stellar system present in the constellation of Taurus, as well as one of the stars that form the open mass of the Pleiades. The same name also defines one of the many craters present on the surface of the moon – a big depression possibly of volcanic origins – and one of the sixty-two natural satellites that revolve around the planet Saturn. Then, the noun “atlas” also derives from the term “atlas”, which generally refers to a collection of maps, created for studying<sup>14</sup>. This name comes from the title of the collection of maps which was devised in 1595 by the Flemish cartographer Gerhard Kramer who had, on his frontispiece, an image of the giant, Atlas. Since then, by extension, all the collections of plates that illustrate spaces or geographical elements are defined as an atlas. In this sense, the celestial atlas makes no exception, and it is thus made of a collection of astronomical maps which reproduce and illustrate more or less wide portions of the sky, showing the position, size and exact proportions of stars, nebulae and star clusters.

Maria Elisabetta Novello’s choice for the title of her exhibition precisely refers to this last object. As a matter of fact, in her expositive project, the artist emphasises the theme of the sky conceived as a night map which, for thousands of years, guided men through their overland and overseas journeys. Therefore, the night here is the metaphor for the moment of biggest uncertainty and unknown for mankind, but which, paradoxically, also represents the chronological moment in which staying on the right path becomes easier. Thus, looking at the night sky, man simultaneously experiences opposite feelings, such as fear and uncertainty, flanked by the certainty of knowledge and the consolation of science.

The second “source of inspiration” of this exhibition also intervenes to reinforce this interpretation: *De la sfera del mondo* (meaning, in Italian, *On the Globe of the World*) a volume by Alessandro Piccolomini – an Italian intellectual, astronomer and archbishop. This work, published in four books in Venice in 1540, represented, along with his other contemporary work *De le stelle fisse* (a work *On Fixed Stars*), one of his first, numerous, astronomical publications<sup>15</sup>. The value of these works did not lie in the innovations of the scientific contents they contained, which mainly represented valid translations of more famous texts, but rather consisted of their author’s ability to mediate complex contents for a public of non-experts, thus resulting in one of the first historic operations of quality scientific translation. Therefore, in this sense, the illustrations accompanying these volumes were extremely important: a large array of celestial maps that enabled the reader to identify the different constellations of stars.

<sup>14</sup> *Atlante*, in *Vocabolario Treccani Online*.

<sup>15</sup> F. Tomasi, *Piccolomini Alessandro*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 83, 2015.

Thus, for Maria Elisabetta Novello the sky is the site of scientific and existential questions. The visit to her exhibition implies that the visitor – one map after another – is willing to begin a journey, both spatial and existential: a path that becomes passage, transformation, interrogation of our deepest self, the one we know almost nothing about and whose origins and final destination we certainly ignore.

→

Maria Elisabetta Novello, *Notturmi*, 2018  
cenere, fuliggine e carbone su plexiglass e carta, 52x37,5 cm



Silvia Mariotti develops her artistic research through different artistic media such as photography and installation. In her works, which are imbued with a strong stylistic coherence, nocturnal reality and the natural world play a fundamental role and represent real leitmotifs which she has been using since her earliest works, up to the latest ones. The night is defined by the artist as a "suggestion holder": a context of mystery, spatial vagueness and time suspension. At nightfall, shapes reveal themselves in a synthetic manner: the uncertain glance at first only grasps the general elements and then discerns deeper truths. Nature, considered as vegetation and natural landscape, is perceived as an archaic and arcane entity. In her works, Mariotti tries to reinstate landscapes and atmospheres in an immersive way, involving all the senses with crepuscular settings, perceptively ambiguous. Another essential element of the artist's works is time, meant as an interval that is necessary to vision so that the eye of the observer gets used to darkness or shadows, defining elements in the scarcity of light, gradually moving from reception to observation and recognition. The production of Silvia Mariotti is always full of erudite references and quotes, which serve as creative background, no matter whether they refer to literature (*Jules Verne*, 2015), art (*Angelico*, 2015) or history (*Aria Buia*, 2015).

The artwork *10 Parsec* (2018) is part of the series *Cieli (Skies)* and represents a portion of firmament fallen onto the ground. Parsec is in fact a unit of measure used in astronomy in order to quantify distance between heavenly bodies. The work is technically composed of a deconstructed light box: it conserves its main constitutive elements intact – photoprint on plastic material and neon tube – but its formal frame, the container, is removed. The photograph is released, emancipated from its support and detached from the wall. When it is modeled properly and receives its own physical dimension, it becomes an installation posed on the ground while a separate neon lights it up from behind. With this work, thanks to a very personal creative solution, Mariotti gives concrete shape to a poetic thought.

The sculpture *Volume notturno (Blu Nerastro) (Nocturnal Volume - Blackish blue, 2018)* derives from the artist's urge to overcome the surface limits



Silvia Mariotti, *Faded Garden (Putto)*, 2018  
emulsione fotografica su statua da giardino,  
60x20x20 cm



Silvia Mariotti, *Faded Garden (Conchiglia)*, 2018  
emulsione fotografica su statua da giardino,  
15x30x40 cm



of a paint as well, and to trespass into the tridimensional space, giving tangible form to the nocturnal tones which characterize her photoprints (green, blue and black tones). The sculptures are true solid projections of nocturnal landscapes. The installation is part of a series of works of the same title and it is made of three-dimensional volumes which were modeled in polystyrene and painted with the crepuscular colors of night, sky and trees brightened by neon light in order to create experience-based sceneries dense with suggestion. As if they were shadows or figures idealistically extrapolated from the photographic works of the artist, these solids are abstract shapes, synthesis of the dialectical relationship between light and shadows which animates Mariotti's whole work. The use of neon, created specifically by an artisan without the standard technique of sandblasting on glass, enables us to see the argon gas in its natural shade; this means to bring an element factually existing in nature into the work and to obtain a cold fluorescence, whose distinctive bluish, almost alien light, and temperature determine a lunar, ethereal, evanescent lighting.

On the other hand, with the photoprint *Lungofiume #2 (Riverside #2, 2018)*, Mariotti creates a prospective breakthrough, aimed at opening a space to enable a glimpse into the external world: a window showing the garden immersed in the night. The employment of cotton paper in the photoprint not only gives the picture a certain pictorial allure, but also contributes to create a vibrating effect of reality.

In the site-specific installation *Faded Garden (2018)*, conceived specifically for the spaces of the old castle of San Vito al Tagliamento, Mariotti creates a spatial setting taking inspiration from the tradition of the Italian Renaissance garden and from the stories related to them. She brings a posthumous scene to life: fragments of statues are abandoned in moss and ivy, sending us back to a reality of the past, already far away and gone. A ruinous, poetic and sublime garden, shrouded by silence. The sculptural fragments – artificial with Renaissance or Neoclassical taste – were treated like supports for the photographs. Through rayographic techniques – consisting of exposing elements of vegetation posed on the emulsified surface of the statues to a light source – the artist has concretely and metaphorically impressed the shadows projected by trees on fragments, as if they were struck by lunar rays, recalling in this way a nocturnal space, in contrast with the estranged daylight of the setting.

[GC]



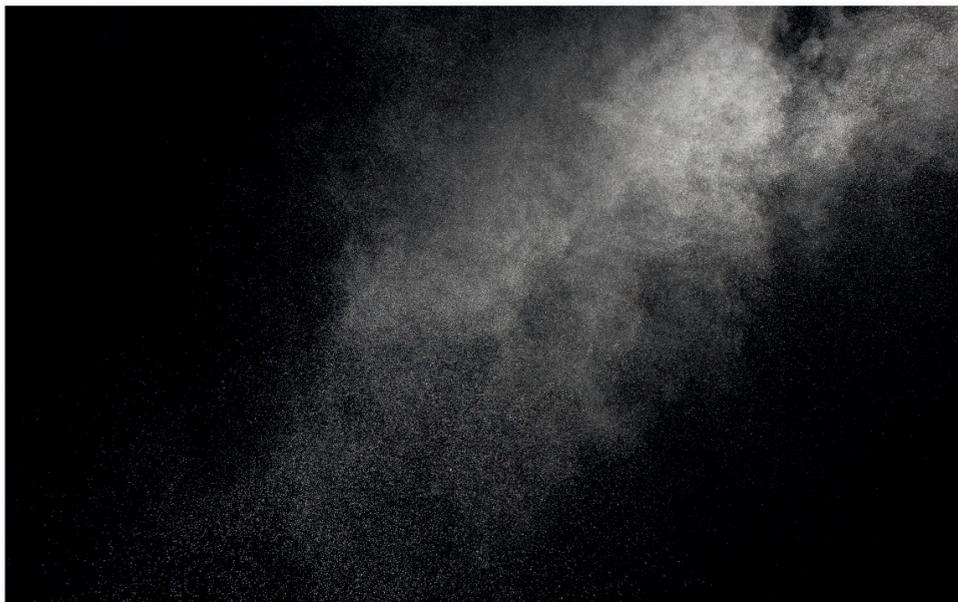
Silvia Mariotti, *Lungofiume #2*, 2018  
stampa inkjet su carta cotone, 210x125 cm

Maria Elisabetta Novello has selected ash and dust as the expressive materials to create her artworks: sculptures, site or time-specific installations and performances. Those unusual raw materials have been moulded in various ways and reshaped in the creative corpus of the artist. In *Paesaggi (Landscapes)* the ash, appearing in different shades of grey, is internally stratified inside parallelepipeds of plexiglass bordered by iron resulting in the creation of sceneries of matter, interior landscapes that come to life. In *Orizzonti (Horizons)* ash is used as pictorial pigment to outline the border between sky and earth. In the project of *Sopralluoghi (Surveys)*, Novello collects dust in a place with scientific accuracy, sampling and storing it for future purposes.

In works such as *Filare Secondo (2008)* – part of a series of installations on the ground– ash is employed in order to create a sort of “crochet embroidery” (the title meaning, in fact, Second Spin). In the series *Opacità (Opacity)*, the ash which was spread over becomes antique patina, encrusted on a mirror’s surface. Ash, inert product of the combustion of wood, is an ancestral symbol of death and rebirth at the same time. Although the result of a destructive process, it fertilizes: it feeds and regenerates. Dust as a composite particulate is in constant and unpredictable transformation, and it embodies the passing of time itself. It has its own inherent temporality; it is the passing of time shaped into matter. It also accumulates on objects and ages them. These unusual creative materials have enabled Maria Novello to perfectly express her poetics and Weltanschauung (perspective of the world) over time, by giving her works and aesthetic research a unique and recognisable identity. Novello has placed at the heart of her artistic practice themes such as the precarity of existence, the never-ending historical development, and the time passing by. The video *Causa-Effetto (2011)* reintroduces images of the homonymous video-installation, presented by the artist for the first time in 2007. Therefore, as can be inferred from the title (*Cause-Effect*), the work grasps the relationship of causality existing between ash, which was posed on the cone of a subwoofer, and the vibration created through the sound produced by the speaker itself. The recorded breathing of the artist broadcasted by the subwoofer actually lifts the ash, creating clouds



Maria Elisabetta Novello, *Atlas*, 2018 (particolari)  
installazione site specific, 650 cm Ø



of particulate. This “dance” of the ash, subjected to sound emission, is filmed by a closed-circuit camera. The obtained image is projected in real time. Novello puts on stage material that becomes shape once again: the spectacle of dust breaking down in infinitesimal particles, in constant comings and goings. A series of fine art prints in pigmented colors or in carbon with the same title, *Causa-Effetto* (2018), derives from the same installation’s moment.

The site-specific installation *Atlas* (2018) is conceived in direct relation with the tondo of Pomponio Amalteo’s canvas in the Church of Santa Maria dei Battuti of San Vito al Tagliamento, where it was conceived and placed. Novello has created “a reversed sky” with cinder and soot, a “star chart on the ground” that can guide us in the journey of life, as a starry sky would have oriented travelers and sailors for centuries in ancient times.

As the artwork alludes to the journey of life and its fundamental questions (Where do we come from? Where are we going?), the intrinsic precarity of the material brings us back to the transience of existence and to the frailness of life. “Dust” and “ash” from which everything comes and everything will ineluctably return to.

The work *Polveri* (*Dusts*, 2018) is obtained by applying particulate and lens-shaped dust on glass, materials which have been previously methodically collected. Passing through the glass, the light of old slide projectors projects their image onto the surrounding space, expanding it. These works visually call to mind constellations, bright planets, and stellar dust. But they also resemble the meteor shower generated by the actual lighting up of space clouds of debris when they collide with the Earth’s atmosphere.

In *Notturmi* (2018), Novello attempts to recreate immaterial skies, unreachable and elusive horizons through the application of ash, soot and carbon on plexiglass, giving form to what is imponderable and intangible. The *Carte del cielo* are rolls of lead instead, on which the artist engraved hallmarks and holes through raised marks, “the astronomical charts” (as evoked by the title of the work) of those months in which the *Palinsesti* exhibition is performed: November, December and January. The choice of lead is meant to recall the “important” presence of the firmament that not only has an unimaginable beauty but hangs, symbolically as well, over our heads, sometimes generating a sense of shock.

[GC]

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Maria Elisabetta Novello, *Causa-Effetto II*, 2018  
stampa Fine Art Giclée a getto d’inchiostro su supporto Vision Matt 300gsm  
100x150cm

Maria Elisabetta Novello, *Causa-Effetto IV*, 2018  
stampa Fine Art Giclée a getto d’inchiostro su supporto Vision Matt 300gsm  
100x150cm

# CIÒ CHE RESTA DEL FUOCO

Giorgia Gastaldon

*Ciò che resta del fuoco (What Remains of Fire)* is a performance which was conceived, created and produced especially for the 2018 edition of Palimpsesti, and actually takes shape as a collateral event of the Atlas exhibition by Maria Elisabetta Novello, dedicated to the theme of the nocturne.

The title of this artistic practice clearly represents an explicit tribute to the book *Cinders* by Jacques Derrida<sup>1</sup>. In this publication, the French philosopher was inspired by the closing sentence – «cinders there are»<sup>2</sup> – from one of his previous writings, *La dissémination* (1972), in order to engage in a plural and choral dialogue of analysis on the true meaning of that same proposition. This dissertation, which develops over many pages, does not come to any conclusion that can be considered definitive or conclusive. Indeed, the true purpose of this book is inevitably the implementation of a form of self-deconstruction, aimed at revealing what is inexpressible and is inexorably inherent in Derrida's own writing and in his most subjective thinking as well.

This work by Derrida relates to Maria Elisabetta Novello's research through the usage of cinder, which has been elected as the preferred material in her artistic practices for several years now. This performance also includes, in particular, a reflection on the theme of fire, which burns and transforms everything.

In a dark and silent room, the audience cannot see anything. At the beginning of the performance the breathing of two dancers, through which their presence is sensed, is the only perceptible element. With a rhythm that becomes more and more rapid, the performers start moving and light matches whose brightness rends for brief moments the darkness of the room, lighting fleeting gestures, faces, and spaces.

An ancestral struggle is played out clearly: dark against shadows, life against death, man against night, knowledge against the most impenetrable mystery.

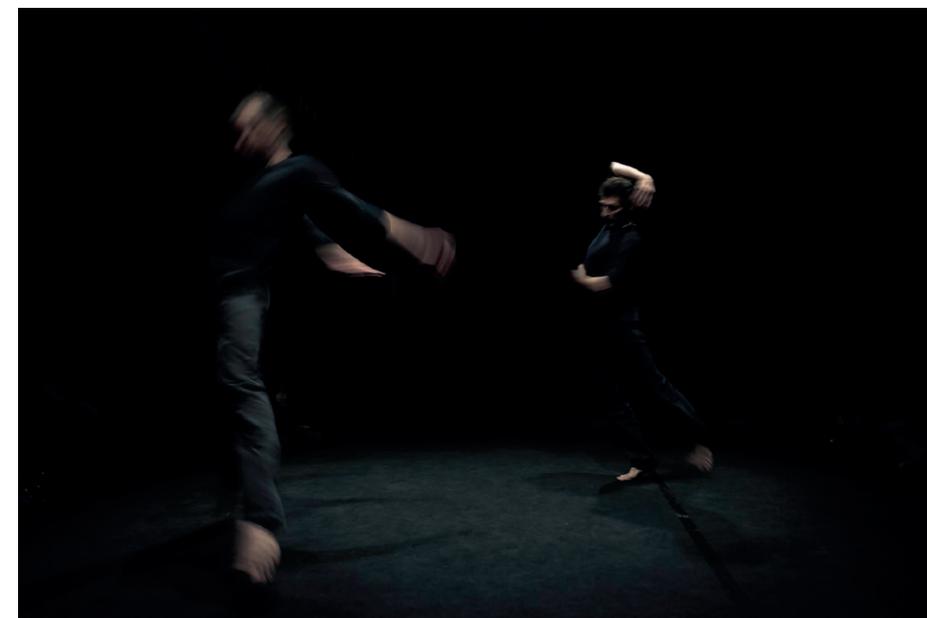
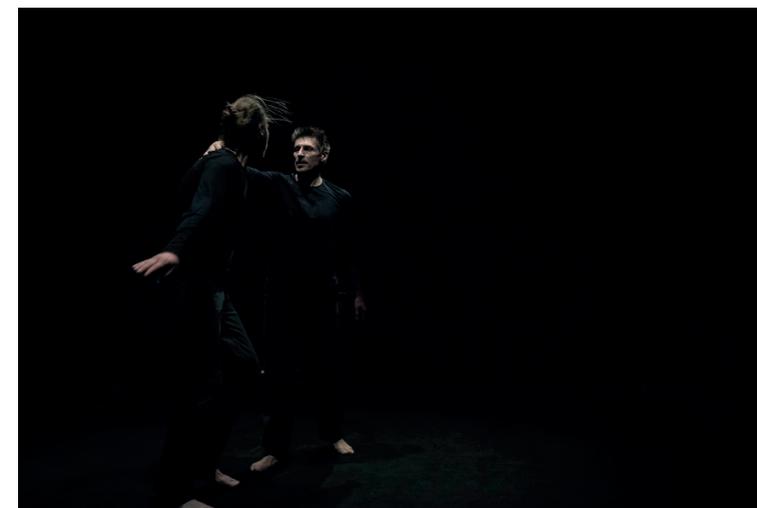
The dancers, in a performance that unfolds itself evidently as a reenactment of an ancient and almost primal rite, are explicit metaphors of human existence: they cannot see and certainly not know where they are going, where they will be led to by their fleeting gestures, however they try to make their way through the dark, to proceed in the most hidden and blackest night.

Fire – always considered as a mythical, mythological and primal element – lights up but yet, at the same time, consumes, generating transformations and irreversible changes of state.

<sup>1</sup> J. Derrida, *Cinders*, NE: University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1991. In the original version, the title was *Feu la cendre* and it clearly included a pun between the different meanings of the term "feu", which in French means simultaneously the past simple of the verb to be, but also "set on fire"

<sup>2</sup> «Il y a là cendre», J. Derrida, *La dissémination*, Editions du seuil, Parigi, 1972. Cfr J. Derrida, *Dissemination*. English translation by Barbara Johnson, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981.

*Ciò che resta del fuoco*  
directed and written by Maria Elisabetta Novello  
with Roberto Cocconi and Luca Zampar  
in collaboration with COMPAGNIA AREAREA



# PUNTO FERMO

## Paolo Comuzzi

Giada Centazzo

It's been twenty years since Paolo Comuzzi presented the multimedia installation *Diventandomenicalunedì* (1998) to the audience of *Hic et Nunc*, in Essicatoio Bozzoli. After exactly two decades, the artist from Udine interrogates this space again through one of his works and with the installation *Diari d'impermanenza* (*Journals of Impermanence*, 2018) Comuzzi once more turns "the dark space of a room, [into] the vessel of a story" all to "discover, create and recreate"<sup>1</sup>. Idealistically, in the rounding of the mark between these two chronological extremes, which are signs of the presence of Comuzzi in San Vito al Tagliamento<sup>2</sup>, it is possible to insert the work *Incontri quasi impossibili lungo gli assi cartesiani* (*Nearly Impossible Meetings on the Cartesian Axes*, 2011), part of the *Punto Fermo* collection since 2011 and visible in the same rooms of the Essicatoio since 2015.

For reasons of thematic similarities, the audiovisual installation is created by editing scans of negatives and slides created by the artist himself or derived from albums of an amateur photographer. The photograms – scenes of daily life, landscapes, glimpses of peripheral locations – slide alternately in horizontal and vertical directions, just as if they were on the "cartesian axes" mentioned in the title. In the flow of the images, the "traces" of the amateur photographer get confused with the "traces" of the artist. In doing so, Comuzzi brings the principle of authorship to an end: the photo shoots mix themselves with photos produced by third parties and any possibility of defined attribution is nullified. The author is thus unspecified. The task of meaning assignment is left to the viewer, who also becomes a co-author himself/herself. Therefore, the "nearly impossible meetings" (this is the meaning of the Italian title of the work) are the ones lying among the sight of amateur photographers, the sight of the artist and the imagination of the viewer.

The sound counter-weight was created specifically for this event and mixed on suggestion of the visible, contributing to produce an effect of continuity. The work is conceived as a space for the vision of micro-films in order to prompt the audience to a more intimate and individual fruition that facilitates identification. The function of the video is to be a receptacle where each observer can project memories and dream: a device of identification (a device generating empathy).

In his works, Comuzzi "puts fragments of potential stories, not yet in act, together"<sup>3</sup> with an archival and documentary attitude, collecting traces of routes and trajectories of the eye which overlap in time.

<sup>1</sup> A. Bertani, *Diventandomenicalunedì*, in *Hic et Nunc 98: rassegna di arte contemporanea*, catalogo mostra/exhibition catalogue, Cordovado, San Vito al Tagliamento, Sesto al Reghena, Valvasone, 18 aprile- 10 maggio 1998, Comune di San Vito al Tagliamento, 1998, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> The *Aprocrifo* video-installation in the Church of Santa Maria dei Battuti in San Vito al Tagliamento is dated 2005 instead and was created during the *Hic et Nunc* exhibition. For details, see the catalogue entry of Angelo Bertani in *Hic et Nunc: rassegna di arte contemporanea*, catalogo mostra/exhibition catalogue, San Vito al Tagliamento, 11 giugno - 12 luglio 2005, Marsilio, Venezia, 2005, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> F. Bonutti, *Paolo Comuzzi*, in P. Toffolutti et al. (eds.), *Specchio, specchio delle mie brame, chi è il più artista del Reale. Artisti allo specchio*, catalogo mostra/exhibition catalogue, Buttrio, Cormòns, Ragogna, Venzone, 7 novembre - 27 dicembre 2009, Neoedizioni, Udine, 2009, p. 69.



Paolo Comuzzi, *Vivi achi*, 2009-2010  
progetto espositivo site specific

Paolo Comuzzi, *Caiero's shoes*, 2007  
installazione video-sonora, materiali vari  
dimensioni ambientali

The diegesis of his narrations is always weakened, the script is "thin and ambiguous"<sup>4</sup>, leaving space for the observer in the reconstruction of the event through inferences, as happened in his other works *Quello che avanza* (1998-2004) or in *Il navigatore guida* (2003).

According to Comuzzi, an artwork should provide different levels of interpretation to the audience, in a stratification of possible meanings which each user has the opportunity to grasp or not, depending on his/her own personal sensitivity and cultural background. The work of Comuzzi often becomes an opportunity to proceed to a reading that lies "beyond", which is sudden and unprecedented. A similar informative logic can be found, for example, in the project *Vivere qui (Living Here)*, introduced at Villacaccia of Lestizza in 2009 and which allowed the audience to see private photographs of members of the tiny community located in Friuli, that were exhibited in the installation and offered for public enjoyment. Not only could the audience identify with the universality of the subjects and with the immortalised themes, but, in a sort of changing contest and condition of fruition, the authors of the shoots were also given the chance to be presented with different interpretations.

Comuzzi's works usually begin with the recovery of repertory images from his personal archives: materials which were forgotten by the artist himself but discovered again in the exact moment he uses them in a creative manner. Other times, Comuzzi's works alternatively take the collections of amateurs or beginners as starting point, or the albums of common people, which attract him and call to him as if they were his. By his own acknowledgement, Comuzzi often does not recognize his archival material, but he identifies himself with one of the others, in a unexpected play between photographic and eidetic memory. The visual material takes shape as the catalyst of thinking and imagination.

In the work *Caiero's Shoes* (2007), an interesting sum of negations can be witnessed: the window with closed shutters; the couch on which is no longer possible to sit because it has been precariously leaned on a screen that cannot be seen; the overturned old shoes with their soles up that cannot be worn anymore, abandoned in the rain. An eulogy to impracticability, to impossibility. The condition of real vision is here clearly denied, the eagerness of purpose is frustrated at the benefit of an ideal vision or introspection: *introspicere*, literally "to gaze within". In the production by Paolo Comuzzi there exists a never ending dialectic between the dimensions of "gaze within" and "gaze outside". Sometimes one takes over the other and sometimes vice-versa. On the rare occasions of the coincidence of the two dimensions, it appears possible to achieve a particular understanding of existence where the subjective "I" who observes, ceases to be important in the observation itself and tends to coincide with what is being seen.

<sup>4</sup> S. Cosulich Canarutto, *Un viaggio*, in Paolo Comuzzi. *Minime tracce*, brochure mostra / exhibition brochure, Spazio FVG, 12 dicembre 2004 - 13 febbraio 2005, Villa Manin, Centro d'Arte Contemporanea, 2004, p. 5.

# DIARIO D'IMPERMANENZA

Antonio Garlatti

«To see the fields and the river  
It isn't enough to open the window.  
To see the trees and the flowers  
It isn't enough not to be blind.  
[...]

*There is only a shut window, and the whole world outside,  
And a dream of what could be seen if the window were opened,  
Which is never what is seen when the window is opened.»<sup>1</sup>*

Fernando Pessoa, *Not enough*

It's time to enter, to begin a new journey. The wooden floor, under the weight of our steps, creaks. Many years have passed and in the vast empty space of the room, the acrid smell of stacks of silk cocoons still welcomes you. Along the walls, countless closed windows deny the external world. However, from those windows a succession of images from memory leads us on an intimate journey, where different moments of life, marked by the course of time, follow one another: daylight, the darkness of night, the sun, the rain, the passing of the seasons.

In the video-installation *Diario d'impermanenza (Journal of Impermanence)*, a site-specific installation for the Essiccatoio Bozzoli (a former cocoon drying room), Paolo Comuzzi wants the space of the room to metaphorically coincide with that of his body, trying to bring us to a different, less predictable and less obvious world because it is «never what is seen when the window is opened»<sup>2</sup>. By using the technique of videomapping, the artist projects the image of windows which are actually present in the room on a wall, but showing other spaces, locations, and worlds. Comuzzi therefore introduces us to his introspective journey that unravels itself in peripheral, border areas, in places –as he states– «neither beautiful nor repulsive, good or evil, where it is not easy to stop by, a sort of limbo filled with traces of humanity, yet still marked by absence, abandonment». A path made standing still. As recalled by Fernando Pessoa: «you want to travel? to travel you simply need to exist. In the train of my body or of my destiny I travel from day to day, as from station to station, leaning out to look at the streets and the squares, at gestures and faces, always the same and always different as, ultimately, is the way with all landscapes. If I imagine something, I see it. What more would I do if I travelled? Only extreme feebleness of imagination can justify anyone needing to travel in order to feel (...) It is only within us that landscapes become landscapes. That's why if I imagine them, I create them; if I create them, they exist; if they exist, I see

<sup>1</sup> Fernando Pessoa, *Selected Poems*. English translation by Richard Zenith, Grove Press, New York, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

them just as I do other landscapes. So why travel? In Madrid, in Berlin, in Persia, in China, at the North and South Poles, where would I be other than inside myself, feeling my particular kind of feelings? Life is whatever we make it. The traveller is the journey. What we see is not what we see but who we are.»<sup>3</sup> The window is a recurring element of Comuzzi's production<sup>4</sup> for its deep symbolism aimed at giving an introspective view and here it represents a line of border between the internal and the external world, an invitation to look through and reflect. The images we see do not correspond always to the reality of things; usually they are in fact the product of our mind and of external conditioning.

In this project by Comuzzi, the emblematic research of Magrittian memory returns again, in which, using the words of the Belgian artist: «...how we see the world: we see it as being outside ourselves even though it is only a mental representation of it that we experience inside ourselves.»<sup>5</sup> Whether we gaze at *The Human Condition* outside ourselves (National Gallery, Washington, 1933; Simon Spierer Collection, Ginevra, 1935), or *The Eulogy of the Dialectic within ourselves* (National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1937), the perception of the real world is being questioned.

In such a manner, inside a window abandoned and no longer used, Comuzzi exhibits, as if it were a painting into another painting, an upside-down image of a landscape where a pair of old shoes are hanging on a nail, threadbare from completing a very long journey but still able to observe, to hold the memory of the journey taken and to lay their eyes on the path that still remains to follow. And in this journey, which has no beginning or end, the artist invites us to see beyond, to overcome any type of border, to use our spiritual eye to follow the traces of memory. The old, no longer used window bears the marks of humanity passing by but, at the same time, it still mirrors the flowing of life itself: in fact, grass continues to grow and move in its delicate swing. The shoes have lost their primary function as well but they remain in contact with the mind which was leading their steps, they have assumed therefore a different purpose, a visual one, able to give new shape to images. As if he were a homo viator, a pilgrim, Comuzzi encourages the visitor to begin a journey of spirit where all flows, *pánta rheî* (meaning "everything flows", as stated by Greek philosopher Heraclitus), but also returns in a continuous *impermanence*<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> *The Book of Disquiet*. English translation by Margaret Jull Costa, London, New York, Serpent's Tail, 1991.

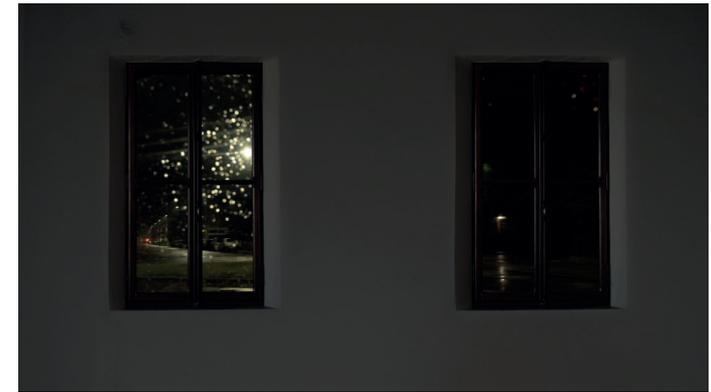
<sup>4</sup> See the docufilms *Viaggi nella parola. I lúcs de poesie* (2008), *Cronaca perduta* (2012) and compare them to the catalogue entry by Giorgia Gastaldon about the installation *Nessun dove*, in D. Viva, R. Del Grande (eds.), *Palinsesti 2010. Storyboard*, catalogo mostra/exhibition catalogue, San Vito al Tagliamento (PN), 9 ottobre - 4 dicembre 2010, Forum, Udine, 2010, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> René Magritte "La ligne de vie" in *Scutenair, Avec Magritte*, p. 90. Quoted from Whitefield, *Magritte*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> According to Buddhism, existence is characterized by three aspects: impermanence (*anicca*), a phase of never ending transformation and change; suffering (*dukkha*) and the non-self (*anatta*).

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Paolo Comuzzi, *Diario d'impermanenza*, 2018  
installazione video-sonora, dimensioni ambientali



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