

l'acqua

Giovanni Anselmo, Lothar Baumgarten, Jason Dodge, Lara Favaretto, Gabriel Kuri, Phillip Lai, Jac Leirner, Robert Mapplethorpe, Paulo Nazareth, Christodoulos Panayiotou, Simon Starling

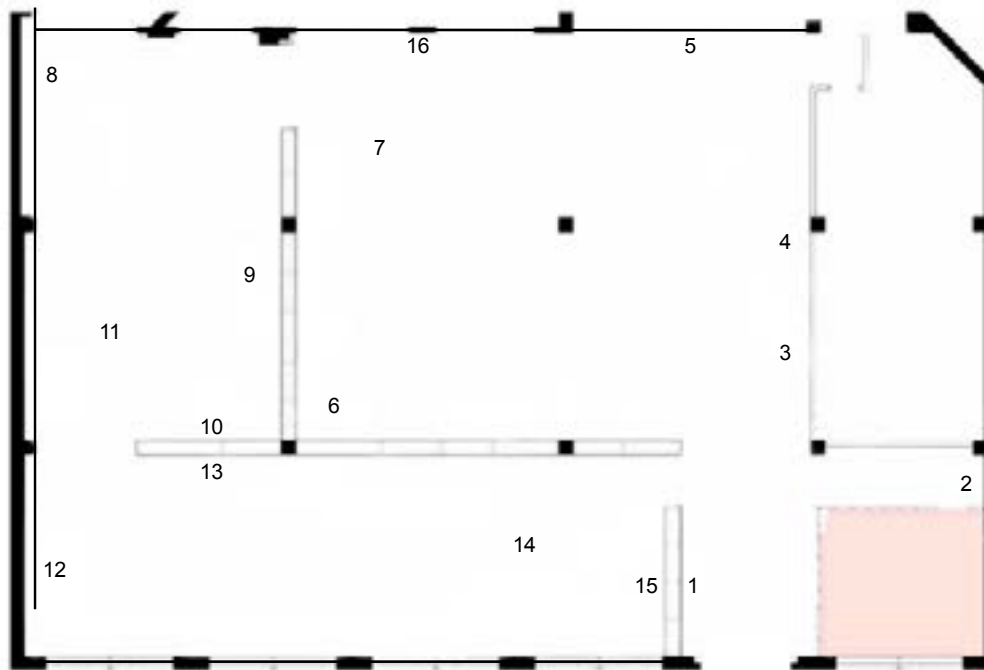
March 2 - May 8, 2021

Galleria Franco Noero is pleased to present *l'acqua*, part of a series of exhibitions on the theme of water held in international galleries as a common project, named **Galleries Curate: RHE**.

Galleries Curate is an informal group of contemporary galleries from around the world, formed as a result of the universally felt global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. The coalition focuses on a supportive sense of community and cooperative interactions through collaborative exhibitions designed to express the dynamic dialogue between our individual programs.

RHE is the first chapter of this collaboration, an exhibition and website themed around a universal and, we hope, unifying subject: water. Like culture, water is never static but always in flux.

With thanks to Galleria Tucci Russo, Torre Pellice/ Torino and Rodeo Gallery, Athens/London for the kind collaboration.



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Giovanni Anselmo

Oltremare all'orizzonte appare

1979-2021

ultramarine acrylic paint on wall

200 x 160 cm

Through the reference to the history of color evoked in the title, the work *Oltremare all'orizzonte appare* pays homage to painting, which, removed from its traditional linguistic system, translates into direction. Ultramarine blue, so called in reference to the origin of the mineral pigment formerly imported to Europe from distant lands - 'beyond the sea', in fact -, relates the limited space of the closed room to a space-time elsewhere; dematerializes the boundaries and widens the gaze towards the immeasurable. The artist does not consider it as a color but as a real piece of land that orients the work towards the infinite cosmic dimension, providing the viewer with the coordinates to orient themselves in turn.

"Moving on Earth - Anselmo reveals - at a certain point we always meet the sea, and beyond that we always encounter an overseas: a place that is further away and that surrounds us, in every point and in every direction. My use of overseas is linked to the fragment of history of the past inherent in this color" (G. Anselmo, in XA Castro, *La energía lírica. Entrevista with Giovanni Anselmo*, in "Lapiz", n. 113, June 1995, rip. in M. Disch, edited by, Giovanni Anselmo, ADV Publishing House, Lugano 1997, pp. 63-64).

Since overseas is in all directions, beyond what we simply see - for Anselmo it is equivalent to an 'adverb of place' -, in each setting the artist decides which particular direction to indicate and whether to indicate more than one at the same time.

Lothar Baumgarten

El Dorado/Apollo

1971

chromogenic print

71,5 x 83,5 cm

73 x 85,5 x 4,5 cm (framed)

edition of 10 + 1 AP

From the beginning of his career as a student of Joseph Beuys' at the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, Baumgarten became interested in ethnography through reading Claude Lévi-Strauss, one of whose main methodologies is the opposition between nature and culture; a theme towards which Baumgarten's work is directed and which is already reflected in his first works, ephemeral in kind, which were photographed and grouped under the title *Culture-Nature, Manipulated Reality* (1968–1972). Baumgarten's oeuvre precedes the interest aroused by indigenous cultures and 'otherness'.

Since the late-1960s, the artist demonstrated a special concern for the qualities of language as behaviour and the sentient qualities of the materials employed - color and form - in works that utilise space as a blank page.

El Dorado / Apollo is part of the series and is a picture that depicts details of the boat with which the artist used to cross the rivers around Dusseldorf, an image indirectly but immediately suggesting water, float and movement, while its crop make it mysteriously elusive and evokes exoticism and faraway places through the presence of a bird's feather.

Lothar Baumgarten

Watertower [Carbon]

1989-1991

wall drawing

exhibited dimensions: 280 x 155 cm

Invited to a solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (1989), Lothar Baumgarten set out on a four-month research to develop a photographic essay about the pioneering industrial achievements during the ‘settlement of the West’. He developed his project *Carbon*, which is composed of photographs, wall drawings, and short stories.

The photographic canon is accompanied by wall drawings, whose typographic segments mirror the construction of bridges, semaphore systems, and rail structures.

“*Carbon* offers no nostalgic railroad romance; it provides a clear account of the consequences of ‘opening up’ Indian territories. The endless freight trains seem to illustrate, above all, the excessive consumption of the new inhabitants, and in this respect the title *Carbon* refers to the continuous need for fuel that is meant to satisfy this hunger... For [Baumgarten] the polyphonic names of the railroad lines reveal their drama and tell the history of the meeting and clashing of different languages and concepts of thought. They call to mind, on the one hand, the Native societies with their tribal names, [and] on the other, they mark the advances of the unstoppable European settlement of the continent.” (Museum De Pont, depont.nl)

Watertower is part of the *Carbon* epic: its graphic composition sketchily evokes the geometry and the tridimensionality of the structure that holds up high a water tower through the use of written words that connect our way of understanding each other in meaning and visually with social, economical, historical and political issues.

Lothar Baumgarten

Pionus menstruus, Brasil 1985

2016

wall drawing

exhibited dimensions: 220 x 220 cm

Pionus menstruus, Brasil is one of Lothar Baumgarten’s “River Pieces”, a series of works in which the title makes reference to the Latin name of a bird. Its feathers donate the color to words painted or transferred onto a wall which relate to places on the Amazonas in which such species of birds bathe. The images accompany the canon of wall drawings [river pieces, 1977-85]. Abstract configurations, composed out of South American native river names that figure as veins in the landscape body. A reflection about mapping time and the perished tongue of nonwriting cultures. Their deceasing languages survive only as place names in our maps. We see mirroring images and witness the encounter of varied systems of thought, which make the boundaries between animism and linear scientific western thought visible.

Jason Dodge

Lining the floor's edges and in the center of the gallery's open air courtyard is Jason Dodge's untitled, undated installation of over 200 glass jars in various sizes – some acting like petri dishes collecting bacteria; others scrubbed clean, ready collect the rain water.

“There can be a compounding of how, and what gets left around (Droste effect). Glasses of preserved food, the body/bodies. When some-thing is left, is that urgency? I remember hearing a lecture in 1992 about raves as a space of collective alienation, feels/felt right.” (Jason Dodge)

Lara Favaretto

Do Not Cross

2013

iron, wool, wood

498 x 5 cm

Lara Favaretto's *Do Not Cross* is a metaphor for the concept of limit, alluding at the same time to an horizon and to an obstacle. The work consists of a single horizontal scaffolding tube wound round with light-blue wool thread, pushed against opposite walls by two extensions of the same metal and rusty patina. The work creates a real obstacle, forming a barrier that cannot be crossed, as the title proclaims, preventing the visitor from going beyond it. The colour of the line appears to allude to the immaterial boundary between sea and sky, as the coagulation of an imaginary landscape in nothingness and in infinity, suggested only by a suspended line of colour.

Gabriel Kuri

Bottled Water E.d.E. 2

2013

plastic bottles, paper backdrop, undisclosed liquid

exhibited dimensions: 210 x 355 x 355 cm

Bottled Water E.d.E. 4

2013

hose, fasteners, concrete

40 Ø 40 cm

Gabriel Kuri's works were first presented in a solo show of his called *bottled water branded water* at Parc Saint Léger Centre d'art contemporain in Pougues-les-Eaux, where the local spa - the main economical activity until some decades ago - offered the starting point for issuing a publication. This last, created to accompany the exhibition, shows a repertoire of images of various brands of French mineral water, photographed like commercial products, but with their bottles filled with a yellowish fluid provocatively entitled 'undisclosed liquid'.

Within the exhibition space itself instead, Gabriel Kuri orchestrated the layout of the objects and sculptures presenting them against paper backdrops, as though the installation as a whole was waiting to be photographed for promotion in a lifestyle magazine.

Bottled Water E.d.E. 2 is an installation that, following the rules of art and sculpture, displays duly labelled plastic bottles on pedestals. They are ready for sale and consumption but filled unexpectedly with a yellowish liquid. The change of content of the bottles in terms of color disenchant the viewer, flips his vision into a realm that feels like it has been polluted, transformed by a liquid the nature of which is a guess. Nevertheless the change occurred and the gradation of color, sometimes stronger or weaker, is necessary to enhance aspects of the objects present in the whole composition that would otherwise be missed, it is the color, otherwise not present, that acts as a binder and gives one of the peculiar distinctive qualities replacing the transparency of water.

Bottled Water E.d.E. 4 belongs to the same series and was part of the same exhibition the elastic materiality of the plastic water pipe as opposed to the raw concrete block cast as to identify the space inside the spirals of the pipe itself. The quality of the materials collide and match simultaneously, exploiting at best the intrinsic features of softness and hardness and the opposition between a vibrant line of color wrapping a lump of flat silver grey color.

Phillip Lai

Untitled

2019

stainless steel, plastic bottles, cast polyurethane resin, water

75,5 x 162 x 44 cm

Phillip Lai's work plays with the vision of a carefully crafted reality that only retains the most essential of the elements, getting rid of the burden of the unnecessary. The sculptures aim to reveal the core of their essence and there is something captivatingly odd in their bare presence, something that betrays the quality of the materials used, apparently industrially made, with something that is its opposite, the seduction that rises from exquisite and extraordinary work of the hands. The artist in fact makes the ordinary sublime through the use of familiar objects which proportions and purpose are twisted: the elements of the whole composition are either replicated by him in his studio or manipulated in order to let only some peculiar visual aspects come through, infusing that soft suavity of the hand-made.

Moreover his sculptures lead to other issues external from their process making, there are references to materials and conditions that speak of sustaining and nourishing life. In the sculpture exhibited, part of a series, water in particular is figured in the notional bottle-filling station, or elsewhere in a sculpture from the same period that quotes the often re-use of plastic jerrycans for water in West Africa. In the works, the imprints of these references are present but also questioned by their visual particularities, materialisation and poise.

Jac Leirner

Skin (Juicy Jay's Cotton Candy King Size Slim)

2013

cigarette rolling papers (860 units)

100 x 500 cm

Jac Leirner's work is often expressed through processes of collection and order: the accumulation of objects and an acute, in-depth observation of their characteristics, breaking into their normal cycle of consumption, followed by a reformulation and conversion into visual qualities that, with as little mediation as possible, express colour, materiality, and a presence in space. These often mimic the salient characteristics of the objects themselves, using them as proportional paragons of size, as in the case of the compositions consisting of series of rulers or spirit levels, or cigarette papers arranged in millimetric grids.

Once she has created an expressive system based on the use of simple geometry, letting the quality of the objects shine through in an immediate and unequivocal manner, Leirner is able to suggest narratives and associations that go beyond the objective minimalism of their components.

Skin (Juicy Jay's Cotton Candy King Size Slim) deconstructs and then reconstructs the reiteration and rituality of the action of rolling a cigarette, instantly alluding to repetition, the drawing out of time, pleasure and addiction, and the burning and rapid consumption of cigarettes in the intangibility and flimsy monochromatic insubstantiality of the paper fluttering as the visitors go by.

In this particular case, given the nature and color of the rolling papers used, flavoured as cotton candy and in a wonderful blue hue, the work suggests the crisp, wavy surface of a sea, a weightless ideal piece of it drawn on the wall, as scattered fragments of the solid blue seas of a geographical map.

Jac Leirner

Splash

2021

photographic prints on cotton paper

40 x 40 cm (image)

40,9 x 40,9 (framed)

edition of 1 + 1 AP

Lick

2021

photographic prints on cotton paper

40 x 40 cm (image)

40,9 x 40,9 (framed)

edition of 1 + 1 AP

Splash and *Lick* are Jac Leirner's new contribution to the exhibition: the two pictures, which onomatopoeic titles declare immediately the reference to water, are taken by the artist at her place with what she had at hand. The materials used relate to some very recurrent choices and topics of Leirner's work: the cigarette rolling papers, already present elsewhere in the exhibition in a generously large work, are arranged in a stack on a transparent tray, a small island of crispy waves rippling on the sea of a Persian rug.

Its title *Lick* refers to the act necessary to roll a cigarette while quoting indirectly a body fluid as transparent and with a similar consistency to water. *Splash* is more mysterious in its making: an array of plastic containers of various shapes piled one inside another in which various stainless steel spoons are trapped, mimicking a drop that plops into water splashing out a number of droplets around.

The spoons are some of the cutlery stolen on airplanes and collected by the artist throughout the years, used in many works of hers belonging to a canon called appropriately 'Corpus Delicti', as in a cinema genre like the detective or crime movies.

Once more some objects once removed from their context find an apt visual and linguistic definition in a parallel and shifted territory, as true as the original one, just different, a new system sprung from flipping and sabotaging another one.

Robert Mapplethorpe

Waves

1981

gelatin silver print

35 x 35,56 cm (image)

50,8 x 40,6 cm (paper)

63 x 61 x 3,5 cm (framed)

Javier

1985

gelatin silver print

25,1 x 25,2 cm (image)

51 x 41 cm (paper)

63 x 61 x 3,5 cm (framed)

Running through the pictures of Mapplethorpe's whole career one can build a sequence of associations, find contrasts and similarities in the compositional schemes and genres dear to him: portraiture, still life, male and female nudes, body parts and sensuality. It's a journey that spans from the diamond-pure freshness of the eye of youth in the 70s, its gushing curiosity fed by the hunger for discovery and the new, to the more layered and sophisticated moments of the 80s, tinged with a bit of hedonism and skillful refinement.

The fascination and necessity of dialogue between his deep passion for and knowledge of classical sculpture and painting constantly unfolds: an extremely formal and stylistic precision is the ground on which lays his capacity for letting his eccentricity appear, his ability to capture the unexpected, thereby creating a sense of mysterious awe.

In all of the pictures, moments are captured with a magical feeling of weight and movement, the constraint of postures and tension in the bodies and still life, all reveal the evident wish of capturing humans and inanimate objects with the same intention. The revelation of an inner truth through the sensational vision of Mapplethorpe's eye and of its prosthetic camera tool, leads to a masterly modulation of stark black and white tones, diving and melting into a field of softer and ever-changing shades of greys.

The reference to water in the photographs chosen for the exhibition is objective and clear: a view of the sea in which its endless horizontality translates - through the eye of the lens and the black and white printing - into a vertical and flattened sequence of tones of gray, reminding the attempts of a number of radical and reductive gestures in early abstract painting, although poetic and romantic.

On the other hand the view is surprisingly turned upside down in the portrait called *Javier*, from inside the water looking up, as if one was looking to a kind of Narcissus from within, the material depiction of the feeling of immersing one's face into water which can only be experienced and can hardly be seen.

Paulo Nazareth

Untitled (from Notícias de America)

2011-2012

photo printing on cotton paper

67,5 × 90 cm

edition of 5 + 2 AP

Notícias de América is the result of a year's elaboration of a living body of work concerned with the web of human affairs and the social and personal ties that exist from household to household, village to village, and city to city on both sides of the Rio Grande. Through documented performances, social sculptures, drawings and biographical portraits in video and film, Nazareth reveals an unseen vision of the Americas – uncovering a plurality of overlapping Americas and a profusion of ways of being. In a practice without preconceived strategies or formulas, Nazareth relies on the immediacy of life itself to create an impression of the overall shape of experience and being.

Throughout the work simple but poignant gestures are used to evoke personal and historical memory and to observe social, political and economic inequalities present throughout the Americas. In *Notícias de América*, the artist blends notions of social justice and peaceful resistance with a dose of the absurd – flowing between solemn contemplation and the light-hearted joy of being alive.

The picture featured in the exhibition shows the artist's body camouflaged into a rocky landscape - or assimilated to it – with the head swallowed by the waters that bathe the shore. A visible and deliberate loss or lack of identity, a human body deprived of the capacity of existing and functioning, a staged momentary disappearance from the theatre of life in order to react against being invisible or ignored.

Christodoulos Panayiotou

The Price of Copper

2014

copper fountain, raw copper sheet, wood and metal base

dimensions variable

The Price of Copper was built with a single copper cathode in its raw material form. The copper was sourced from the Skouriotissa mine in Xeros, Cyprus, which is said to be the oldest operating copper mine in the world and has played a central role in Cypriot history from antiquity to the present. Panayiotou borrowed the title for this piece from Bertolt Brecht's parable in the book *Der Messingkauf* (translated as the Price of Copper).

In *Der Messingkauf*, the German playwright narrates the story of a client who enters a musical instrument store and wants to buy a trumpet. He offers a sum much lower than the selling price of the instrument, explaining to the seller that he is neither interested in the instrument, nor does he know how to play it; he simply wants the metal. Panayiotou's fountain uses found materials that render it a fountain only so long as the water is running. As soon as the water stops running, the piece reverts, once again, to a mere sheet of copper.

Simon Starling

“By night the Swiss buy cheap-rate electricity from their neighbours which they use to pump water into holding reservoirs. By day they use the stored water to generate hydroelectric power which they then sell back to their neighbours at peak-rate prices. (After Christopher Williams / After Jean-Luc Godard)”

2005

21 Platinum / Palladium salt prints

each: 93,5 x 106,9 cm (framed)

installation dimensions variable

edition of 5 + 1 AP

The work consists of twenty-one black and white photos printed with platinum/palladium salts created by the artist on the occasion of his solo exhibition dedicated at the Kunstmuseum Basel, Museum für Gegenwartskunst in 2005. As is customary for Starling, the title lists some of the concepts and circumstances that the artist brings into play in a circular system: the 'Grand Dixence' is a Swiss dam built in the 1950s that was at the same time the subject of Jean-Luc's first short film Godard - 'Opération Beton' - and the subject for this reason of a series of seven photos by Christopher Williams, now housed in a number of collections in Europe. The Swiss dam produces and sells electricity during the day at a higher price than that paid at night to the neighbouring countries to pump water into its own tanks: in analogy to this circumstance, the artist photographed Williams images in the warehouses where they are currently kept, virtually bringing them back to Switzerland where they were taken and where his retrospective was to take place.

At the same time, the chosen printing technique, with platinum/palladium salts, is an increase in value compared to that used by Williams, with silver salts, as it happens with the electricity produced by the dam; this represents the artist's will to reflect both on the notions of waste of value and on the 'material' qualities of the photos, for the printing of which it was required a large quantity of metal mined and transitively of energy.