

Adelinda Allegretti
c u r a t o r

The concept of this show was devised several years back for an exhibition space in Tivoli, near Rome but, as sometimes happens, logistic problems delayed the organization. When the opportunity arose for an exhibition in Sweden, I immediately realized that the concept that I had previously put aside was perfectly in line with the image of Northern Europe rooted in the collective unconscious. Its wide, uncontaminated spaces more or less intentionally conjure the idea of the right "emptiness" that is necessary to look inside oneself and discover the endless lands of our innermost self. Admiration and respect for the physical landscape is but a first, compulsory step towards an itinerary that starts from the outer in order to reach the inner space.

As usual, my working method's initial input consists of a title, but the real asset is the way in which each artist interprets it and, in this specific case, the prevailing idea of landscape: whether Nature, or the urban environment, or that ignored and way too often untrodden world living inside of us.

The following words are meant for those of you who wish to be taken by the hand and accompanied through a critical reading (this, too, "within the limits" of my personal interpretation) aiming, on one side, to facilitate the understanding of the artworks, on the other side, to instigate doubts and raise questions.

The landscape painted by the Dutch artist **Henriëtte Kros van de Water** evokes the idea of tranquillity and total silence. In both *Biesbosch zonsondergang* (2006) and the more recent *Biesbosch* (2013), the landscape scene is stripped of any human or animal presence, but one almost perceives the delicate sound of the flowing water and swishing vegetation. The use of pastel imbues this already idyllic vision with extra softness; besides, the reflection of the sky's brightness onto the liquid surface is charged with symbolism evoking a pantheistic vision of Nature and of its inner sacredness.

Eindringendes Licht (Light penetrating) (2011) of the German artist **Siegfried Pichler** also conjures a strong sense of sacredness. The light is blinding and makes its way through the intricate and thick branches of the bushes, the other co-star of this work. It's a reinvigorating landscape that instils vital strength from the first, superficial glimpse and invites to let us go, to cross its threshold (insurmountable for some of us, totally relative for others). Could Eden look like this?

The work the German artist **Stefan Havadi-Nagy**, *Filigree* (2011), has all the majesty, perfection and abundance of creation. The trees stand out tall against the sky, like giants, but at the same time they're elegant, light, precious and delicate, exactly like a filigree jewel. Nature's beauty is also the *leitmotif* of **Pablo Márquez's** work, *Baja* (2011), a breath-taking view of his native Mexico. The uncontaminated blue of the sea makes even the sky go pale and contrasts with the aridity of the soil, or better, our gaze is so satisfied with the spectacle of the sea that the soil's poverty completely loses its relevance. Likewise, *Kerry, Irelande* (2014), by the Italy-based English artist **Joy Moore**, gives life to a scene that charms the eyes and soul, thanks to a wise use of colour and a quick, confident and expert brushwork that banishes particulars and drenches a quintessentially green land with renewed vitality.

In the work of the German artist **Beate Kulina** nature and landscape provide the means for cultural and intellectual enhancement. As in a modern Grand Tour, hers are but the stages of a neverending trip, the memory of which is kept alive by watercolours and ink sketches. *Tel-Aviv near the beach* (2008) and the

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earlier *New Zealand 16.06.2002* are reworked versions of visual notes initially recorded into a sketchbook and inside the mind. They are like minute tiles of mosaic made of life experiences. In the digital culture age, the act of entrusting one's memories to a sheet of paper is a sign of unrivalled intellectual riches.

In *Backstreet* (2014), by the Cuban artist **Dayan Prado Bravo**, the sense of utter freedom that pervades his art search is reflected in the mix of subjects and techniques. In the incitement/excitement of the game, children and horses dominate the surrounding space and the palm tree rises as a symbol of a perpetually warm, sun-kissed land, where poverty is always inevitably coupled with joyfulness. It's a landscape as hearty and welcoming as its people. The same sense of freedom is also found in the work of the Spanish painter **Maria Fatjó Parés**, *Las cometas-Kites* (2013), previously on show at the Los Angeles exhibition "Skies (Nel blu dipinto di blu)". Here the landscape is limited to a narrow stretch of beach and the more or less intense blue of sky and sea. The deriving image is that of joy and blitheness, with the two girls getting ready to fly their kites in all their lightness and freedom.

Before reaching the turning point of the exhibition and focusing our attention on more conceptual points of view, it's necessary to consider the works of the German artist **Ingeborg Saes**. *Truss window* (2008) and *Cottage* (1994) put on stage spots of everyday life removed from the city chaos. In particular, the first of the two works on show draws on tradition and the importance of its memory, perpetuation and respect. With its beams displayed on the façade, the timber-frame house is in fact typical of Central Europe, from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth century. One just needs to focus the attention on the sashes of an open window to determine the geographical area that provided the source of inspiration.

In the two works of the Austrian artist **Gaby Muhr**, *Cry of hope* (2014) and *Into the sun*, of the same year, which in this exhibition I like to read as a sequence, the "grey, featureless, completely impersonal inhabited space opens up onto a natural setting where it's possible to see trees, clouds, birds". This is a part of what I wrote in the catalogue of the exhibition "Con i fiordi negli occhi. Omaggio all'Urlo di Munch" ("With the fjords in the eyes. Tribute to Munch's Scream", Mu.MA Museo del Mare, Genova 2014), where only the first of these two works was on show. For this reason, I wish to introduce the second painting as a natural continuation, an obvious development, I would say, of the first work, with the balloon finally offering the right solution: the escape from an enclosed space into Nature. Whether an inner or outer space, what really matters is finding the way to move towards a renewed sense of freedom, and this can only happen inside of us.

Another work already shown in the said Genoa exhibition is *Ansia (Anxiety)*, 2009, by the Mexican artist **Josefina Temín**. Let me recall once again the words of the previous catalogue: "The sculpture is made from repurposed eucalyptus' bark and not only maintains an organic, vital shape, but perfectly embodies the idea of Nature, at once offended and offensive. At first sight, my mind was quickly crossed, one by one, by images of a cavern, of an ogre's or a whale's mouth and of a Venus Flytrap, perhaps the carnivorous plant that more than any other has captivated collective imagination. It is absolutely extraordinary that something as simple as tree bark could morph "into something else", with such a huge pathos and renewed meaning, when treated by the artist with such workmanship and sensitivity." Perfectly in line with the idea of Nature's desperate scream, *Ansia (Anxiety)* also fully conveys a deep sense of inner disquiet, of that existential disease that man is way too accustomed to. The disquiet of inner and outer reality coincide.

If that sense of profound, intimate despair fades away, pessimism will leave its place to zest for life and our inner landscape will be totally transformed. It will become radiant, overflowing with colour and light and we'll feel curious and lively. This, in my opinion is the key to *Colors & White* (2012) by the Dutch artist

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Laurence Steenbergen. The complexity of human beings can't overlook the perpetual flux between two sides of the same coin, hitting sometimes in the dark, sometimes in the sun. We still retain our identity, though.

In the three works of the French artist **Antoinette Pallesi**, *Il mistero della nascita* (*The mystery of birth*, 2011) and *Ora segreta* (*Secret Hour*) and *Sottile ora* (*Subtle Hour*), both of which dated 2014, this complexity performs a unifying function. The events marking the life of each of us are bound to alter our inner reality. This will be destined to take on ever changing forms, colours and hues, like a camera on the bonnet of a car that is sometimes running along a highway, sometimes along a country road, facing at times a hairpin turn on a high mountain, at times the desert dunes. The work of the Italian artist **Rosanna Orsini**, *Landmark* (2012), can be read in the same fashion. Here the elegant palette, the light nuances and the marks across the pictorial surface represent instants that allow to half-see something that does not belong to the real, meaning the physical world, but to that which we could define as metaphysical.

In *Complessi* (*Complexes*, 2010) by **Michele Angelillo**, another Italian artist, thought literally takes shape. He draws on the use of radiophotography to represent a phenomenon that began in Italy in 2007 and later spread to other countries. I feel like I ought to trace its steps, as the exhibition is addressed to a Swedish audience and there might be a risk of missing the meaning of the work. Everything started with Federico Moccia's book "Ho voglia di te" ("I want you", Feltrinelli, 2006) that, in the following year, inspired a film titled "2007: Ho voglia di te" ("2007: I want you"), set in Rome. This is the origin of the phenomenon of the lovers' padlocks of Ponte Milvio: in one of the most famous scenes of the film, in fact, the main characters, a couple of lovers, write their name on a padlock, secure it on the bridge and toss the key down the Tiber, as a symbol and promise of eternal love. So what appears in place of the brain is a tangle of padlocks, which tie down human beings, limiting their freedom. In *Ricerca dell'amore* (*Search for love*), of the same year, this great aspiration is reduced to a tangle of doodles. Here the constraints of the urban landscape reflect a complicated, jumbled inner world that cannot soar above itself.

Rita Vitaloni's work titled *Ciclo continuo* (*Continuous Cycle*, 2014) is taken from the series *Il colore degli sfrattati* (*The Colour of the Evicted*). This is a very large project that the Italian artist has been carrying on for years. Its starting point is an eviction that she went through years ago and that negatively marked her life and that of her family. The resulting outer landscape (and, I would say, the inner one) is dark, out of focus. The house should be a nest, a welcoming and protective place, but actually looks as if surrounded and strangled by thorny shrubs and bushes, making it unapproachable. Even the palette is exacerbated, toned so as to reach an unreal, or maybe surreal, aspect. It is the sign of an intimate, inner disease that inevitably marks the world around us.

On the other side there's however a city made of fun and bedazzlement. *Tiger* (2012) by the Japanese artist **Mitsushige Nishiwaki** puts up on show a bygone city, where a huge placard evokes the exotic spectacle, for adults and children, of animals coming from faraway countries. And even a skyscraper can arise to the status of beauty icon. This is what happens in the work *Downtown Los Angeles* (2012) by the Mexican **Susana Diaz Rivera**, where the reflection creates the impression of an uninterrupted and dynamic movement on the mirror surface of the building.

I'm pleased to close this ideal tour with the works of the Italian artist **Carlo Guidetti**, all dated 2011. His architectures might appear as "eco-monsters": almost like cathedrals in the desert, enormous, empty, useless structures. They however assume an air of sacredness. In *Compenetrazione* (*Compenetration*, 2011) the aerial element (are they really clouds?) surrounds the monster, making it incredibly suggestive, almost meditative. The same happens in *Verso l'alto* (*Upwards*), where the idea of verticality, reflected on each

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floor as well as in the stratified atmosphere, evokes a more profound idea of elevation, until we reach *Paradiso* (*Paradise*). Here the reading is immediate: have we really been forever searching for Eden just to realize that we're already living in it? Eden is inside of us, no matter the corner of the earth that we happen to live in and occupy.

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