

FLOWS

by Isabella Indolfi

Space and time, sculpture and music, plastic and sound waves. Liquid art, consisting of interdisciplinary entwinings, perceptive dimensions and sinusoidal curves, these are the elements that make up the exhibition FLOWS.

The protagonists are the sculptures of Licia Galizia, an artist from Abruzzo who, since the early 1990s, has moved between form and matter with a skillful ability and equilibrium. Her research has its roots in Conceptual Art and Arte Povera, and is directly influenced by Fabio Mauri and Pizzi Cannella, soon she became autonomous with her own characteristics: abstract sculpture composed of signs, lightness, minimalism and futuristic movements.

After a meeting with the composer Michelangelo Lupone in 2005, Licia Galizia's sculptural research took on a new dimension enhancing its dialogue with space and the public. Continuing her link with material, her art was reinforced by a trend toward interaction with its human and architectonic surroundings, in an act of freedom whose objective was to widen the boundaries of her artistic research, toward new answers and new stimuli.

Thus Licia Galizia began her collaboration with the Musical Research Centre of Rome (CRM), with a spirit that is exquisitely renaissance and composed of the interdisciplinary exchanges that bring us back to that period's holistic thinking and new forms of expressive values. Thanks to Planofoni®, brand new technology for spreading sound designed by CRM in 1997, it is possible to create interactive and adaptive works. Licia Galizia's sculptures live symbiotically with the music of Michelangelo Lupone and Laura Bianchini, integrating shape, sound and new technologies into a single hybrid, sensitive and complex sculptural entity, able to respond to external stimuli, be these heat from the sun or the barely perceivable vibrations of a hand touching a surface.

FLOWS is a site-specific project that, using a rhythm made up of movements and pauses, tells an ideal story on water's infinite visual and sound shapes: sea, spring, rain or water fountain, the water has

different natures and contains in itself a conscience and memory that can be overwhelming.

“Waves indicated by bent sheets of metal breaking the surface, overlapping, and continuing to rise in the background, from low to cutting, increasingly wide, long and cresting until they break on the shore.” With these words Licia Galizia describes “Mare Oscuro” the work that inundates the first room of the gallery and manages even to “wash up to” the visitors’ feet, forcing them, as one does with the waves on the beach, to play in space and flee from or run after the white foam. Obscure like the destiny of the immigrants that cross the Mediterranean in search of a new life. Licia Galizia’s sea “speaks” through Michelangelo Lupone’s musical composition, inviting the visitors to immerse themselves in it and sail its surface. The flows of migratory humans entwine ideally with the electronic flows of the data and the public’s sensorial flows, creating a dark and tragic sound that comes up from the waves like a cry of suffering, like a deep lament that vibrates in the air and causes the material to seethe.

The exhibition progresses through a contraposition of flat and curved surfaces, low and high sounds, that seem to chase each other along the walls of the gallery in the form of vibrations and deviations.

Across the sea, the traveller’s gaze rises and the rhythm of the narration of the exhibition becomes lighter, as if to symbolize the hoped for landing on the terra firma; the tale, however, is still full of the drama of our times, because water, the natural element most sensitive to pollution and climate change, is seriously threatened by mankind. In the second work we find ourselves face to face with a spring of bright and blinding colour: “Fonte Gialla” meets the visitor and speaks of a faraway land, burnt by the sun, inhospitable and desolate. In the city of Dallol in Ethiopia, there is a strange spring of yellow water, made toxic by underground gases. Water can be poison rather than a source of life, and this is one of the contradictions that fills this primordial element with meaning. For this work, Licia Galizia has chosen to use only the language of sculpture, without musical intervention, which here explodes in all its visual power.

Continuing with the exhibition, we are overwhelmed by “Diluvio”, an installation pure and violent at the same time, seemingly threatening visitors with its impetus, as it tumbles like a great waterfall from the tallest wall in the gallery. Here again the work is light and purely sculptural without sound or the possibility of interaction, unless one includes letting oneself be struck by the flood and soaked in the overwhelming spatial dimension.

In the installation “Acqua” the process of purification is represented by chromatic passages from black to white passing through shades of grey. Five sculptural-musical elements, the number of letters in the word water, are digitally linked in a feedback of very particular sounds, in which the dialogue between two musicians is intense and direct: Michelangelo Lupone gives sound to polluted water, while Laura Bianchini is assigned the task of representing purity. Starting from the first black element of “Acqua”, the sounds are grave, dirty and almost indistinguishable, they entwine into a tightly woven fabric that slowly unravels in a filiform process until in the last element, the lightest in colour, all is a prosody as light and white as a feminine caress.

Each sculpture in the exhibition accompanied by sound has its own musical character, adapted to what the sculpture represents. Masaru Emoto says that water has its own conscience that responds to sound stimuli; were this true, its voice would be that of the music of Michelangelo Lupone and Laura Bianchini. These two composers have travelled over the plastic waves of Licia Galizia and have given life to previously unknown electronic polyphonies that though they do not literally reproduce the sound of water, they restore to it its undulating rhythms.

The musical concept becomes contemporary and travels along the wires, procedural schemes, microprocessors and sensors. The musical instruments are algorithms of syntheses of sound, capable of imitating reality and producing a new sublimation. Even listening requires different rules and syntaxes, starting from the liberation of the idea of the melody, tonality and classic timbres, so as to open onto an infinite panorama fluid in sound.

The works exhibited sublimate the meeting of the two autonomously developed lines of research and find their fulfillment, the one in the canons of sculpture and the other in contemporary music. The combination and a perfect synthesis between sculpture and music are made possible by recent technological research that animates what would otherwise remain inert; invisible devices activate thousands of musical cells that are designed to operate in a delicate equilibrium. A sculptural skin covers, protects and hides an array of wires, sensors, motherboards and speakers that are only a complex control and sound production system designed by CRM.

Here technology is made the servant of art and not vice versa, an approach that occurs more and more often in contemporary art and starts conceptually from a reflection on the technological means and the final shape of the work is based on this. Exhibiting naked and functional technology has little to do with creativity, rather it is a new aesthetic linked to a fascination with increasingly complex machines, increasingly similar to human bodies, that everyone wants to see “from inside” in some way voyeuristically.

The danger, however, is that the line that separates the technician and the artist, the work of art and the invention has become more and more subtle that aura that, as Walter Benjamin says, is placed beyond the technical reproducibility.

In these sculptural-musical works, instead, digital devices are not ends in themselves but rather instruments to work in the context, to read and translate it. These works approach the concept of “gesamtkunstwerk” or “total work of art” – which includes poetry, painting, sculpture, music and architecture – in this way, digital art has a particular ability to create new experienceable dimensions, interacting with the public on several levels through immersive and livable installations and environments, where spectators become activators and manipulators of the sense of the work.

In FLOWS, like in any complex magic trick, sensorial experience is immediate learning, almost natural rather than mediated.

The works’ interactions with the public represent a first step toward understanding their language.

Once you have gone beyond the threshold of passive contemplation, continue beyond the few disturbing centimetres that create a bottomless abyss between the work of art and the audience, this latter is no longer composed of simple visitors, they are travellers, inhabitants

and activators. Observe, touch, listen. The audience, immersed in the sensorial experience, is invited to go beyond the safety barrier separating it from the work, placing itself to listen to and navigate art's surfaces, to open itself to a newly revealed experience.

The audience activated, now it is the turn of the work to really become reactive. A determinative and limited interaction is not enough; it is necessary that the work adapt, evolve, take on unpredictable behaviours and, like a living organism, change how it modulates its voice continually. To this end a memory and artificial intelligence are at work, in other words a brain, so that the work "learns" from its context and its interaction, adapts itself to its environment until it becomes part of it.

It was Germano Celant who first taught that between a work and its context there must be a reciprocal interchange so that "*art creates an environmental space equal in measure to the art created by the environment*".

In FLOWS Licia Galizia has created a dynamic and fluid landscape, an environment which not only can be lived in its multidimensionality, but is at the same time interactive, adaptive and evolutive.

The final work in the exhibition "Fontanile" is a lively rhythm of foam and flickers and the visitor slips into the Zen dimension of water tamed by man in which flow gushes silently and brightly from below in the gallery's external courtyard.

Our voyage ended, the landscape in which we had been immersed, closes again. We are left with our memories of signs, colours and sounds, of sensorial experiences that we will not easily forget, because we were actors in a theatre made up metaphors, shapes and voids, explorations and expectations.