

*The materials you choose for your works and the way you arrange them in the spaces where they can be experienced is an indication of what I believe is your wariness of images.*

I have often asked myself about the importance of the image and whether we can truly say that a work is resolved in one. Certainly, this may be so in many cases but the conclusion I've reached is that I see bringing an image in as enclosing it in a "finite dialogue". That is why I like glass and favour reflecting surfaces, for example. They allow me to find a path to follow, in the face of that wariness of mine so clearly recognised by you.

*The wariness is also a sign of how you behave towards materials and the execution of that required to create a work: an approach I would describe as "standing back". You place yourself at the due distance, accepting that it may take more than one direction to produce it.*

I can relate to that but let me say that it is also an approach impacted by the possibility of successfully meeting my needs when I have to create a work. The pathway to a potential synthesis appears when I clash with a medium and am forced to choose another one. For example, I experience drawing more as the outlining of an idea. A drawing doesn't move. It doesn't produce light. It doesn't allow me to create a "choreography" that takes me deep into the space. This has several times driven me to seek something else. I have found an alternative, the prospect of holding several parts together through continuous transformation, in the installation.

*What drives this choice of yours?*

As well as the insufficiency of the image — although I would like to say as well as what is to all effects my criticism of it because I am constantly clashing with it — is my need to find combinations. Certainly, I can do it partially on paper, with drawing or other illustration practices. But actual success can only be achieved with an installation, i.e. by establishing relations that may be on the very margins of the possible, perhaps unimaginable, which then take shape after bowing to the constraints and possibilities posed by reality. For example, in *Venere Bugiarda 3023* I forged a relationship between the stone, glass and organic materials. Three hundred glass vases symbolise a large sun; close to it, I drew a semicircle by positioning nine alabaster orbs, on which are sculpted letters forming the adverb "FOREVER". The installation enabled me to highlight what, from the very first, seemed the only fixed point of the exhibition: the colour white of the flower. A colour is constantly changing in relation to the light.

*I get the sense that your combinatory approach and criticism*

*of images also influence your relationship with sound, a subject that recurs frequently in your works.*

It would be much easier to produce art by continuing to focus on the production of images. I think however that apart from the arts, in which the shortcomings of images can be acknowledged in several spheres, in today's society these shortcomings are even more evident in the form of a cultural problem. We are becoming increasingly accustomed to being educated about images and all too ready to consider their possible falsification. This is partly why I immediately think of sound and the potential it offers. For example, we could react to the increasingly popular post-production of facial photographs by starting to think of the potential of our voices as they also convey our uniqueness.

*Although often associated with invisibility and the absence of matter, you place sound at the centre of your work because you consider it a presence first and foremost.*

That is right and it is why I decided to install the sound outside the basilica of San Celso, for the "Aperçues" exhibition because, otherwise, it would have filled an empty space. It is invisible but also present, too present. Actually it is more disturbing than other presences. Think of exhibitions featuring several works: if there is a sound work it will affect the others. You cannot but hear it in that space. Sound affords me such freedom as it allows me to be at the point where the visible and the invisible meet. The reflection underpinning the exhibition, which I have summed up in the phrase "I have caught sight of you," is also my way of discussing the presence of my works. Through them I ask onlookers to listen but they are not ambitious in terms of concreteness. They always have something timeless about them. I do not instantly see a presence as material because basically it has to do with being human. We can be present but equally be invisible.

*Placing yourself on the borderline of near visibility, your works also highlight the possibility of being midway between presence and dissipation. For example, a representation makes it possible to be present in delayed time: technology and the arts are constantly showing us that. Indeed, delayed time is a popular phenomenon. We often realise that a person speaking to us may also be caught up in other thoughts.*

The key factor is speed. We are constantly racing and often, in order to maintain the pace, we transform our presence and as a result also our relations with the world. There are too many interferences. When we meet we are distant and something is missing in terms of presence. Or perhaps it is there but, being transformed, it becomes something completely different. These aspects inspire me to try and

establish relations, well aware that the outcomes may be surprising. For example, when recording the voices for *Le cose in pericolo* (A, B, C, D, E, ...), I came across a language formation process that, in many ways, reminded me of a new language. A subject I had already examined in the work *Hoquetus* (2021), an installation composed of six manipulated professional microphones that lend a rhythmic voice to a choir of animal and baby cries. The topic in that case was “pre-language”.

*Relations and transformations are indispensable in your work but, if you are to manage to produce it, leaving space to uncertainty seems equally crucial.*

Basically, what interests me is the possibility of remaining in the movement, “being between” several energy poles, to highlight the potential for change. I experience being static as a constraint. With my works, I often prompt observers to perform a circle with their bodies or eyes. In *Constellation* (2019) this circle becomes a hypnotic spiral; in *Confine* (2018) I am the one moving in the space and writing a verse of Rainer Maria Rilke’s *First Duino Elegy* in the sand: “Fling the emptiness in your arms out into the spaces we breathe,” introducing the topic of the void.

*On the one hand, this approach confirms your “stand back” approach to producing art but, on the other, it seems to reveal a protective inclination on your part.*

I believe it is linked to finitude, to an awareness that we are finite beings and so determined by ageing, by the end and by death. The opportunity to continue extending the work, to insist on its transformation and to manage to work on the air means I can come as close as possible to a concept of infinity that I hold dear and tend towards. It is a case of managing to extend the work as much as possible. Those really long arms made of bronze polished to a mirror finish for *Mani come rami che toccano cielo* are a concrete expression of something I have imagined. I would like to be able to touch the sky. In one sense, they are a sign of a my transformation, of a change not only in the way I behave but also in my body. That inclination of mine which you have glimpsed is an allusion to my desire to protect subjectivity. And it is not an individual matter.

*I believe this is also confirmed by your relationship with the environment. I mean, you aim to share your works with other people and offer them experiences.*

When I think of the environment I see it essentially as a space of potential that, being naturally changing, demands we pay due attention to the elements and factors that alter it. Space for me is a

starting point and it inspires me. It will contain the work but also those who can experience it. I cannot focus only on the former and ignore the people. These initial issues have been joined by another that, let's say, took shape after my exhibition at the Fondazione Merz in Turin: the space has increasingly guided me in my choice of installation. My work *The indeterminacy of an encounter* (2021) also originated in this way.

*What did you discover on that occasion?*

I sort of made a leap forward because I could work on an image that came to me and only produced it via my constant relationship with space and time. That is, I achieved a natural performance: the sky reflected in the water to form a large liquid pupil that could be observed from several angles; alongside it, arranged in a semicircle, nine black wires five metres long concealed a speaker system. Observers could walk around this huge sonorous eye made of water and sky. When I discovered I could relate to nature as I worked and so not merely seek a steered performance but accept that it may constantly change, I realised the meaning not just of the relationship with space in terms of environment but also with the factors that may alter it, natural ones included. These relationships linked one to the other made me review my subjectivity and, of course, had no small impact on the subsequent transformations of my work.

*Working on the air*

*Nina Carini talks to Davide Dal Sasso*