



Breathless

Claudio Cravero

curator PAV

The work of **Andrea Polli** (Chicago, 1968; she lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico) seeks to make visible those natural phenomena we usually think of in the abstract, associating them with generalised theories or alarms about the environment and its fragile equilibrium. Themes like global warming, atmospheric pollution or the melting of glaciers take shape as she translates meteorological data into sounds and visions, which leave the spectator “breathless” – as evoked in the title of her first personal show in Italy.

Considered among the protagonists of “extreme” ecological art for having participated in some scientific expeditions to the Antarctic and the North Pole, Andrea Polli develops devices to listen to and view the climate, which becomes the medium within a physical and aesthetic experiential process. Within her project *Atmospherics/Weather Works*, her *soundwalks* or “sonifications” of storms and hurricanes are well known: they translate meteorological data into sound, reconstructing it according to a human-sized tonal scale, and then returning it in a “musical” continuum with a strong emotive impact.

One immediately enters into this dimension of meteorological corporeality on passing the threshold of the Art Centre and crossing the waterfall of *Particle Falls*, a video-installation that reproduces, as a constant flow of lights, data collected in real time on the presence in the air of the particulate fraction, that is to say fine powder. These data are captured by a nephelometer and processed by a computer, then projected onto the wall of the entrance hall, which is the antechamber of the main space.

Breather and *Cloud Car*, the two environmental installations set up in the PAV courtyard and made from two old Fiat 500 cars (a runabout chosen as a symbol of the Italian economic boom), extend the relationship between man and nature to the wider social context. While in *Breather* the car is covered by a transparent dome that, thanks to a system that blows air into the dome and releases it, acts like a lung stretched to suffocation, in *Cloud Car* the auto is fitted with a misting device that makes the air into a tangible and visible element. For the artist, the car is a sign of the cultural change in man’s evolutionary history, a conquest of technology, but at the same time one of the most significant causes of the climate changes that we are going through and that, with time, will have an increasing influence on the future of life for all living beings.

The video documentation of installations set up in New York, New Delhi and San Jose, by bringing the artist’s work into context, at the same time expands its scope to the global level. Because the effects of decisions and behaviour concerning development and life-style, that man is imposing on the planet, are likewise global.

Lastly, in the project room, are the video-documentary *Ground Truth*, shot during a scientific exploration in the Antarctic, and *N.*, a video installation of atmospheric data measured at the North Pole. These are works evocative of spaces that are remote, extreme, rarefied, and yet closely linked to the places of our daily lives, because they are fundamental for the survival of the planet’s ecosystem.

Polli’s works are thus narration, they are stories of our earth purged of epic events and fables. They are accounts of the environment, of man and of the body experienced as a natural “weather station”: because through their skin human beings perceive rain, heat and cold; with their eyes they see clouds, fog and light; and with their ears they perceive changes in atmospheric pressure. The landscapes traced by the artist, geophysical and emotional, are thus “Worlds at the edge of the world”, territories we must pass through to embody an intimate relation with the environment, with its malaise and with the factors that compromise its stability.