



## PRESS RELEASE

# *Praeter naturam* Brandon Ballengée

July 7<sup>th</sup> - September 26<sup>th</sup> 2010

**Public Conversation:** on Monday July 5<sup>th</sup>, 6.30 PM, conference room, Museum of Natural Sciences of Turin, Via Giolitti, 36, Turin, Italy; lecturers: Brandon Ballengée, Jens Hauser and Beatrice Mautino.

**Opening: on Tuesday July 6<sup>th</sup>,** 6.30 PM, PAV – Park of Living Art, Via Giordano Bruno 31, Turin, Italy

On July 6<sup>th</sup>, from 6.30PM, PAV is pleased to announce *Praeter naturam*, the first solo exhibition in an Italian public institution of the New York based artist **Brandon Ballengée** (Sandusky, Ohio, 1974), one of the protagonists of the Bio-art and a biology researcher himself.

The title exhibition, curated by Claudio Cravero, from Latin means *beyond the nature*. In fact, it refers to amphibian with developmental abnormalities analyzed in Ballengée's recent studies. These deformities do not feature dangerous creatures to be feared, rather simply amphibians which due to pollution and parasites and predators (perhaps increasing by anthropogenic environmental factors, not yet well scientifically understood) have morphological anomalies such as extra limbs or missing ones. Amphibians are sentinel group of animals that are declining all across the globe and increasing levels of deformities may be a concern for some populations. Being beyond the natural means to act with a "sacral" attitude of respect for what is considered otherness, and then the artist's work can still augment the threshold of attention given to topics on defending the world with declarations of respect for biodiversity.

At PAV Brandon Ballengée shows the results of his *Eco-Aactions*, his public fields and laboratory studies of amphibian species that - since 1996 - he has carried out in selected localities in Asia, Europe and North America. Exhibited in *Praeter naturam* is a variant of the sculptural installation *Styx*, an open laboratory table where transparent boxes dishes display actual specimens of "cleared and stained" deformed frogs. Each tiny frog has been carefully preserved and chemically altered so that bone is dyed red and cartilage blue with remaining tissues transparent. Photographic portraits of individual deformed frog specimens are represented in Ballengée's *Malamp* unique Iris prints (which Ballengée refers to as reliquaries). These are created from high-resolution scans in which single frog is printed the size of a human-toddler. In these works Ballengée does not mean to shock the viewer or arouse one's disgust; instead he wishes to inform us about the analyzed organisms' individual processes of growth and transformation, which in any case, are characteristics of nature's capacity to adapt and organize itself according to the infinitesimal variations that can occur, and which basically, Charles Darwin had already delineated in his theory of evolution.

Also, included in the exhibition is a new sculptural work, *Turin Po River Eco-displacement* here a portion of the actual ecosystem and it's living inhabitants are temporarily displaced inside the art centre for viewer observation - allowing an opportunity to witness a not normally seen 'portion' of this complex living system. A selection of small paintings (1996-98) made from polluted pond water, coffee and ash on artist reconstituted paper is exhibited. Finally, the exhibition includes also Ballengée's fieldtrips video reports made abroad, and the PAV new *Eco-Action* made in Turin (from May to July 2010), the workshop curated by PAV Educational Dept with the artist, and in collaboration with two biologists of The Turin Po River Park.

The show is part of the initiatives *ESOF2010 Science in the City*, and is made with the collaboration of the Museum of Natural Sciences of Turin, Nowhere Gallery, Milan and The Arts Catalyst, London. A second part of this exhibition will open at the Museum of Natural Sciences of Turin in the spring of 2011 and an exhibition catalogue will debut at that time.