

2016 — 2021

Exhibitions Portfolio

Fabio Barile

Fabio Barile & Domingo Milella — Le Forme del Tempo
Terme di Diocleziano, Museo Nazionale Romano — 2022
Curated by Alessandro Dandini de Sylva

Insallation view Eleonora Cerri Pecorella

The Shapes of Time
Text by Stéphane Verger
Director of the Roman National Museum

The process of archaeological investigation consists of recognizing the shapes that time gives to objects, sites and landscapes. Time affects archaeological records in several different ways. Initially, we notice the damage suffered following their abandonment: erosion, cracks, fragmentation, dispersion. Then, little by little, we witness the dynamics of these processes, the orderly succession of natural and man-made scars. A stratigraphy of degradation is created, allowing archaeologists to trace the original state of things: the moment when an object was buried, a tomb was definitively sealed closed, or a house collapsed.

This completes an initial time-chain that, in a certain sense, characterizes the preliminary work of an archaeological investigation. Another type of time then becomes evident: that of the people who created, used, transformed, replaced, preserved, and subsequently forgot the objects, sites and landscapes. The shapes of time are something else entirely. It is necessary to reconstruct those of human life, which are manifested in the succession of the seasons, the complex logic of the ritual process and day-to-day episodes of family life. This time of micro-histories is perhaps the most difficult to capture, as it requires particularly sophisticated and precise investigation techniques.

It is no coincidence that archaeologists have only recently begun to focus special attention on the study of these particular shapes of time. We even know the date of birth of this archaeology of everyday microhistories. It coincides with the excavation of “habitation n° 1” of the prehistoric site of Pincevent, directed by André Leroi-Gourhan with his team of specialists. The particular arrangement of a heap of flint chips, miraculously found intact due to the flooding of a river that had immediately covered it, reveals that a man had sat there, cut the stone, taken away the tool he’d fashioned and left behind the useless fragments of the block of flint in the space that had been between his legs. By combining various pieces of information like this, gleaned from the forgotten remains of everyday activities, it was possible to reconstruct a season in the life of a small group of people who lived over 10,000 years ago. Months or years of work are required to reconstruct even a moment in the life of a person. The time of archaeologists often expands in relation to that of the people they intend to bring back to life through their work. This marks the start of another time-chain, whose shapes are those of contemporary research: life and work as a team during the excavations, long laboratory analyses, time for writing and drawing, publication and science meetings. Archaeological research time is measured in decades or even centuries, which are necessary to patiently reconstruct what ultimately interests us most – the history of societies and cultures, forms of interaction, processes of transformation, innovation, the succession of periods of war and peace, and the impact of individual

microhistories on History with a capital H. The shapes of time are actually at the heart of the work of an archaeologist, who must put in order various temporal patterns, adapting the various investigation techniques available to each of them, from the geological time of the decay of things, to the brief time of human life, the historical time of the succession of civilizations, and the scientific time of research.

The Shapes of Time exhibition probes the relationships between these various kinds of time in a different way, unlike that of the archaeologist. Fabio Barile and Domingo Milella show us photographs depicting the sometimes brutal collision of the different kinds of time that archaeologists are careful to distinguish between and arrange in separate categories. The presentation of the works in the halls of the Baths of Diocletian, which themselves have a complex relationship with time, extending from the glory of the Roman empire to the definition of a shared past in the National Roman Museum, adds to the complexity of the theme itself and creates a further temporal interplay that is reflected to some extent in the images on display. Seeing Barile and Milella’s works in this monumental setting prompts us to look differently at the museum’s collections too, rediscovering in some of the inscribed fragments and portraits, ruined by erosion or broken by waves of destruction, the geological processes that the artists captured in the landscapes and monumental archaeological sites they explored. Through the eye of an artistic archaeology of the third millennium, yet to be conceived.

Installation view
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Domingo Milella
Le Forme del Tempo
Terme di Diocleziano,
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Nazionale Romano,
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Regeneration

American Academy in Rome — 2022

Curated by Lindsay Harris, interim Andrew Heiskell Arts Director, and Elizabeth Rodini, interim Director.

ARTISTS IN THE EXHIBITION

- Fabio Barile
- Chiara Camoni
- Annalisa Metta and Luca Catalano
- Sonya Clark
- Binh Danh
- William Dougherty
- Guillermo Kuitca
- Jorge Otero-Pailos
- Robert Gerard Pietrusko
- Georges Senga
- Julia Solis
- Yeesookyung

Insallation view Daniele Molajoli

Elizabeth Rodini
Coming Apart

Rome is coming apart. All around us concrete crumbles and paint flakes, tree roots upend stone while car exhaust fouls buildings and toxic rain eats at their ornament. The monuments that have come to define Rome seem increasingly precarious, mocking the vision of eternity that allowed them to be built in the first place.

Although morphing and accelerating in the era of the Anthropocene, decay is an ever-present force and the “ruins” it produces are long-standing ciphers for western attitudes toward the passage of time. Paradoxically, the representation of ruins, whether stemming from nostalgia or anxiety, gives fixity to objects that are powerful precisely because they are undergoing change. Such representations assume the ruin to be a thing when it might better be understood as a process.

Regeneration draws inspiration from Caitlin de Silvey’s description of cultural objects as “provisional gatherings of matter.” This may seem a cold definition of art, but it is also a reminder of how art can help us make sense of transience in an epoch when change has taken on existential urgency. For the artists included in this exhibition, decadence, or the physical undoing of bodies, is the seed and substance of creative expression rather than its sentimental, regrettable endpoint.

This particular view of art is necessarily global. It imagines a continual making and remaking of the world that is beyond human measure, reaching back to the very formation of the marble that the Romans later quarried for their monuments. Similarly, it envelops oceans and landmasses, regardless of the peoples who have traversed and occupied them. In its concern with the literal force of matter, it also makes way for varied cultural interpretations of the elements we all share.

The resulting discourse is thus an ethical one. Beyond the equalizing factor of sheer materiality—that we and the world are dust—is the question of how to mark, make note of, intervene in, and perhaps forestall these natural processes. On the one hand lies the matter of resources: who has the means to decide which buildings will collapse while others are rebuilt, which landscapes merit intervention and which should be left “to nature”? On the other hand are more nuanced questions concerning cultural attitudes toward permanence, value, and beauty.

Roman monuments were by definition intended to outlive all else. But other traditions find potential elsewhere, including in the fragment and in materials that are taken back into the earth. The artists included in Regeneration explore these aspects of materiality, alongside the power of absence, silence, the shadow, and the trace. They refuse to place art on a timeline of judgment that sees the whole as the apex of achievement and degradation as decline, preferring to situate creative expression along a continuum of ongoing, elemental reinvention.

Lindsay Harris
What Art Makes Possible

Ruins have long fascinated artists as a symbol of the passage of time. With the onset of Humanism in the fifteenth century, characterized by a curiosity about the lives and creative output of the early Greeks and Romans, artists began to turn their attention to the remains of ancient civilizations with newfound fervor. Rome emerged as the epicenter of this impulse, in no small measure due to ongoing discoveries of ancient buildings, sculptures, and wall paintings by contemporary archaeologists. The opportunity to see firsthand the accomplishments of earlier societies, and the power of time to ravage their integrity, triggered an association between ruins and nostalgia for a bygone age.

In contrast, the dozen artists featured in Regeneration perceive decay as brimming with possibilities. For some, photography offers a way to focus attention on the perpetual evolution of the landscape. Matrices of branches, vines, and leaves testify to nature’s inclination to recycle debris into new life. In other views, objects discarded in the course of daily activities—plastic bottles, a hair clip, an old shoe—make plain how humans catalyze landscapes’ transformations. Whether representing natural spaces or sites that people inhabit, these photographs compel us to reflect upon the ethics of environmental degradation. Which landscapes do we preserve from human intervention? Which, instead, do we sacrifice to human consumption, finding in their neglect patterns, lines, and forms that strike us with unexpected beauty?

The values we attribute to the built environment also take center stage in the exhibition. The industrial ruin emerges in Regeneration as a monument to the waning persuasiveness of modernity. The ambition associated with the age of the skyscraper, the automobile, and, slightly later, the movie theater fades in images that show the deterioration of these twentieth-century icons. The grandeur of monuments from earlier eras likewise comes into question in hand-crafted images that disintegrate historical representations of these sites. These works call attention to the very nature of preservation, in which we select certain elements of our built surroundings to preserve, and others to let go.

Finally, this exhibition foregrounds the capacity of art to help generate resilience in the face of destruction due to violence. The traumas of war, racism, and their consequences leave traces that can be seen and that remain invisible. Several of the artists in Regeneration have developed creative processes that use the elements of time, meditation, and metamorphosis inherent in art-making to acknowledge these scars and try to heal them in however small a way. In their work, symbols of hatred and intolerance decompose into new forms that hold within them the promise of a fresh start, a changed perspective, or, at the very least, a moment of reprieve to reflect upon the possibilities that lie ahead.



Installation view
Regeneration
American Academy in
Rome — 2022



Installation view
Regeneration
American Academy in
Rome — 2022



Installation view
Regeneration
American Academy in
Rome — 2022

Di roccia, fuochi e avventure sotterranee.

MAXXI — 2021

The photographic projects of five authors, commissioned to photograph five major infrastructure works around the world.

Fabio Barile, Andrea Botto, Marina Caneve,

Alessandro Imbriaco, Francesco Neri.

Curated by Alessandro Dandini de Sylva

Insallation view Vincenzo Labellarte

Commissioned by Ghella, underground excavations specialised company, the 120 pictures on display were taken between 2019 and 2020 at five construction sites in Europe, the Far East and Oceania. The exhibition is introduced by historical images documenting the company’s activities from the 19th century to the 1950s. Views of cities and construction sites alternate with archaeological finds, cores and excavator components, while spectacular explosions interact with forests and rock formations. The dimensions, structure and physicality of the spaces, machinery and excavation materials convey the complexity of the site’s infrastructure and its nature as an organism in constant evolution.

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Oslo Follo Line High-Speed Railway Project

36 km mechanized excavation

135.000 precast segments

The Follo Line project in Norway consists of a new high-speed dual-track, 22 kilometres long, that will connect Oslo central station and a new hub for public transport in the city of Ski. The new railway tunnel is the longest ever excavated in Scandinavia and is designed to decongest the traffic in the south-eastern outskirts of Oslo, and to integrate the public mobility of the small towns around the capital. Follo Line is one of the most important high- speed railway projects in the world because of its technical complexity. It is also one of the first in Northern European history to feature a double tunnel created simultaneously with four Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs).

“My work on geology is focused on the representation of time via the shapes of the landscape. The photography of the landscape thus becomes a philosophical tool with which to examine the natural processes that surpass our imagination, in the attempt to come to terms with a different perception of time. Over the course of my research, I have inevitably come up against themes such as stratification, interconnectivity, multi-dimensionality, and complexity. The history of geology has forced me to look at the landscape as a dynamic and complex system, to which a simplistic and linear vision cannot be applied. In my photographic campaign at Follo Line I tried to make this discontinuous vision emerge, in which woods, rock walls, cultivated fields, concrete casts, excavating machines, and various constructions seem to be thematically distant from each other, but are actually part of a single complex system that is constantly evolving.”

— *Fabio Barile*



Installation view
Di roccia, fuochi
e avventure sotterranee
MAXXI, Rome.
2021



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Installation view
Di roccia, fuochi
e avventure sotterranee
MAXXI, Rome.
2021

Works for a cosmic feeling

Matèria — 2021

Curated by Alessandro Dandini de Sylva

Exhibition design Etaoin Shrdlu Studio

Insallation view Roperto Apa

Fabio Barile's practice is an expanding universe. A cosmos of images that attempts to grasp the comprehensive and total flux of evolution through photography, a medium by definition partial and fragmented.

Works for a Cosmic Feeling is a collection of photographic works that when grouped, function as an immersive journey through interconnectivity. The 229 images exhibited - produced from 2018 onwards and inspired by the oceanic sentiment described by the French writer Romain Rolland in a 1927 letter to Sigmund Freud - explore multiple trajectories in the artist's enquiry, taking on the characteristics of a complex and evolving organic system.

Within the grayscale of Barile's photographic multiverse, a photograph of his wife's back becomes a fragment of deep time containing celestial bodies. A blurry image transforms the model of a helium hydride molecule into a mysterious representation of a black hole. Branches and leaves organize in an intricate forest, two-dimensional surfaces burst into the third dimension and articulated experiments conducted in the studio imitate architectures created by animals or geological events such as the tectonic compression and the earth's magnetic field. Using photography as a stratigraphic tool, the artist attempts to understand, connect and depict reality, capturing the interaction between apparently distant elements and timeframes.

Incoherence and imperfection are the driving forces of the work as a whole, and play a central role in animating the exhibition project conceived by the curator and designed by Etaoin Shrdlu Studio. Five projectors mark the tempo of the exhibition, generating an asynchronous and dynamic flow of images. The dilated succession of countless visual combinations plunges the viewer into a continuously unresolved present. To this point, no one observing a landscape in the countryside can grasp the idea of evolution in progress, just like no one, looking at the sky full of stars, can grasp the idea of the galaxy's full size. What simultaneously contains the entire corpus of images is a large exhibition sheet available at the gallery entrance, functioning as a map and constellation of all possible exhibition scenarios.

Installation view
Works for a
cosmic feeling
Matèria, Rome.
2021





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cosmic feeling
Matèria, Rome.
2021



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2021



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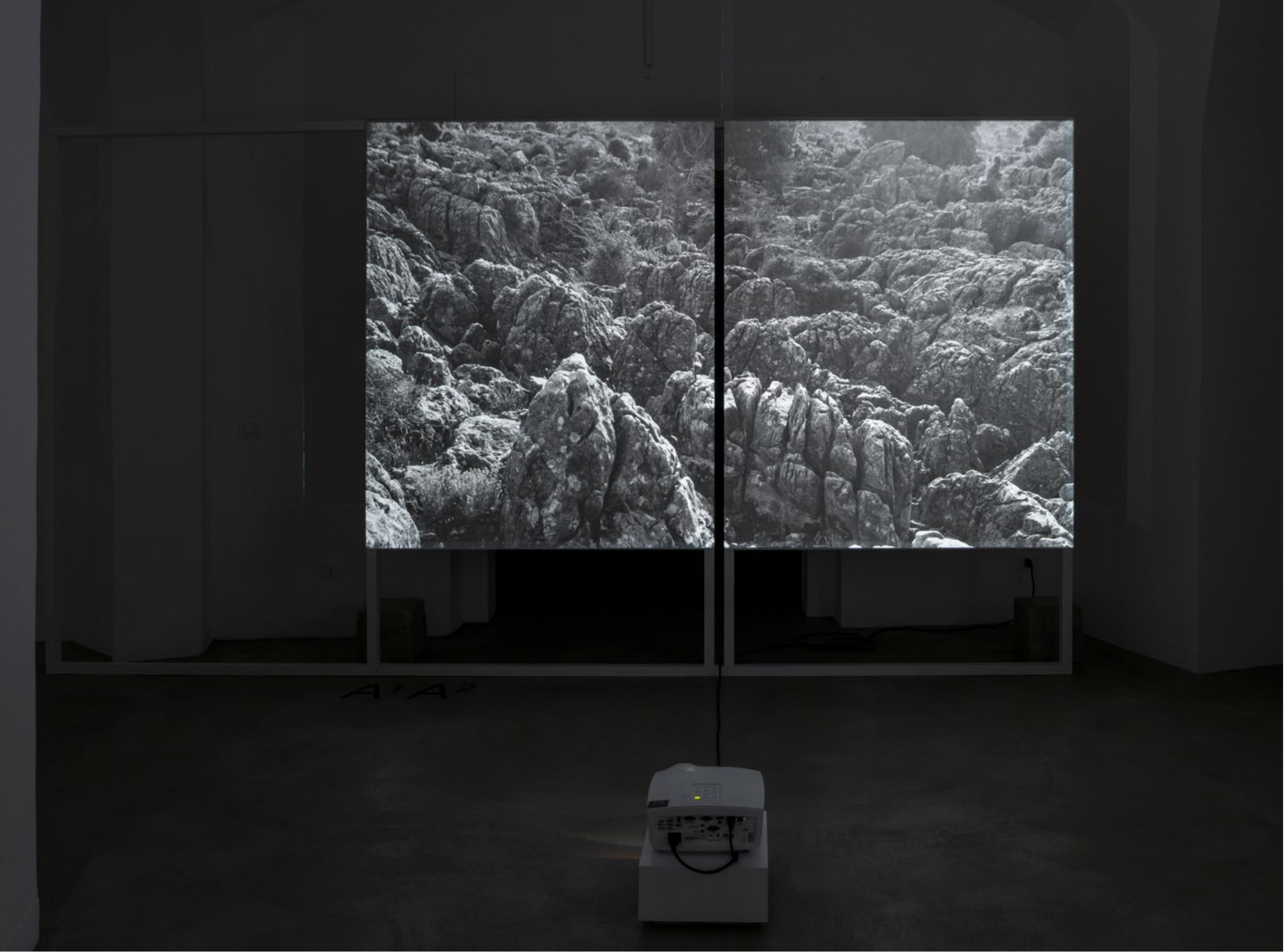




Installation view
Works for a
cosmic feeling
Matèria, Rome.
2021



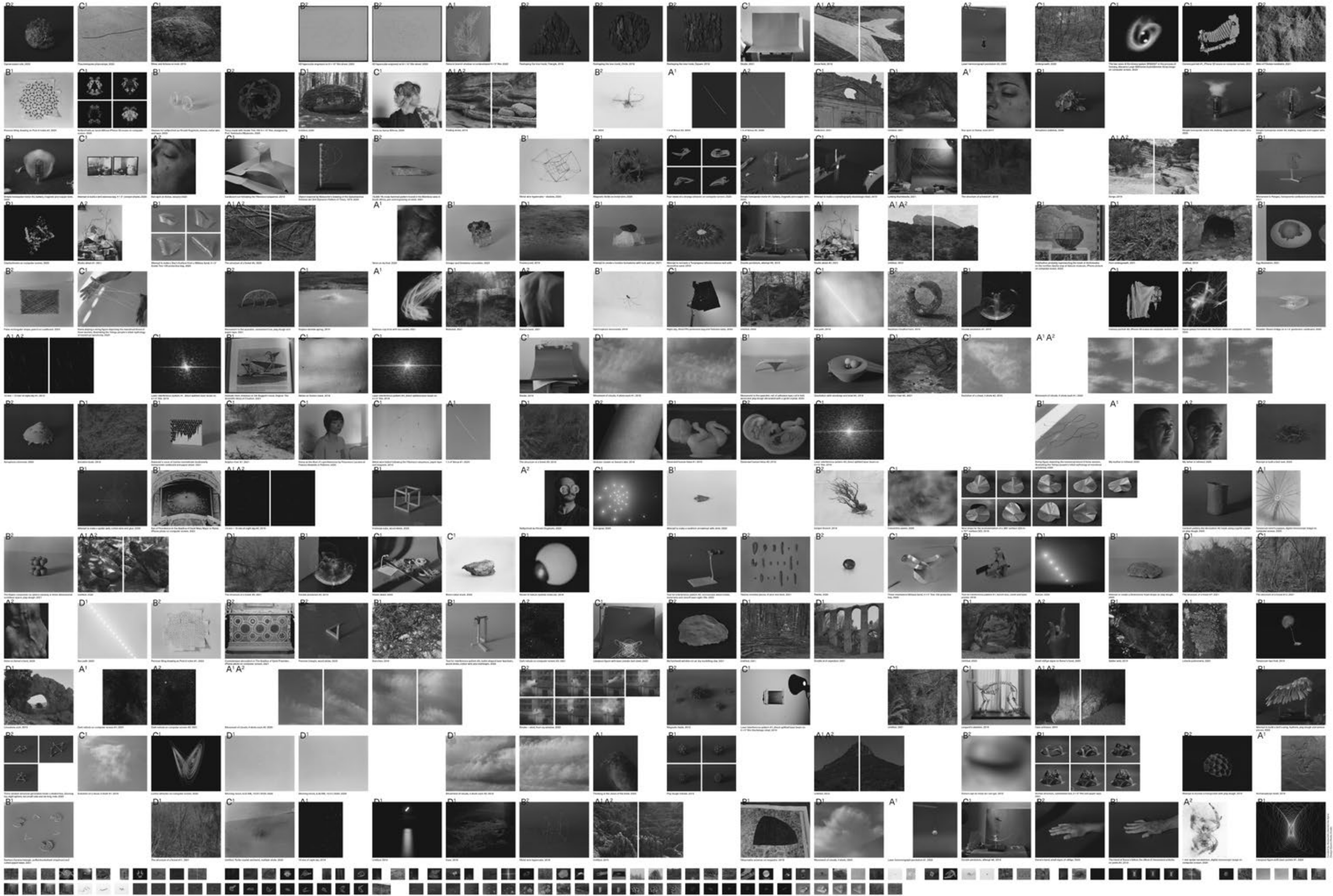
Installation view
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2021



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2021



On Earth — Imaging, Technology and the Natural World

FOAM, Amsterdam — 2020

Curated by Hinde Haest and Marcel Feil

Photography enables us to observe the world and the effects of our existence in it. It can be used to document, eternalise and motivate events. Photography has also testified to the paradoxical relationship between man, nature and technology. As we use contemporary technologies to document and question our relationship with the natural world, we increasingly experience this world through the very same technologies used.

On Earth – Imaging, Technology and the Natural World unites the work of 27 contemporary artists who use innovative visual techniques to reflect on the evolving relationship between humans and nature. Besides photography, the artists make use of installation, sculpture, in-game photography and video. Their various visual approaches diverge and converge throughout the exhibition. These artists show they both seek to explore and reunite our technological, socio-economical, spiritual and political connection with the world.

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

Thomas Albdorf (1982), Jonathas de Andrade (1982), Jeremy Ayer (1986), Fabio Barile (1980), Matthew Brandt (1982), Melanie Bonajo, (1978), Persijn Broersen & Margit Lukács (1974 & 1973), Raphaël Dallaporta (1980), Mark Dorf (1988), Lucas Foglia (1983), Noémie Goudal (1984), Mishka Henner (1976), Femke Herregraven (1982), Benoît Jeannet (1991), Adam Jeppesen (1978), Anouk Kruithof (1981), Mårten Lange (1984), Douglas Mandry (1989), Awoiska van der Molen (1972), Drew Nikonowicz (1993), Mehrali Razaghmanesh (1983), Guillaume Simoneau (1978), Troika (1976 & 1977), Maya Watanabe (1983), Guido van der Werve (1977).

On Earth was curated by Foam and produced in collaboration with Les Rencontres d'Arles.



Installation view
On Earth — Imaging,
Technology and the
Natural World
FOAM, Amsterdam.
2020

Installation view
On Earth — Imaging,
Technology and the
Natural World
FOAM, Amsterdam.
2020





Installation view
On Earth — Imaging,
Technology and the
Natural World
FOAM, Amsterdam.
2020

On Earth — Imaging, Technology and the Natural World
50th edition of the Rencontres d'Arles — 2019
Curated by Hinde Haest and Marcel Feil

Installation view
On Earth — Imaging,
Technology and the
Natural World
50th edition of the
Rencontres d'Arles.
2019



Installation view
On Earth — Imaging,
Technology and the
Natural World
50th edition of the
Rencontres d'Arles.
2019



Fabio Barile & Domingo Milella — Le Forme del Tempo

Centro Arti visive Pescheria — 2019

Curated by Alessandro Dandini de Sylva

The sense of time is the subject of the dialogue through images between Fabio Barile and Domingo Milella. Both use photography to portray time. The measures are different: historical time is very short compared to geological time, but both the artists transpose, reduce and compose images that describe the shape of time.

The work of Domingo Milella, Indexing 2001/2016, features the main destinations of fifteen years of research during which the author has collected images and signs of people and cultures vanished, ancient enough to be forgotten or even not deciphered. Milella's journey began in the outskirts of Bari, the city where he grew up, and continued traveling from East to West, marking a map in which the man, often physically absent, still leaves traces of his presence.

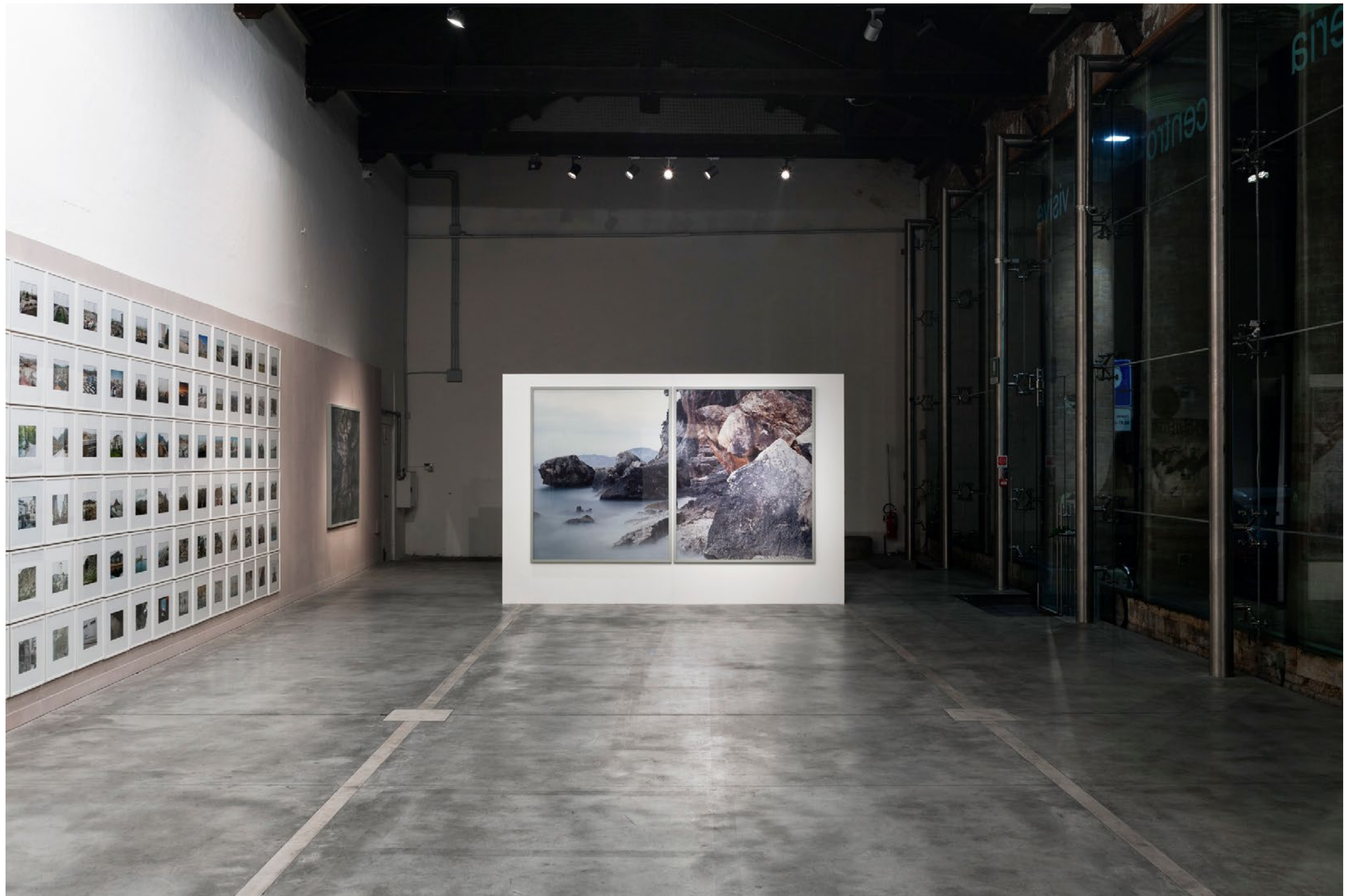
The work of Fabio Barile, An Investigation of the laws observable in the composition, dissolution and restoration of land, is the analysis of the complex and intricate elements that characterize the landscape we live in, through geological evidence, experimentation with photographic materials and simulations of geological phenomena. His intent is to establish a dialogue with the deep history of our planet that, eroded, compressed and shaped, over billions of years of transformations, has generated the illusory stability of the landscape we are used to today.

The spirit of time traveler is the imprint of the research of the two authors. The juxtaposition of their photographs let us into a backward journey, a descent into the unknown, into the human's heart, from present to deep time.

In a letter addressed to an American colleague, Charles Darwin declared that thinking of the evolution of the eye made him shiver. The author of the Origin of Species used this rhetorical tool to introduce readers to the concept of evolution, a natural process that surpasses our imagination by its breadth, ubiquity and (in most cases) remote slowness. No one observing a landscape in the countryside can get an idea of the evolution in progress, just like no one, looking at the sky full of stars, can get an idea of the size of the entire galaxy. It is therefore right to expect some shiver.



Installation view
Fabio Barile &
Domingo Milella
Le Forme del Tempo
Centro Arti visive
Pescheria, Pesaro.
2019



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Le Forme del Tempo
Centro Arti visive
Pescheria, Pesaro.
2019



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Pescheria, Pesaro.
2019

MAPS|SPAM

Società Geografica Italiana,
Villa Celimontana, Rome — 2018

Curated by Alessandra Arancio

Prototype #1

The space of possibilities is constituted by the patterns of neural activity that are possible given the structure of one's brain architecture (or connectoma). As a whole, the latter determines the possible patterns that may exist within it. In other words, it contains the matrix of all the perceptions / ideas / behaviors we are able to have.

Beau Lotto, Deviate

What links the Museum of Comparative Anatomy of La Sapienza to the concept of map? Mapping is a process intrinsic to human thought. Measuring reality, creating relationships between its elements, allows us to stay in the world, we also do it for unattainable places, like the stars. The maps, as well as being a valid tool for territorial positioning, are also a powerful generator of imagination, we have a beautiful evocation in *Lisola di Arturo* by Elsa Morante. When we look at a map, without being in the represented place, our imagination is activated with sensations that act as connectors between the lines drawn on that map and our experience of the world.

So, I wanted to try, using as a propeller a map of the Milky Way, a process of localization and branching of my conception of the world.

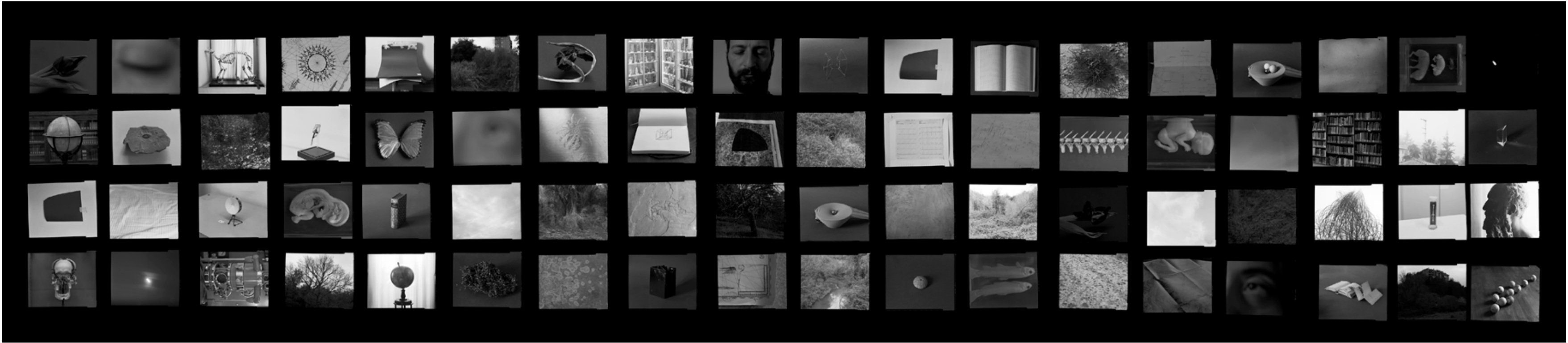
The work created specifically for the exhibition at the Italian Geographic Society is an attempt to give shape, through photographic practice, to my space of the possible. Using a large contact sheet, they are returned without a conscious filter and, at the same time, with ever wider connections mental associations dictated by pure observance with the intent to comprehend, meant at the root as CUM PREHENDERE, or to take together, to grasp. In this way a wide range of relations is activated between the elements that make up this atlas of human perception.

From the observation of the anatomy of living beings, which allows us to reconstruct the tree of life, I moved towards an imaginary space, with suggestions related to the observable universe, associated with instruments used by navigators to orientate in their journeys and a series of representations of landscapes realized both inside and outside my home, to show the potential of an exploration that is always possible, without preordained boundaries.

The represented space thus takes shape from the relationships that are created and not from the individual images, giving the possibility to the observer of the work to draw their own internal narrative.



Installation view
MAPSISPAM
Società Geografica
Italiana,
Rome
2018



Prototype #1 at
[MAPS|SPAM](#)
Società Geografica
Italiana,
Rome
2018

Observing the Earth

A dialogue between contemporary photography and the historical archive of ICCD

Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione,
Rome — 2018

Curated by Benedetta Cestelli Guidi

In 2017 Fabio Barile began to compare his work with the photograph preserved in the historical archives of the Central Institute for catalog and documentation; the exhibition *Observe the Earth* documents the dialogue and intends to return some reflections born from this new phase of the photographic project to the exquisitely visual level.

The archive photographs are displayed on the wall on two registers parallel to the main one, so as to tickle the visitor with the possibility of dialogue between contemporary and historical. The only exception is the historical photographs documenting the spread of erratic boulders in Lombardy, displayed on the notice board alongside the experiments carried out by Fabio Barile through which this very particular phenomenon of migration of large fragments of rocks is displayed.

As is known, the historical photographic archive of the ICCD preserves photographs of documentation of Italian cultural heritage over the long time of over a century (1895 - today).

Only gradually the landscape and its geological conformations have been recognized as a cultural asset (Bottai Law, 1939) albeit in the sense of 'natural beauty'. Photography has played

such a central role in this process of inclusion in the 'register' of national heritage that it appears to be always and still not underlined enough; the photographic archive of the ICCD is therefore configured as a tank of litmus papers to understand if, when, how and what has been photographed and protected.

In the preparation of the exhibition, some historical prints - different in format, technique and presentation of the image - were excavated in the archive, which document geological conformations that are not identical but similar to those photographed by Fabio Barile. The verification and comparison has led to multiple results, broadening the perspectives of the authorial project on the one hand and opening new horizons for historical photography on the other. One of the openings concerns the possibility of distinguishing between the ways of looking; the contrast between the activity of looking / distraction and that of looking / observation is articulated in room 2 of the exhibition. Only by preparing to look / observation are you then ready to get to the heart of the exhibition and understand the thematic sections into which the exhibition in room 3 is divided, whose exhibition layout is divided into four sections that document as many common geological phenomenologies such as the erosion, dissolution, volcanism and sedimentation.

The juxtapositions between Fabio Barile's photographs and archival ones often force the most obvious field of assonances to favor that of differences; they insist more on waste than on continuity and / or compositional identity. Calculating the interstitium of these visible compositional divergences, critical issues emerged - the omissions but also the recurrences - which document the tortuous path of the recognition of the geological phenomenon as a cultural asset, and therefore of attention for the purposes of conservation and protection.

A second element appeared even more significant. Given that the photographic archive is a polysemic reservoir in which the authorial dimension is neglected in favor of a plurality of often anonymous glances, there has been a persistence of a single 'vision' shared by photographers operating at different geographic latitudes and in distant times; this compositional alignment of the photographic image is translated into the insistence in photographing extraordinary geological phenomena, taken up because of their monumentality and singularity and transformed into further folkloric elements useful for strengthening identity processes on a local scale. Geology therefore as an element of folklore and not as an instrument of knowledge of the terrain; to this fossilization of the gaze of the photographers in the long duration of a century (1870 - 1970 approx.) there are few exceptions that become precious indicators to outline specific projects aimed at restoring the morphology of the terrain even in our not far past.

The exhibition *Observing the Earth* was therefore a precious opportunity to trace the contours of this story and to verify how a narrative articulated over many times and on many looks can broaden the field of action of contemporary design and at the same time restore sense and depth of reading. criticism of the photographic archive and the historical photographs preserved here.



Installation view
Observing the Earth
Istituto Centrale per il
Catalogo e la
Documentazione,
Rome.
2018



Installation view
Observing the Earth
Istituto Centrale per il
Catalogo e la
Documentazione,
Rome.
2018



Installation view
Observing the Earth
Istituto Centrale per il
Catalogo e la
Documentazione,
Rome.
2018



Installation view
Observing the Earth
Istituto Centrale per il
Catalogo e la
Documentazione,
Rome,
2018

An investigation of the laws observable in the composition, dissolution and restoration of land

Matèria — 2017

Essay by Naomi Itami

‘A few hundred years hence, in this same place, another traveller, as despairing as myself, will mourn the disappearance of what I might have seen, but failed to see. I am subject to a double infirmity: I am hurt by everything I see, and I constantly reproach myself for not looking as much as I should.’
Claude Lévi-Strauss, “Tristes Tropiques”

At first glance, Fabio Barile’s practice could be said follow in the long tradition of Italian landscape photography which includes practitioners such as Luigi Ghirri, Guido Guidi, and Gabriele Basilico. On closer inspection, however, the images in *An Investigation* hew to a tight conceptual framework that belie their simplicity, asking deeper questions about the nature of Time and geologic time, questions whose philosophical implications underpin scientific endeavor, human perception, and the unknowable forces of creative destruction at work in Nature and within the artist himself. The works are tethered to their titles: geological descriptions and accounts of the experiments Barile undertook. Whether admired for their grandeur, or viewed as documents, the material alludes to the binary relationship between science and art, and the leaps made by artists and scientists toward one other, in the belief that startling connections are possible. The ambitious scope of the work produces a surprisingly internal travelogue of cosmic dimension.

Drawing from the realms of geography, physics, chemistry, and biology, *An Investigation* borrows from the multifarious approaches of geological observation and data collection and from

the history of photography. These photographs are about looking as much as we should. James Hutton’s book ‘Theory of the Earth’ was seminal to the project and the artist cites Timothy O’Sullivan’s ‘Geological survey of the 40th parallel’ as a direct influence. Echoing early photography pioneers such as Blossfeldt, Le Gray and Bayard, Barile works on an unwieldy large format camera, evoking the arc of the photograph’s evolution, and linking photography to the bygone days of exploration. In an age where every mountain has been google- mapped and every island breached, Barile suggests that the only journey remaining is inside the image itself. And indeed, a slow reading of the photographs elicits what Romain Rolland called in a letter to Sigmund Freud in 1927, an oceanic feeling. Textures and striations of uneven planes in the rocks and landscapes provide clues as to how and when these ancient formations came to be. They also yield a sensual appreciation of Time’s inexorable march. As all images tend toward dissolution (digital photographs pixelate, paintings reveal brush strokes) a haptic visuality is elicited from the viewer. The viewer’s gaze travels across these images like a caress. The eyes fastening to them as though organs of touch. Barile’s invitation is most successful here, as it invites contemplation of the infinite rather than pulling us down the narrow path of a private narrative. After all, glacial formations are not going anywhere soon.

As a juxtaposition to the noble, sombre images of ancient rock and landscape, Barile produced playful, decidedly lo-fi images of the scientific experiments he undertook that serve to round out *An Investigation*.

Highlighting the disparity between man’s pursuit of knowledge and Nature’s inherent perfection, the artist used darkroom and everyday household materials, to replicate (on a smaller scale) the physical forces and natural phenomena that occurred beneath the surface of the earth over the 4.5 billion years of its existence. Barile says the experiments became the key to interpreting the landscape as a complex, hidden system, transforming it into a form of research, in the hopes of creating a vision that is not to be received passively, but rather, “interrogated by our gaze”. The analogue models do indeed explicate processes like the formation of stalactites and differential erosion using everything from crackers to Ikea furniture, but mostly serve as an attempt to stretch the viewer’s grasp of deep time. In so doing, Barile invites us into a mordantly funny, quasi-pathetic time machine of his own making, to travel to a time before humanity existed and to question what will be left when we cease to exist.

Knowing that images of nature can never be separated from nature, Barile accepts that the world has been exhausted by representations of itself. The natural world has become a simulacrum, manipulated for the purposes of revealing aesthetics lodged within ‘objective’ representation. The artist’s use of geological descriptions as image titles, urges the viewer to consider far more than the science behind the geological structures. The large format prints, products of Barile’s obsessive gaze, are windows which give onto both a distant past and a presumptive future with geologic time as the connective tissue. Like a Renaissance artist, Barile considers art to be an instrument for understanding the universe, a view which implies reverence for the pio-

neers of modern science, chief among them, the father of geology, James Hutton (1726-1797), who first perceived that the earth is alive with geologic activity, as well as determining that the Earth is billions of years old. Glimpsing our planet’s history in these primordial landscapes inundates the imagination to the point of paralysis. How can we conceptualise geologic time? Numbers fail. One hundred thousand years or one hundred million years can’t be encompassed. The landscape is the only evidential inscription of deep time— both the victim and the perpetrator of change. It is the immensity of time writ large, in a language we can decipher.

A final word about photography as a natural process that has its origins in the same ancient earth: *“The photographer deals in impressions that are enabled by the apparatus of the camera, chemicals, plate and light. Remarkably, this concept of impressions mirrors another natural process, namely, that of fossilization. If fossilization is an ancient impression of softer organisms onto harder geological forms, photography is its modern, mediated equivalent. It is the impression of gradations of light and shadow onto stone, metallic, or glass surfaces—themselves the elder products of geological forces. This new technology is written back into the earth’s deep history. The landscape crosses over to the order of the photograph, and vice versa; each an impression, each a fossil.”*¹

Barile’s work takes us on a temporally dizzying journey through deep time not merely through the myriad geographical forms of his native land, but through the language of the photographic medium itself.

¹ Architecture in the anthropocene: Encounters among Design, Deep time, Science and Philosophy : Episodes from a history of scalelessness: William Jarome Harrison and Geologica Photography. Adam Bobbette



Installation view
An investigation of the
laws observable in the
composition, dissolu-
tion and restoration of
land
Matèria, Rome.
2017



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Homage to James Hutton

Matèria — 2016

Homage to James Hutton, focuses on the aftermath of the earthquake that shook the Italian region of Abruzzo and the city of L'Aquila in 2009.

The series displays images of an antipodal nature to the substantial amount of photojournalistic projects that followed the event. Barile applies a scientific detachment to the tragedy, finding fertile ground for his research in the collaboration with the geologist Antonio Moretti, whose technical diagrams, applied and layered onto Barile's landscapes, encourage a meditative exercise on the complexity of landscape, its evolution and formation.



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James Hutton
Matèria, Rome.
2016



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Homage to
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Homage to
James Hutton
Matèria, Rome.
2016

Fabio Barile
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Fabio Barile was born in Barletta (Italy) in 1980 and graduated from Fondazione Studio Marangoni in Florence in 2007. In the same year he was selected as one of 15 finalists of the ‘Atlante Italiano 007’ award and his work was exhibited at MAXXI, Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI secolo, in Rome.

He started his photographic research in 2005 with a project about coastal erosion that affects 1500 km of the italian coastli-
ne. This project, titled ‘Among’, launches a research path focused on the investigation of the natural processes of
the landscape. This work is part of ‘Visions and Documents’, a ten-book set published by Documentary Platform and
has been exhibited in several group shows, for example: ‘Tempi Osceni. Moments de la photographie contemporaine ita-
lienne II’ at the Centre d’Art Dominique Lang and at the Athens Photo Festival in 2009.
In the same year, he had his first solo show, ‘Diary n°o, things that do not happen’, as part of Fotografia,
Festival Internazionale di Roma.

In 2017, following his solo show at Matèria, Barile exhibits a selection of works from his body of work “An investigation of
the laws observable in the composition, dissolution and restoration of land” at the National Archive for Cataloguing and
Documentation in Rome, in dialogue with images sourced from the archive itself. In 2019, alongside Domingo Milella,
he participates in his first major museum exhibition ‘Le Forme del Tempo’, curated by Alessandro Dandini de Sylva at
Fondazione Pescheria Centro Arti Visive in Pesaro.
Between 2019 and 2020 Barile participates in the major touring museum exhibition ‘On Earth - Imaging, technology and
the natural world’ held at 50th edition of the Rencontres d’Arles, FOAM Museum in Amsterdam and at
Le Lieu Unique in Nantes.
In 2020 a portfolio of his most recent works was published on FOAM Magazine #57 ‘In Limbo’ and in the same year he was
one of the five artists working with photography, chosen from UNESCO to work on the most recent italian sites entering
the UNESCO World Heritage.
In 2021 the book Works for a Cosmic Feeling is among the finalists of the MACK First Book Award.

Selected exhibitions

2021
Works for a cosmic feeling
Matèria, Rome
2020
Group exhibition, On Earth - Imaging, technology and the natural world
Le lieu Unique, Nantes.
Group exhibition, On Earth - Imaging, technology and the natural world
FOAM Museum, Amsterdam.
2019
Group exhibition, On Earth - Imaging, technology and the natural world
50th edition of the Rencontres d’Arles, in collaboration with FOAM Museum.
Fabio Barile & Domingo Milella - The shape of time
Centro Arti visive Pescheria, Pesaro, Italy
2018
Group exhibition at Villa Celimontana, MAPS|SPAM
Società Geografica Italiana, Villa Celimontana, Rome
Osservare la terra — a dialogue between contemporary photography and the historical archive of ICCD about photo-
graphy as a tool for observation
ICCD — Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Rome, curated by Benedetta Cestelli Guidi
2017
An Investigation of the laws observable in the composition, dissolution and restoration of land,
Matèria, Rome
2015
Homage to James Hutton
Matèria, Rome
2014
Group exhibition at MAXXI, Open museum open city
MAXXI, Rome
Fabio Barile & Francesco Neri, Middle-Earth a journey inside Elica
Elica Showroom, Milan
2011
Group exhibition at Museo Pino Pascali, Giovane fotografia di ricerca in Puglia, Museo Pino Pascali
Polignano a Mare

Publications

Di roccia fuochi e avventure sotterranee - Quodlibet/Ghella, 2020
Fabio Barile & Domingo Milella - The shape of time, Fondazione malaspina edition, 2019
Fabio Barile & Francesco Neri, Middle-Earth a journey inside Elica, 2014
Vision And Documents Box, Documentary Platform, 2010
Diary N° o - Things that do not happen, 3/3, 2009