

# EPIMELEIA

*The world's salvation is in the community.*  
[M. Scott Peck]

Algid, at times surgical, Elena Mazzi's visual alphabet conceals a deep holistic feeling seamlessly intertwined with militant positions, making her a brilliant interpreter of contemporary times. A vision close to eco-feminist positions, according to which there will be no future without overcoming the binary concepts of nature-culture, male-female, body-mind and without a radical transformation of the current neoliberal and patriarchal system. A seed of hope in a world on the verge of ecological "catastrophe" and social injustice. Science and anthropology, botany and sociology are condensed into an eclectic yet organic artistic production. In it, the need for harmony with nature and other species passes through the recognition of the importance of community as the only true core of the individual (hooks), without ever neglecting a whistle-blowing attitude of contemporary social injustices, from gender to climate.

*Community cannot take root in a divided life. Long before community assumes external shape and form, it must be present as a seed in the undivided self: only as we are in communion with ourselves can we find community with others.*  
[Parker Palmer]

From this concept, starting at the intimate sphere of the self and then expanding to the search for harmony between the micro and the macro, the human and the nonhuman, the individual and the community, *Epimelia* takes its cue. The Greek term of Socratic origin properly indicates care of the self, as it is preparatory to the relationship with the other. Spanning video, sculpture and photography, *Epimeleia* is a protean exhibition whose works contribute to the visualisation, representation and realisation of the same message: care.

The private and fragile dimension of *Encounters*, immersed in the untouched Icelandic wilderness meets the collective dimension of *POÇ*, pool or rather well in the Friulian dialect. The two videos join the archetypal sphere of *Written and unwritten dance*, an installation dedicated to a magical form of "liberation" in the Apulian tradition, the "Pizzica Serpentata Ceglieese," a lesser-known version of the Taranta dance in which the symbolic animal is the snake. The work is a difficult attempt to apply the empirical method of cultural anthropology to the visual arts, namely to systematise something that nevertheless escapes strict classification as an apotropaic rite. The artist translates the traditional movements of this dance into signs and symbols by appropriating the well-known Labanotation system created in 1920 by Hungarian choreographer and dance theorist Rudolf Von Laban. In this dialectic of languages, the result eludes classification: the "performativity" of the installation sits alongside the pictorial of the precious sheets, as a score of signs reminiscent of Russian constructivism. *The shape of contemporary artwork extends beyond its material form: it is a binding element, a dynamic principle of agglutination*, according to Bourriaud in his essay *Relational Aesthetics*.

Restoration, ritual and repetition are keywords in the three bodies of work that testify to the consistency of both Elena Mazzi's aesthetic and conceptual research. Therefore, the affinity between the series *Encounters*, here presented as stills from videos accompanied by holographic annotations that recreate a storyboard, and *POÇ*, a video transposition of the recent participatory project carried out in the mountains of Friuli with the community of Moggio Udinese.

Water is always a central element, it retains an ancestral thaumaturgic value of purification and healing, as in the "organic jewelled sculptures" *Becoming with and unbecoming with*. In this series, begun in 2018 during repeated Icelandic stays, silver-cast cetacean vertebrae are like suspended in an amniotic liquid of Murano glass. A natural pool is, above all, again the scene of a ritual practice which changes from a place of cure to a place of healing.

Finally, the daily dedication, the meeting of generations and the dialogue between past and present of *POÇ*, a pool magically set in the mountains, represents the secret memory of a community whose inseparable bond lies precisely in the act of caring for a common good. Nature is a *topos*, as Donna Haraway reminds us, a place that indicates a space in which shared themes are condensed: nature is a "commonplace."

Adriana Rispoli

**Adriana Rispoli** is an independent curator and art historian whose interests are mainly focused on art in public space, site-specific art projects and environmental issues. She has collaborated in curating exhibitions and interdisciplinary projects with numerous Italian and international institutions including the Venice Biennale, Museo Madre, Real Bosco and Museo di Copodimonte, Fondazione Morra, Museo Pignatelli | Casa della Fotografia, Paestum Archaeological Park, Certosa di San Giacomo Capri, Palazzo Incontro Rome, Palazzo Ducale Massa Carrara, Overtaci Museum, Aarhus Denmark, Palazzo Italia Belgrade, Serbia, MSU Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, Croatia, Zoma Museum Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, PiSt Istanbul, Town House Cairo, CCA Tel Aviv, State Museum Thessaloniki. Currently in her third year of a Ph.D. program at the University of Salerno and working as a curator at Palazzo Diedo, BerggruenArts&Culture Venice.