

Going towards the wind

By Irene Rivolta

Wide-ranging is a breath of fresh air.

Literally.

The birth of this show has been an exciting path of growth and reflection thanks to the comparison with the artists Bea Mc Mahon, Vera Pravda and Caterina Silva.

The chats became flows of ideas which, among other things, talked about breath. This *fil rouge*, involuntary but at the same time wished, resulted into the idea of focusing the show on the tight connection between the breathing of humans, the one of the artworks and the one of the space which hosts them.

Every artist has a unique practice but together, in this exhibition, they provide new lungs to the room.

Their works turn into megaphones of vital breaths, showing the bond between man, environment and art through the ethereal, something that is only apparently invisible behind the substance of reality. They explore that activity of communication that is silent, the words of air, talking about global issues and about intimate situations: such as air pollution and translation of interior spaces through breathing.

Bea's research moves from mathematics to Greek myth, often focusing on the usage of natural elements - like food - and the culture of her birthplace, Ireland. From this it is originated the series of inflatable trees, which are titled as the letters of the ogham alphabet, an ancient Irish writing system. Bea narrates that every letter of the alphabet is associated to a specific tree. For example, the letter D correspond to the oak, *Doire* in Irish. The trees, in sewn plasticized paper, are painted with a natural pigment derived from red cabbage which was cooked for five hours. The final water becomes purple, and with the bicarbonate or the vinegar changes into pink or blue/green. The trees, swollen thanks to a computer fan, rise to the ceiling: here it is the living presence of trees, of the oxygen and the function of the lung which lives the room, and the other way round the space which gives breath to whom lives in it.

The artistic approach of Vera is connected to the study of the human impact on environment and society. The two big art works, which are shown in the exhibition, aim at this purpose. They belong to the series "Quarantotto", created during the artistic residency at *Villa Greppi* (Monticello Brianza) in 2019. The works were painted with a special anti-smog varnish, called Airlite, which is usually used by the construction industry and which was mentioned by UN as one of the four most innovative technologies currently existing, capable of purifying the air. The color, due to its alkaline properties, activates in contact with the light and it kills bacteria and pollutants. Two paintings: eight square meters of surface purify air as eight square meters of a forest. The ancient trees of the *Parco della Villa* and the passing of season are the main characters of this works (in the exhibition the paintings represent October and November). It is a silent social and environmental revolution that the artist brings to Milan with perseverance. It is an active real action and a reflection on the physical, sentimental, mental space, populated not only by humans beings.

For Caterina, the breath is the center of many paintings, together with the idea of rhythm, method and tall, concepts that she derives from yogic practices, asana and pranayama, and she represents them on canvas. With the breath, it is given voice to ourselves, and also to the environment. The artist tells how the action of breathing creates around her an empty space and, with a genuine and spontaneous evolution, the landscape enters, flows into the paint and, during the pictorial process, it makes interchangeable the notions of Subject and Object- such as in the work O (throat).

What interests her is the idea of a creation through emanation, for which the beings - animated and inanimate- are the ones that come to life. It is like a breath that, in a natural way, absorbs oxygen through inhalation and eliminated the toxins through exhalation. Even *Mouth and Survivor*, part of the series named *Forms of non-power*, are an attempt to let the space express itself. By the employment of different materials, technique layering, liquids traces, folds or erasures, the art works are soaked with an innate quiet language which talks about breath and communication, power and powerlessness.

This concept of ethereal reminded me the poem "On the clothes" by Kahlil Gibran, taken from "The Prophet":

*Would that you could meet the sun
and the wind with more of your skin and less
of your raiment,
For the breath of life is in the sunlight
and the hand of life is in the wind.*

Wide-ranging gradually takes the action of breathing out of the shadow cone of the habit, an action which is so automatic and instinctive. It offers the possibility to rediscover fixed points, in us and the environments which surrounds us. It invites us to go towards the wind, to the life breath, holding its hand.