

text by

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«E poi non sapevo più cosa guardare
e guardai il cielo».
(Italo Calvino)

Edson Luli's is a sky full of visions.

Every day there are people who try to solve problems created by other people trying to solve other problems. We are sure that we are doing the right thing. Based on our knowledge of the natural world, we suppose that it will work. But when we actually do it, it backfires and something else happens.

"*A Glimpse into the Future*" encourages a debate on the impact that our society has on the environment: saving the planet is a fundamental act for human survival, but can the planet be saved? And does it need us to do so?

Luli takes the sky as a contemporary frame of reference that imposes a process of criticism of the present, by communicating and evoking with "*A piece of sky for future generations*" a configuration on the borderline between reality and representation. From the ceiling seven tetramini, typical shapes of the game of Tetris, decorated with the image of a cloudy sky suspend in space, according to a minimalist aesthetic that simulates falling, as the only source of light. Indeed, light. Climate change legitimizes us to think that many attempts in this field, even technological ones, are quite discouraging. However, has the world played a trick on us, or did we play it on ourselves? The clash between human and inhuman agentivity is intensified in the exhibition space through three monolithic screens, of different sizes, that show three compelling Tetris challenges ("*Don't blame yourself! It's just a game*"). In a fascinating interplay of perspective, intensified by the micro-universe of sounds - typical of the game - diffused in the ambience, on the screens the falling tetramini deposited on the bottom or on other blocks already deposited recall the suspended ones. But when an unbroken block of sky is created, it is the sky itself that disappears. The initial enthusiasm, stimulated by the possibility of being able to take control of the game, ends up being tempered by doubt: in order to metabolize the idea of the disappearance of the sky, and therefore the darkening of the sun, one would have to believe that the technology not only works according to plan but that it is also used according to plan.

Franz Kafka wrote: «A volte fa scorrere il suo martello lungo i muri, come se volesse avvertire la grande macchina in attesa di liberarlo che è giunto il momento di entrare in azione. Non accadrà esattamente in questo modo - la liberazione inizierà a tempo debito, a prescindere dal martello - ma è comunque qualcosa, qualcosa di palpabile e comprensibile, un simbolo». Trying to turn the hammer along the walls into the joystick of television sets, what is striking is that the artistic intervention stems from something we all think we know and that belongs - in the specific case of "*A piece of sky for future generations*" and "*Don't blame yourself! It's just a game*" - to the

EDSON

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rhetoric of play. What lies behind the game is a form of control. Is it possible to get rid of it? Here Luli, by allowing the viewer the playful action, instills the doubt that the program can change, opening up a critical space about the possibility of freeing oneself from control. What comes to the fore from a philosophical or anthropological point of view is thus the complex - human and otherwise - agentivity. We must think, then, that the game machine is a view of the world and, as such, embodies a subjectivity, however inhuman, that differs from our own.

In the transition to the lower floor, Luli insists on the source of light by abandoning the sky and taking on water, earth and plastic for people to see, with their own eyes and actions. The room, completely dark and extended potentially to infinity by the mirrored walls that make up its perimeter, is transformed into a desert - with sand coming from it - within which the audience can move, leaving their own imprint, trusting their own sensations and partly guided by 21 micro light sources. What kind of sources? Nothing less than recycled, LED-lit plastic water bottles. It's human, all too human: how many times have we finished drinking and left a drop of water in the bottle and crumpled it up and thrown it away? "*Footsteps towards the future*" is, by its very nature, a participatory work that - pardon the pun - sheds light on several aspects. First of all, water, as we know, lends itself easily to becoming a metaphor. It can be murky and full of hidden meanings, or clear and limpid as mirrors. Luli's water, discarded by human beings, not only reminds us how the world is becoming more and more thirsty, but also forces us to pay close attention. Atmospheric warming, ocean acidification, rising sea levels, receding glaciers and desertification are some of the consequences of our actions. Human beings produce climates, ecosystems and an unprecedented future. It might be wise to scale back, to reduce the impact. But there are so many of us, and we have gone far away. What to do?

Without any scientific presumption, Luli prototypes a new model of renewability and sustainability that, adhering to his research, short-circuits what we believe. The gesture with which we throw away the bottle, decreeing its end, is taken by the artist as synonymous of a new use - as illumination - and a new fullness - the drop of water in the crushed bottle occupies a greater volume than in a whole bottle. We are confronted with a completely new situation that reminds us of the rhetoric of control. Indeed, it seems that if there is a possible answer to control, it can only be more control. The sand desert illuminated by the water bottles emerging from its dunes is not a nature that exists or that we imagine exists independently of man. The work is an act of re-creation that folds in on itself: it is not the control of nature but the control of the control of nature: firstly, Luli reverses the course of the waste disposal action, then he electrifies it.

«Il mattino veniva e se ne andava senza portarsi il giorno,
E gli uomini nel terrore di questa desolazione
Dimenticavano le passioni, mentre i loro cuori
Raggelavano in un'egoistica preghiera di luce».
(Byron)

The starting point with which Edson Luli, who has always been attentive to the (in)coherent and vibrant multiplicity that is part of contemporary life, has come to explore the human attempts to reshape the planet and the challenges that await us today, bears the name "*Now, 1.3.2020*". Perfect timing, one might say. The work, an installation of 10 inkjet prints on cotton paper, looks at climate and environmental change in relation to human thinking. Displayed in the dividing space between the first and the second space of the exhibition,, "*Now, 1.3.2020*" can be taken as the artist's manifest call for conscious reflection: our fragmented way of thinking is the main cause of our society, which we consider disposable.

Here, the element of contingency, necessary for the definition of freedom of action, takes shape. But it also emerges how much every point of view that looks at the world is itself subject to the gaze. It is not only a question of reversibility, but also and above all of agentivity, which takes on a central importance on a conceptual level - above in the form of game control, below according to a recalculation of the path. It finds formal correspondence in the constant double register - on the border between light and darkness, life and death - from which emerges, not coincidentally, an idea of fragmentation that is common to the game as well as to reality: for thousands of years, humans have been practicing challenging the surroundings by destroying and reshaping, in the realm of the concrete as in that of the playful. "*A Glimpse into the Future*" invites us to focus on the challenges ahead, to avoid finding ourselves facing an unrecognizable future.

No one can know who has played a trick on whom. Nor can anyone know whether the planet will be saved and whether it needs us to do so.

«Sometimes you learn a lot when you are forced to think in such a long time frame».
(from Elizabeth Kolbert's book, "*Sotto un cielo bianco. La natura del futuro*")