

NATURE FOREVER. Piero Gilardi

art, ecology, social commitment and political activism
in the life and work of a master of contemporary Italian art

over 60 works showcase his career from the Sixties to the present

13 April – 15 October 2017

#NatureForever #PieroGilardi | www.fondazionemaxxi.it

*Art must become part of life, but as life is alienated,
we also need to commit to liberating and disalienating life*
(Piero Gilardi)

Rome, 12 April 2017. Piero Gilardi has recreated portions of nature in the form of carpets, reproduced the faces of politicians and industrialists in satirical masks, persuaded protest marchers to push a giant rock together and constructed stones that beat to the rhythm of our heart. He believes in a militant, democratic art free from the market, a positive generator of social transformation. MAXXI is dedicating a major monographic exhibition to Gilardi, **NATURE FOREVER**, curated by **Hou Hanru**, **Bartolomeo Pietromarchi** and **Marco Scotini**, from **13 April to 15 October 2017**.

As the curators explain: "With over **60 works** – from the famous *Nature-carpets* to the interactive installations and through to the Living Art Park of Turin, along with important pieces exhibited for the first time in years or reconstructed for the occasion – the exhibition reviews the career of a master for whom art and life are identified with and become militant commitment, starting out from that as an ecologist. An artist who is also a critic, researcher and political and social activist. For Gilardi, the artistic object goes beyond the purely aesthetic dimension: it is not made to be contemplated but experienced, shared and participated. And it is this interactivity that runs throughout the show."

The exhibition is an integral part MAXXI's research into the great masters of contemporary Italian art and, at the same time, explores Gilardi's career identity as a creative workshop on the pressing issues and concerns of our time.

THE EXHIBITION

NATURE FOREVER presents Gilardi's 50-year career in which art, criticism and politics are intertwined. From **the complex relationship between man and nature**, it investigates the era of consumerism and the use of new technologies in a presentation tackling and exploring themes such as ecology, the relational nature of art and social and political commitment. It is divided into **four sections**, each of which includes both **works** and **archive materials** (sketches, texts, original photographs, small works) allowing a comprehensive overview of the artists thinking and poetic.

The **first section** is devoted to work from the **Sixties** and includes, alongside *Macchina per discorrere* from 1963 (one of the artist's first works), a device through which one can speak that seems to have come from the future, *Terrazza*, a structure similar to a stilt house, created for the 1966 exhibition *Arte Abitabile* at the Galleria Sperone in Turin and **reconstructed for the first time for this show**.

Then there are the *Nature-carpets* that have made him famous, sculptures in expanded polyurethane, hyper-realistic but artificial representations of natural scenes, a kind of "disguise", a ritual exorcising the death of nature, *Igloo* (1964) which the public could enter and sit down and a number of *Natur-clothes* created for performances presenting man's original relationship with the natural world, all works that lead back to the idea of art that is usable and "habitable" by the public.

The **second section** focuses on **New Media Art**. The floor of Gallery 3, completely covered with artificial turf, features works such as *Ipogea* (2010), a cavern that offers the possibility of an evocative exploration, *Aigues Tortes* (2007), a log on which you can sit and listen to the sounds of the natural park in Spain from which it takes its name, or the *Sassi Pulsanti* (1999) which present the visitor with the beating of their own heart.

These works are part of that strand of research that from the 1980s led the artist to adopt technology allowing the spectator to actively participate by interacting with the art.

Also on show is the multimedia work **Inverosimile** (1989), presented on the cusp between the Eighties and Nineties at the Castello di Volpaia and in New York, Paris and Lyon and now exceptionally reinstalled for the first time in an Italian museum. This large-scale interactive installation, which is activated by the breath of the spectators and moves and produces sounds, represents a vine in expanded polyurethane that, like the *Carpets*, present an image of an evidently artificial nature, a total, immersive and interactive environment which the public is invited to enter for a multi-sensorial experience. Sitting on the large green patch of grass the works of this section come together to reproduce the context of the *PAV Parco Arte Vivente*, Gilardi's lifelong commitment to creating a community of eco-art.

The **third section** features Gilardi's **political animations**, from the Sixties to the present, some of which are on show in a museum of the first time. When, in the late Sixties, he realised that militancy did not enjoy the space in the world of art he had hoped for, Gilardi lost interest in the production of "works of art" and devoted himself to creating "useful" works in the political and social ambit, working in psychiatric institutions, factories and working class areas and collaborating with the student movement.

This section features **Andreotti Volante** (1977) and the mask of **Agnelli** (1977) used in protests in the Seventies, the **Masso della Crisi** (2012), an inflatable made for the May 1st march, and numerous other projects and costumes made to criticize the political class, defend the environment and civil rights, arouse awareness of peace and tolerance in what has been defined as a "carnivalization" of the artist's world.

The **fourth and final section** presents **Gilardi the curator and critic**. Between 1967 and 1969 the artist made numerous trips to the United States, Sweden, Holland, Germany and Britain; he was a correspondent for *Flash Art*, the *American Arts Magazine*, the Swedish *Konstrevy* and the French *Robho*; he was in contact with a multitude of artists. Less known is his role in the staging of two fundamental exhibitions in 1969: *When attitudes become form* and *Op Losse Schroeven* curated respectively by Harald Szeeman and Wim Bereen. This extremely intensive period is illustrated through **archive materials** recounting Gilardi's abandoning of the "art system" in favour of more direct action "within life", as shown in his political and social work and the project for **PAV Parco Arte Vivente**, Turin's Living Sculpture Park, a Contemporary Art Centre, a "museum beyond the museum" opened in 2008 and conceived as single living organism that rather than possessing traditional works is a naturalistic area studded with installations to be constantly tended to through cultural animation and gardening.

The exhibition layout concludes with a large-scale **wallpaper** portraying a protest against nuclear power at Caorso in 1987, with the protestors wearing costumes by the artist reproducing the faces of contemporary politicians.

Gilardi's research is unceasing and he continues to give form and voice to the community; rather than deception, in his inclusive, democratic and participated work the creative artifice is *power* which the artist constantly invites us to liberate as for him art is not a way of talking about art but about the world.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue published by **Quodlibet**, edited by Anne Palopoli, with critical texts by Hou Hanru, Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, Marco Scotini and Valérie Da Costa and a new text by Piero Gilardi.

The press kit and images of the exhibition can be downloaded from the Reserved Area of the Fondazione MAXXI's website at <http://www.fondazionemaxxi.it/area-riservata/> by typing in the password **areariservatamaxxi**

MAXXI – National Museum of XXI Century Arts

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opening times: 11.00 AM – 7.00 (Tues, Weds, Thurs, Fri, Sun) | 11.00 AM – 10.00 PM (Sat) | closed Mondays
Admittance free for students of art and architecture from Tuesday to Friday

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