

CURATORIAL TEXT

Rethinking Ruptures

The Sea as a Living Archive in Roberto Ghezzi's Naturographies

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“A boundary is a line, but it is also an encounter, an interweaving: a place where different worlds recognise one another and are transformed.” — Zygmunt Bauman

Every wave that breaks upon the shore is a rupture: a moment in which the continuous movement of the sea shatters into a thousand fragments before withdrawing and beginning again. It is the breath of the sea, a rhythm alternating fullness and emptiness. Sea and land embody two polarities that, despite their difference, complete one another, a theme that can reflect contemporary dynamics such as dialogue between cultures, the encounter between tradition and innovation, or the balance between nature and the artificial. The boundary therefore becomes a process: it is never fixed, but emerges as the result of interactions, exchanges and conflicts. The idea of a renegotiated boundary is powerfully contemporary, especially in a world in which physical, cultural and symbolic limits are constantly being questioned. Sea and land, so different from one another, represent precisely this tension: the fluid and the solid, the mutable and the stable, the continuous confrontation between permanence and transformation. The boundaries between land and sea are spaces of transition, places where the force of nature meets and mingles with human intervention. Often perceived as barriers, these ruptures instead conceal a creative and transformative potential capable of redefining our relationship with the landscape and with natural resources.

In the Mediterranean, the sea has always been a place of contrasts: a fertile and divine expanse of water, but also a witness to hardship, transformation and intertwined human histories. As for Ulysses, the boundary between land and sea represents a space of tension and possibility, where the thin line separating the two worlds becomes a place of metamorphosis. The sea is a rupture in continuous

becoming, a threshold between land and water that constantly redefines the concept of boundary and habitability. The Italian coasts, which Pasolini described as “a long road of sand,” are territories of beauty and discontinuity, where nature and human intervention coexist in a delicate and often fragile balance. They are margins that carry with them the weight of history and contemporary challenges: from erosion to rising sea levels, from the abandonment of maritime rituals to the risk of forgetting the ancient pact between humankind and nature.

The *TerræAquæ. Italy and the Intelligence of the Sea* call invites us to imagine “the form of the sea” as a space of reconfiguration and possibility, and within this scenario the work of artist Roberto Ghezzi finds extraordinary coherence. Through his “Naturographies”, Ghezzi explores the relationship between human beings and the marine environment, allowing nature itself to co-produce the work of art. His canvases, immersed in brackish waters or placed along coastlines, become supports upon which the sea imprints its own memory, tracing signs, organic deposits and mineralisations that return a visual geography of change. In this process, the boundary between human creativity and natural agency dissolves, transforming the work into a living archive, a tangible testimony to the dialogue between time, matter and ecological transformation. In rethinking the ruptures between land and sea, the “Naturographies” offer a perspective in which the limit is no longer a barrier, but a dynamic point of contact. The sea, as a fluid archive in constant motion, becomes a laboratory of natural writing that invites us to reflect on the need for a new language through which to understand and inhabit liminal spaces. In an age of growing ecological awareness, valuing frontier environments such as coastal zones means not only preserving their biodiversity, but also recognising their cultural and symbolic potential. The “Naturographies” encourage us to rethink the sea not merely as a physical space, but as an ecosystem of meanings and narratives to be protected and reinterpreted. This contribution proposes the “Naturographies” as a model for reflecting on interactions between human beings and the marine environment, imagining a future in which ruptures are no longer clear separations, but zones of co-creation, adaptation and attentiveness to the natural intelligences that shape our existence.

This contribution seeks to transform coastal ruptures into spaces for aesthetic, environmental and social reflection. In an era marked by climate change and environmental tensions, it is important to raise awareness of the fragility and importance of these places, which are often neglected or exploited without any real understanding of their value. The Mediterranean, with its millennia-old history, thus

becomes not only a geographical place, but a metaphor for resilience and creative potential. Roberto Ghezzi's artistic practice invites a change of perspective: to look at the sea not as a limit, but as a threshold — a space charged with possibilities, capable of generating beauty, dialogue and shared reflection.

Particularly relevant in this context is Roberto Ghezzi's project *āquae Naturographies*, an investigation begun by the artist in 2019 in the Upper Adriatic: the coastline of Friuli Venezia Giulia, the coasts of Slovenia and Croatia, and the Venetian Lagoon (the dock in front of the CNR-ISMAR headquarters inside the Arsenale and a renaturalised salt marsh in the Southern Lagoon). This is not only an aesthetic contribution, but also an investigation into the environmental condition of both natural and anthropised contexts. For this reason, Ghezzi's practice has attracted the attention of the scientific community, in particular CNR-IOM in Trieste and CNR-ISMAR in Venice, which, during the installations in the lagoon, collected fabric samples that were analysed using scanning electron microscopy (SEM). Ghezzi's artistic sensitivity, his practice and his vision can therefore offer useful points of departure for a broader reflection on architectural, urban, environmental, geopolitical and humanistic issues, among others. It is an increasingly shared form of project-making, respectful of differences, that places care for the sea at its margins with the land at the centre of the debate.

NATUROGRAPHIES

"Naturography is a neologism coined by the artist himself to indicate works transcribed (graphy, from the Greek graphé, 'writing') by nature, which he has produced across a plurality of landscape contexts over almost two decades of activity. These works are canvases created according to a process devised by Ghezzi so that nature itself leaves traces of itself on supports placed in the natural environment for long periods. At a certain point in his pictorial research, the artist suspends the more orthodox practice of painting and, instead of pigments, oils and related materials, seeks to catalyse natural processes capable of sedimenting traces onto canvases left in nature, thanks to treatment with environmentally compatible materials. He chooses suitable places in which to anchor the supports. He decides whether to leave them partially exposed, bury them, or immerse them in water. Through analysis and empirical reasoning, he anticipates how winds, currents, waters and natural essences will act in that site and positions them accordingly. He then monitors them, returning repeatedly to

observe the progress of the canvas until he considers it ready to be removed and exhibited, because intuition tells him that something of such beauty and mystery has been transferred to the canvas through contact. Through this singular practice he has worked in landscapes of extraordinary visual impact. He has created Naturographies in the boundless landscapes of Patagonia, in the natural parks of Macedonia, along the Tunisian coast and, with a different technique but a related intention, among the glaciers of Greenland and the Svalbard Islands.”

A SUBLIME PERFORMANCE

“Behind every installation by Ghezzi lies a performative practice of dedication to the landscape. The work is the result of an unusual process that becomes an essential part of its interpretation. Since the ‘pictorial’ work is not produced directly by the artist’s gesture, but by that of nature, from an artistic and humanistic perspective what becomes central to the analysis is not so much the morphology of the canvas as the artist’s very act of withdrawing from representation. It is in this gesture that the conceptual significance of Ghezzi’s works resides: entrusting nature with its own representation in order, in some way, to free it from the partial and subjective imposition of the person representing it. In essence, it means allowing nature itself to articulate its own essence and, where appropriate, to reveal the extent to which human beings affect it through mutations and alterations.

In the history of thought, the word Sublime has been used in opposition to Beauty to describe something that, rather than being graceful, picturesque and pleasurable, confronts the human being with a kind of searing pain before the overwhelming ineffability of Nature and its force. The term Sublime came to define works in which the grandeur of nature and the smallness of humankind induced in the viewer a sense of inadequacy and primal terror. In Ghezzi’s canvases, the Sublime is not in the finished canvas, but in its premise: in the acknowledgement that the landscape cannot be represented. Ghezzi refuses to betray that imponderable quality with his own hand. The Sublime in his poetics therefore resides in the entire performative, alchemical and epiphanic ritual that allows nature to reveal itself for what it is, because — in the logic of the Sublime — the human hand and mind are never sufficient to comprehend it.”

ROBERTO GHEZZI

Roberto Ghezzi (1978, Cortona, Italy). His training began in his family's sculpture studio and was further developed at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence. He began exhibiting in the 1990s, and his early work was rooted in painting. His entire practice is founded on a strong interest in the natural landscape, which he initially explored both through pictorial representation and through field experiments in direct contact with the natural environment. In the early 2000s he began presenting works arising from this research. These original creations emerge from studies and experiments carried out in natural, often uncontaminated environments, and their title, *Naturographies*©, contains the founding concept of both the final result and the process itself. The latter is an integral part of the work, in a journey to the origins of the relationship between artist and nature, where the support becomes a space of communion between them. The artist creates with nature while at the same time overseeing every phase of creation: from determining the initial variables and the factor of time to the final form.

Recent solo exhibitions include *THE MOUNTAIN'S EYES*, Gallery MCube, Kathmandu, Nepal (2024); *WHITE FADES*, curated by Mara Predicatori, Italian Cultural Institute in Oslo; *Life on mARTS*, curated by CasermArcheologica, Natural History Museum of Crete, Heraklion; *THYBRIS*, *IL FIUME ETERNO*, curated by Davide Silvioli and Cristian Porretta, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome; *L'IMPRONTA DELL'ACQUA*, curated by Mara Predicatori, Museo di Palazzo della Corgna, Castiglione del Lago; *AQUAE*, curated by Start Cultura and EContemporary, Fondaco dei Tedeschi, Venice (2023); *CONTEMPORARY ECOSYSTEMS*, curated by Bojana Janeva and Davide Silvioli, Museum of Contemporary Art of Skopje; *THE WRITING OF NATURE*, curated by Inanna Riccardi, Sixty Eight Art Institute, Copenhagen; *NATUROGRAFIE*, curated by Elena Cantori and Monica Mazzolini, Museo Lapidarium, Novigrad; *RADICI E FOGLIE SOLTANTO*, curated by Michele Dantini and Michela Morelli, Museo Civico di Palazzo della Penna, Perugia; and *PHYSIS – i codici dell'invisibile*, curated by Ilaria Margutti, Galleria Comunale di Arte Contemporanea di Arezzo (2017). Recent international artistic projects include *The Mountain's Eyes*, Annapurna Base Camp, Nepal (2024); *Life on mARTS*, Crete, Greece (2024); *The Polar Stream*, Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway (2023); *The Greenland Project*, in collaboration with CNR ISP, Tasiilaq, Greenland (2022); *North Macedonia Project – Art As Nature*, North Macedonia (2022); *The*

Writing of Nature, 68 Art Institute and CasermArcheologica, Copenhagen, Denmark (2022); Planeta de Origen, Ushuaia, Argentina (2019); Kunstkvarteret artist house, Lofoten Islands – Leknes, Norway (2019); OAW, Tunis and Hergla, Tunisia (2018); South Africa Project, Blyde River Canyon and Mossel Baai, South Africa (2018); Iceland Project, Hofn and Akureyri, Iceland (2017); and Alaska Project, Talkeetna and McCarthy, Alaska, USA (2015).