

AQUA AURA - Landscape Flowers and Guts

by Alessandro Trabucco

Aqua Aura's photographic work over the last decade represents both the evolution of an era and a premonition: photography, in the most traditional sense, no longer exists. It is no longer a tangible testament to the outside world, but rather creates another parallel, alternative world, that both does and does not exist.

Only a creative and visionary mind can gain access to a place of absolute visual purity, uncontaminated by matter and its inevitable decay, drawing elements from this place that will form a new effective reality, consciously imaginary but, in its objective presentation, credible and reliable.

The solo exhibition entitled **Landscape Flowers and Guts**, his third in Finland, includes various series of works that clearly visually define the journey taken by the artist toward the frontiers of an impervious and evocative space – an image explorer, in search of the new expressive possibilities that current digital technology can offer.

The landscapes, flowers and guts presented by the artist trace a path within environmental and human nature: a "Fantastic voyage" (to quote a cult film from the '60s), that is at the same time compelling, in pursuit of the profound meanings of our existence, through a succession of images capable of raising questions about their content.

Are these situations that actually exist, that the artist has photographed in some far off place, forgotten by man? We mentioned that photography – or at least Aqua Aura's photography – no longer documents what is before our eyes. And indeed, if we look closer, giving each image the time needed to convey its essence to us, we may notice something strange, effectively out of place, not immediately recognisable, not consistent with our normal perception of the world outside.

This element of "disturbance", which drives us to not avert our gaze elsewhere but encourages us instead to take a closer look, is what Barthes refers to as the *punctum*: the visual focus of the image, which determines its true meaning, the message that the artist wishes to communicate across space and time.

Time is the key element to understanding this particular visual direction that the artist seeks to convey in each of his works: present time i.e. that spent viewing the image, and a future time, i.e. that in which Aqua Aura's pieces will be fully understood. Because the artist's photographic work is not rooted in the contemporary. Rather, it projects towards the future of humanity, which is difficult to imagine, whether it will be better or worse than our current time, both in terms of overpopulation and more strictly environmental concerns.

And he does not shy away, in his work, from tackling what seems to be the most pressing issue of the moment: climate change, and its short- and long-term consequences.

Transformation, in the sense of alteration of a state or function, is of particular interest to the artist, who takes inspiration from nature to investigate the extremes of the infinitely large and the infinitely small, focusing specifically on what we can perceive directly with our eyes, and what, instead, we require specific instruments to observe. The human eye and the electronic telescope/microscope are two opposing poles, characterising the creative skeleton of the image, the structural elements by way of which the very concept of the image and its content are redefined.

The series entitled **The Graft**, **Sweet November** and **Carnal Still Life** combines two aspects of nature, which the artist presents alongside one another: scientific photographs – taken from web archives and featuring computer reconstructions of biological elements such as viruses, bacteria, cells, ligaments, tissue, neural networks and bones – and floral and woodland images. On the one hand, the magnificence of the flowers, gathered in full bloom, on the other, the circulation of "spores" in the air, emitting not heady scents but ominous viruses, visually magnified million of times. Or clusters of red blood cells, grown in peculiar biological gardens with a dangerously seductive appearance. Or expanses of dry leaves and personal objects arranged on a surface made up of various biological elements. All realised by the artist with impeccable technical skill, demonstrating how the frontiers of the digital image are being pushed toward as of yet unexplored terrain.

The images in the **Empty Spaces** and **Museum Highlights** series engage directly with the issues in the climate change debate currently concerning the whole planet. Aqua Aura constructs containers, boxes or veritable exhibition spaces that, rather than displaying traditional works of art, contain pieces of nature: icebergs, sea ice, ice crystals, snow-covered plants, fully active geysers and arctic caves.

Precious niches that preserve the memory of a world already lost, though present. Rooms in an archaeological museum containing objects from a past that can no longer be recovered. Testaments to nature that has been neglected, wiped out and destroyed by man's greed and selfishness. Sole examples of a world that no longer exists, lost to the memory of a time neglected for ever.

Aqua Aura tells the story of our catastrophic era through futuristic visions of great refinement, constructing images capable of representing the drama of our time with absolute expressive delicateness. Whole pieces, taken directly from nature, just as they are, become true works of art, displayed in containers or exhibition spaces that, in the artist's imagination, will be the museums of the future: no longer dedicated to man's creativity, but to nature, an authentic demonstration of beauty that will be but a distant memory.