

Press Release

ANDREA FRANCOLINO
But then Gaia, the Earth, came into being

Curated by Lorenzo Benedetti

Mazzoleni, Turin

22 September – 22 October 2022

Private View: Thursday 22 September 2022, 6-10pm

“... ..In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography.”
(Suárez Miranda, *Viajes de varones prudentes*, book IV, cap. XIV, Lérida, 1658).

On Exactitude in Science, Jorge Luis Borges, Collected Fictions, translated by Andrew Hurley

Andrea Francolino's first solo show at Mazzoleni, Turin features a sequence of antinomies. On the one hand, the show offers a mapping of the artist's journeys across different lands; on the other hand, it presents an attentive recording of the ground's minimal traces.

This dialectic between **micro and macro** generates a tension in the scenery. As in Zeno's first paradox (*“If there are many, they must be as many as they are and neither more nor less than that. But if they are as many as they are, they would be limited. If there are many, things that are are unlimited. For there are always others between the things that are, and again others between those, and so the things that are are unlimited”*) the philosopher underlines the contradiction of multiplicity, Francolino shows infinity through a small crack in the wall as well as through the great outlines of oceanic shores or mountain chains.

This everyday continuous **duality** emerges in the works on display. **Natural elements** and **research journeys** become irregular shapes that reflect organic strains, entropic fractals spreading across the surrounding space, with the potentially infinite pathways and cracked surfaces.

Francolino tries to make sense of this unpredictability in his series of glass works *Caso x caos x infinite variabili* (Chance x Chaos x Infinite Variables) in which the crack is replicated in its original scale, **generating a relationship between the natural and the artificial** in the attempt to reconstruct the track of an unpredictable line. Each crack has its own shape as each itinerary is unique and unreproducible.

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The search for **reproducibility** becomes the element that unifies the artist's different types of research. The same principle is evident in the video series *Minuto* (Minute), in which numerous images of cracks are projected on a variety of supports in an impossible effort to find the "right" overlap.

In the series *Percorsi* (Pathways), the artist has mapped on paper seven specific cracks he found on the ground. These traces illustrate the **movement of matter** in certain stopovers of his journey. The displacement from the starting point – his own studio – to its conclusion, generates an equivalent, fissure-like shape when drawn on paper. The seven traces remain imprinted on Hahnemühle paper.

The search for an infinite series of natural elements that are linked to an evolutionary dimension lead Francolino to give meticulous titles to his works, relating to concepts of space and time. Two examples are the large-scale paper *45.069920, 7.677337 - 14/06/2022 - 13:26:13* and *From 45.500761 9.224836 to 47.562640 7.601494* from *Percorsi*.

The installation *Dalla terra al cemento alla terra al cemento* (From earth to concrete to earth to concrete) creates a dialogue between two materials building a slow dissolution from one substance to another through a chromatic scale made up of the two materials that determine many common landscapes: a mathematical control over **chaos**. Here too the artist seems to run into Zeno's paradox, as if there was an intermediate possibility between one element and another.

The dualism between real and artificial is also present in *A-Biotic*, a work displaying the anthropic representation of nature through a **continuous association with plant forms**. It investigates the paradox of competing with nature by trying to imitate or replace it. In these works, there is an attempt to resume the organic perfection of plants: a Fibonacci sequence that has its own inner geometry. *A-Biotic* highlights this symbiotic, increasingly dialectical relationship between nature and industry, green spaces and large metropolises.

Several new works from Francolino's "**water series**" will be included in the show. Space and time are imprinted on paper using only the inorganic element of water, which defines images relating to macro and micro. The intimate reflections suggested by the **crack** relate to concepts of **fragility** and **impermanence**. Using water only – either collected from alpine glaciers and rivers, or from springs and the sea – this body of works is at once ephemeral and durable, thanks to the coordinates that fix its existence into a precise spatial and temporal context chosen by the artist. Differently from the works in **earth and concrete dust**, the results of this series are a type of sculptural positive of the cracks in the soil, where the support "absorbs" their three-dimensionality.

Finally, Francolino continues his experimentations started with the "**golden crack**". A recent example is the site-specific work installed in the church of Saints Giusto and Bartholomew, near Peccioli in the Province of Pisa, Tuscany. Following these studies, the exhibition ends with an environment in which the preciousness of the crack – both physical and symbolic – is celebrated as a sign of the passing of time as well as the perpetual movement of the continental plates.

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The visual elements include interventions in earth dust on the floor, gold on the wall, and lapis lazuli on the ceiling. Thin leaves and pure pigments of gold and ultramarine – precious materials reminding of Italian Medieval masterpieces with hieratic figures on golden-painted backgrounds – give substance to Francolino's research on the crack. Like glimpses of the Universe, they reunite earth and sky, matter and spirit, bearing witness to the hidden preciousness of what is – only apparently – void.

The artist pays tribute to that force of nature that marks – and *draws* – the surrounding space: whether it is a crack on the public street in front of the gallery, or the faults separating the Earth's tectonic plates.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a bilingual catalogue with a critical text by Lorenzo Benedetti.

ANDREA FRANCOLINO

Andrea Francolino (Bari, b. 1979) lives and works in Milan.

At the centre of his reflections is the “crack” – as in cracked surfaces – in all its universality and its “infinite variants”, without criticism and prejudice. “*Looking at a crack is like looking at the universe, I reflect on the meaning of life and the meaning of things*”, says the artist. Taking a multidisciplinary approach spanning aesthetic, ethic and ecology, Francolino tries to honour Nature in his works and has coined the term *econcrethic*, a combination of the words *eco* (eco), *concreto* (concrete), *etico* (ethical), to describe his work with natural materials.”

In 2013 he wins the “San Fedele” Prize with *Et omne Tempo*, an installation in concrete's dust that traces the floorplan of the largest shopping centre in the world. The work is a reflection on the exasperation of contemporary consumerism and on human vanitas. The relationship between man/product and nature/universe is instead at the basis of *Performance di una pianta* (Performance of a Plant), 2013-2015, heap of rubble of destroyed works from which a plant spontaneously grows: it is Nature that reaffirms itself and gives new life to what used to be inert and abandoned.

In 2018, the crack becomes the total protagonist of a work that bears its own name. On a wall of Spazio Aperto San Fedele (Milan) appears a fissure coated and filled with 22k gold leaf. As Francolino affirms, “*the crack, on objective manifestation of a process of becoming, evokes and sometimes reveals a link between opposites, generation an infinity of reflections.*”

From 2022, Francolino has started the so-called “water series.” In the works from 2019-2020, *Limiti* (Limits), he used to use concrete or earth dust to imprint on paper the cracks found in specific places between nature (meadows, rivers) and manmade (roads, buildings). In these new 2022 works, the results are a series of sculptural positive of cracks in the soil, where the support “absorbs” their three-dimensionality.

Francolino is among the four founders of The Open Box, non-profit art space opened in 2015 in Milan.

Among the most important solo shows are Museo Novecento, Florence (2020/21) with performance between Palazzo Vecchio and Museo Novecento; Spazio Contemporanea, Brescia (2020); Spazio aperto San Fedele, Milan (2018); The Open Box, Milan (2018); nm>contemporary, Monaco (2017); Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London (2016); Galleria San Fedele, Milan (2015); Spazio Testoni, Bologna (2013).

Among the numerous collective exhibitions are: Church of the Saints Giusto and Bartholomew, Peccioli (Pisa), site-specific work (2022); Woolbridge Gallery, Biella (2021); Embassy of Italy in London, London (2021); Austrian Cultural Forum, Rome (2021); Palazzo Barbò, Torre Pallavicina (2021); Mazzoleni, Turin (2021); CAMERA Centro Italiano per la Fotografia and Mazzoleni, Turin (2020); Mazzoleni, London (2020); AGI Verona and University of Verona (2019); Palazzo Palmieri, Monopoli (2017); Frittelli arte contemporanea, Florence (2016); The Loft, Works from the Servais collection, Brussels (2016); Quartiere Intelligente + MADRE, Naples (2014); Courtauld Institute of Art Somerset House, London (2012); Italian Cultural Institute, New Delhi (2011); Spazio Oberdan, Milan (2010); Villa Ponti, Arona (2010).

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Mazzoleni was founded in Turin in 1986 by Giovanni and Anna Pia Mazzoleni as a natural evolution of the private collection they started in the 1950s. Since 2014, the historic Turin space has been flanked by the London gallery in Mayfair. Over the past three decades Mazzoleni has organised solo and group exhibitions of more than 200 prominent Italian and international artists from across the 20th century with an exhibition programme focused on museum-calibre Italian art from the post-war period and recently also the contemporary panorama, working in close collaboration with artists' estates and foundations. Under the leadership of Davide and Luigi Mazzoleni, the gallery has intensified its international activities, participating in numerous art fairs, including Art Basel (Basel, Miami Beach, and Hong Kong), Frieze Masters (London and Seoul), TEFAF (Maastricht and New York) and FIAC (Paris).

NOTES TO EDITORS

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