

Au Revoir (station, deconstruction, shore)

Scartoni/Donati

2024

The intelligence of plants is a complex topic, deeply rooted in the depths of nature itself, challenging our traditional understanding of the natural world. For centuries, plants have been considered static and passive beings, devoid of consciousness and subordinate to human action. However, according to recent discoveries in the field of plant neurobiology, this living universe, while lacking intellectual capabilities, shows intricate signs of perception, communication, and adaptation. Plants tell stories of resilience and cooperation, demonstrating a form of intelligence that challenges our anthropocentric conceptions. They possess an innate ability to respond to external impulses, to remember past experiences, and to make decisions for their well-being by coordinating with each other, an ingenuity expressed through underground root networks and complex chemical and neural interactions. Every leaf, every flower, every tree holds a fragment of ancient knowledge, a wisdom beyond words that invites us to see the world with new eyes. Plants, apparently lacking the qualities that define intelligence by human standards, have been relegated, in our perception, to a marginal role. Scartoni/Donati guide the viewer in a reinterpretation of nature, structuring the journey through two interventions directly related to other works on display.

In the second intervention, the duo extracts a portion of soil from the banks of the Terzo Giardino, recontextualizing it within the gallery, thus creating a space of anti-heroic reflection. The work challenges conventional perceptions of nature by presenting a plant destined to die, which, through the use of small electric motors placed on fragments of vegetation, receives the necessary motion to be perceived as alive. This imposes upon the plant the role of protagonist in a tragicomic and grotesque scene, prompting reflection on human arrogance in determining its essence based on self-referential and thus relative principles. The irony of the work lies in the fact that the viewer only recognizes the plant as alive and present after seeing it move due to artificial intervention.

At the same time, this oxymoronic representation is further highlighted by the use of a monitor displaying a video of a similar piece of vegetation from the banks of the Arno River. Nature, vital and unchanged, is filtered through an inert, cold, and inorganic medium that projects a faithful, yet inherently inorganic and sterile, replica. In this way, Scartoni/Donati invite us to reflect on our relationship with nature, emphasizing the paradoxical human attempt to imitate, control, and understand it from a relative and fallacious perspective.

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