

Andrea Galvani: The Sound of SilenceEdit

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Fabio Pariente



The style of Andrea Galvani (born in Verona, 1973) is measured in different languages that are born on the basis of long and meticulous conceptual research that often makes use of scientific institutions and international scholars. The finished product is often the result based also on the surrounding environment: the work is shaped and completed within the space where it is received. In fact, architecture, especially for performances, becomes a scenography where images, music, songs and lights meet to make the soul vibrate visibly to the audience. Galvani's work is that art where nothing is left to chance, a result of his continuous travels around the world from one airport to another. The journey thus becomes an essential sap to find that force that serves to identify that new light – that silence to interpret, that artistic sensitivity that communicates emotions telling of a territory, a culture, and an experience.

FRONTRUNNER reached Galvani to talk us through his words and his works including neon, photography, installations with variant materials and performances.



Andrea Galvani

The End [Action #1] (2013-2019)

SNIPPET Synchronized multichannel video installation, 16mm film transferred to HD

Architectural dimensions

Installation and performance view at the Mart Museum, Trento, 2016

Photo credit: Andrea Cracco Courtesy the artist and the Mart Museum, Trento

How and when did you approach the art world?

I began my career in the late '90s, and progressively increased my participation at shows in the early 2000s. It was a very important and defining moment for me. I gathered momentum, started receiving institutional support and recognition, grew my practice internationally, and never stopped. I was raised in a very scientific environment, coming from a family with multiple generations of doctors and surgeons. I developed a really particular way of seeing the world around me, and at a very early age, I started to generate my own language. I've always been fascinated by the intersection of disciplines: art and science; mathematics and philosophy; architecture and performance studies. My work is still based on this same curiosity and intersectionality.

You were born in Italy but you've been based in New York and Mexico City for many years. How did you become a citizen of the world?

I have always traveled a lot, in different ways and at different times. When I was a student at university, I backpacked everywhere I could. I've lived in Africa and throughout Europe. I've never measured the world according to geographic or linguistic borders. I moved to the United States and opened a studio in New York almost 15 years ago in

conjunction with my participation at the Location One Residency Program, a prestigious international residency that has hosted top artists including Joan Jonas and Laurie Anderson. When I started collaborating with galleries in Latin America, I expanded my studio to Mexico. They're two different realities, two poles that are both powerful and generative for me.

Beyond that, I'm constantly traveling, thinking and speaking in different languages, collaborating with people and institutions around the world, and feeling at home in so many places, so this international life is not only conducive to my practice, it's part of who I am.



Andrea Galvani

Instruments for Inquiring into the Wind and the Shaking Earth (2018-2019)

Audemars Piguet Prize site-specific installation with neon sculptures and performance

6500K neon, white blown glass, metal structures, cables, paint, electricity

Dimensions variable with architecture

Installation and performance view at ARCOMadrid, 2019

Photo credit: Leonardo Morfini, OKNO Studio

Courtesy the artist and Revolver Galería, Buenos Aires

Your work is both analytical and sensitive, and your practice is multifaceted in artistic languages—neon, sound, photography, and performance. Is there a medium that you feel more comfortable working with than the others, and why?

My work is research-based, a conceptual practice driven by ideas and actions. The issues I'm addressing determine the media I use, so my projects are intrinsically interdisciplinary. Media is not the subject of contemplation for me, it instead serves as a vehicle to bring something into being. I don't feel more comfortable in one medium over another because whether I engage photography, sculpture, video, drawing, installation, or performance, I'm seeking to stretch the contours of possibility, to cross a limit. It's always a challenge. There's always a tremendous amount of organization, preparation, training, and technical knowledge behind what I do. I've crossed the Arctic Circle on a sail boat: collecting, inverting, and returning sunlight back into the Universe (*Higgs Ocean*, 2008-2011). I broadcast the sounds of negative space, modulating bats' ultrasonic echolocation into audible frequencies (*A Cube, a Sphere, and a Pyramid*, 2011); accelerated a gold nugget to the speed of sound (*Llevando una pepita de oro a la velocidad del sonido*, 2014-2015); used sculptures as fuel tanks in customized motorbikes for a series of performances (*A Few Invisible Sculptures*, 2011-2016); and filmed a never-ending sunset from a military aircraft flying opposite the Earth's rotation (*The End [Action #5]*, 2015).

You sometimes collaborate with singers and actors for performances. Could you tell me a little more about the vibrations of sound and pauses in these projects?

Sound is a physical vibration that enables us to connect with and channel immaterial phenomena as cosmic as gravitational waves or as mundane as language. In *Instruments for Inquiring into the Wind and the Shaking Earth* (2018-2019), for example, I collaborated with vocalists and performers to interact with the architecture, the artwork, and the public. At certain times during exhibitions, live voices produce a chorus that migrates throughout the space, transforming it into a soundscape. Collective rhythms and individual inflections emanate through a choreography of movements that advances and recedes, undulating like waves. There are sometimes pauses, rests, or moments of tension. The actors may freeze, or move their bodies so slowly that it seems they are still. These shifts remind us of the human element, our condition of constant change, the labor and effort behind our knowledge.

The performance is embodied awareness, the fragility of our mortality and our uncertainty. It's an energetic link between thought and form, offering an immersion into a multi-sensory space, a tactile experience.

How would you describe “the sound of silence”?

True silence is a state we are unable to reach unless we move at supersonic speeds. In 1943, Harvard University constructed an Anechoic Chamber designed to trap all sound. Until it was dismantled in 1971, it was essentially the quietest place on Earth. John Cage's 1951 visit there inspired him to create *4'33"*, a musical composition which contains no notes but precise durations. On his experience in the Anechoic Chamber, Cage describes: “in that silent room, I heard two sounds, one high and one low. Afterwards I asked the engineer in charge why, if the room was so silent, I had heard two sounds. He said, ‘Describe them.’ I did. He said, ‘The high one was your nervous system in operation. The low one was your blood in circulation.’” Silence is merely space for sound to emerge.



Andrea Galvani
The End [Action #5] (2015)
Concrete structure with Gold Apple MacBook
16mm film transferred to HD
155 x 28 x 20 cm / 61 x 11 x 7.9 inches
Courtesy the artist and The RYDER Projects, London/Madrid

What was your inspiration and intention behind *The End [Action #1]*, one of your large-scale institutional projects?

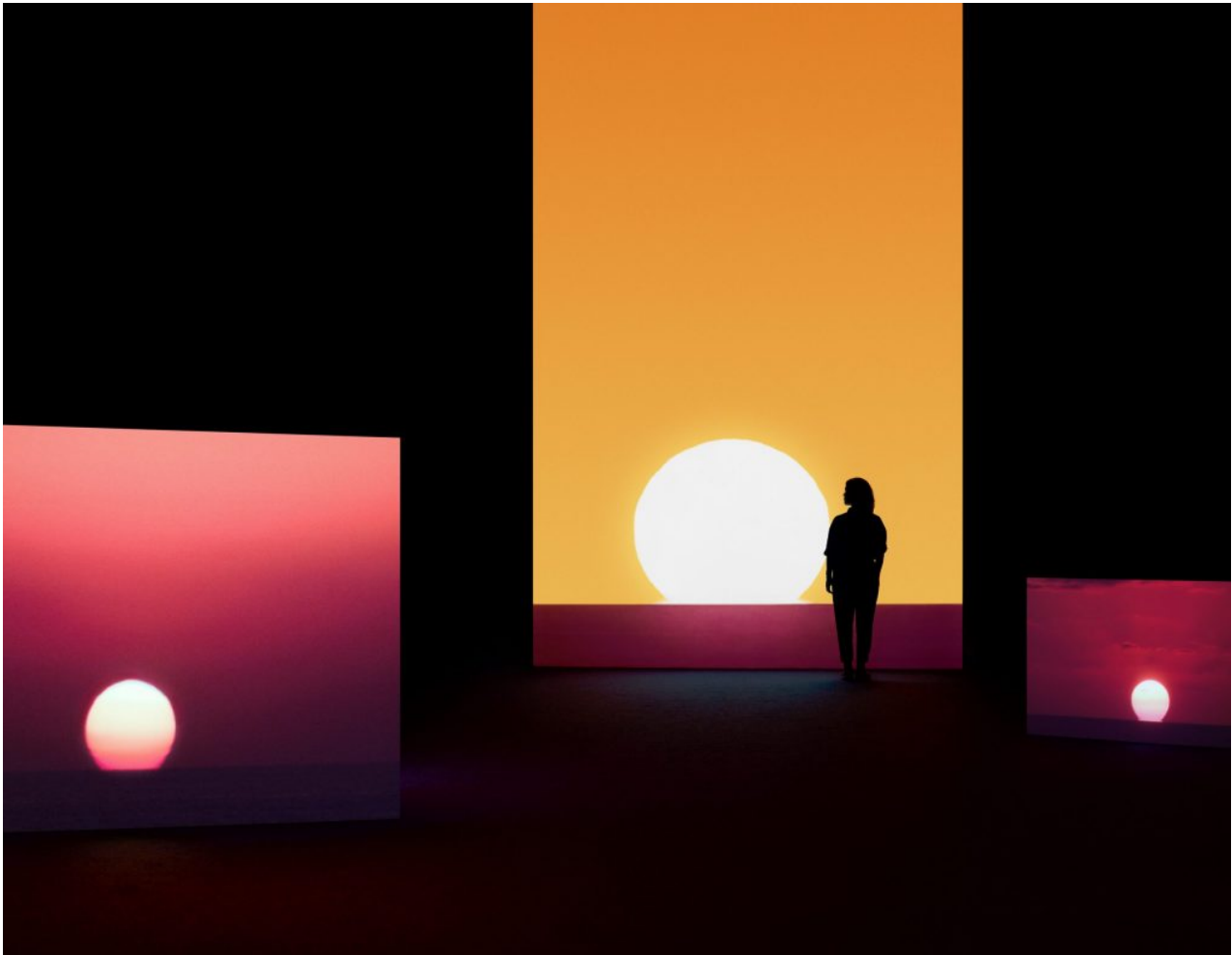
My original intention behind *The End [Action #1]* was to produce a real, complete scan of the sunrise, a planetary event that we're usually destined to perceive through our own singular perspective. It began as a transnational collective action in which over 40 different cameramen across 5 different countries along the east coast of Central America filmed the sun rising over the sea. It was performed on January 8th, the anniversary of the death of Galileo Galilei. The work manifests as a synchronized multichannel video installation that allows people to experience this singular event over and over again from a multiplicity of perspectives. This is important to me because I understand the power of collaboration to extend and evolve, to increase our capacity for knowledge and understanding, and to empathize on a human level.

We all have our own individual ways of perceiving, navigating, and interpreting what's around, and that's informed by how we identify ourselves, our backgrounds and beliefs. But we live in a moment in which it's really important to realize how complex and open this world is, so we need to collaborate, we need to be together, to build together, now more than ever.

Fairs and galleries. Do you think they still have a decisive meaning for an artist in the art market today?

Certainly. The art market is what it is today because of galleries and fairs. They're nodal points that constitute a vital network, structuring and connecting the international art market. Each gallery is like a living organism, a planet which generates its own gravitational field. Some galleries choose to invest heavily on participation in the most important international fairs with ambitious site-specific projects and curated solo shows. Others, on the contrary, choose to keep their participation at fairs to a minimum, instead investing heavily on projects within the gallery, offering support for particularly complex productions and spaces that allow work to grow.

Together, these different approaches and operations have welcomed my work, generating a solid international market with purchases from institutions, public and private collections that take place both in fairs and in galleries. That being said, what supports an artist first and foremost is the quality and consistency of their work, their intellectual honesty, determination, and rhythm.



Andrea Galvani

The End [Action #1] (2013-2019)

Synchronized multichannel video installation

16mm film transferred to HD

Architectural dimensions

Installation and performance view at Fabienne Levy, Lausanne, 2019

Photo credit: Andrea Galvani Studio

Courtesy the artist and Fabienne Levy, Lausanne

What are your plans for 2020?

I'm in the developmental stages of a few new projects that I'm really excited about. One is a new series of sculptures that I will be presenting for the first time at Galería Curro in Guadalajara this week. Also opening this week is Art Genève with Fabienne Levy, a new gallery based in Switzerland, then immediately after is ZONA MACO in Mexico City, followed by shows in the US, Latin America, Spain, Italy...you'll have to stay tuned.

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