

Giacomo **COSSIO**

Between aesthetics and responsibility

by Matteo Chincarini

Giacomo Cossio's work lies in a borderline territory, where art ceases to be mere representation and becomes gesture, action, embodied experience. His practice stems from a profound and almost restless attention to the environment and the space in which he lives, a space perceived as fragile, threatened, constantly subjected to anthropogenic pressures that alter its balance. In Cossio, this awareness does not translate into didactic denunciation, but into a symbolic and performative language that invites the viewer to stop, observe and question their role within the natural world.



Braga Parque ControNatura, May 2024



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Giardino Portatile, 2023. Photo: Massimo Dall'Argine



Atto unico Fabricaeos, 2021 ControNatura. Photo: Rudi Falomi

His art is action and performance, a direct intervention on living beings that is charged with ethical, aesthetic and political meanings. Cossio does not limit himself to representing nature: he encounters it, touches it, temporarily modifies it, establishing a complex and ambiguous dialogue with it. It is precisely in this ambiguity that one of the central themes of his research manifests itself: the often violent relationship between human beings and the environment, a relationship mediated by culture, design and aesthetics, tools that humans have historically used to control, order and transform the natural world according to their desires.

In Cossio's work, culture is never neutral. It is a force that shapes living beings, interpreting them, framing

them and sometimes dominating them. Painting plants, intervening on their vegetal bodies with strong, unnatural colours, means making visible this growing distance between man and nature. The colours used by the artist are deliberately far removed from those found in nature: artificial, intense, almost violent colours that temporarily transform the plant into an aesthetic object, a constructed image, domesticated by the human gaze.

Yet, this seemingly invasive gesture conceals a deeper and more subtle reflection. The colours used by Cossio are water-based and harmless to the plant. The intervention is therefore reversible, ephemeral, destined to disappear. At first glance, the work



Giardino Portatile, May 2021. Photo: Rudi Falomi



Giardino Portatile, Settembre 2021. Photo: Rudi Falomi

appears monochromatic, frozen in an artificial dimension that seems to impose a new identity on the living being. But it is time that completes the work. As the months pass, the leaves and branches are renewed, and the plant is reborn with its original colours. Nature reclaims itself, demonstrating a vital force that goes beyond the passage of man.

In this process, Cossio presents a powerful metaphor: human beings are merely passing through, superficial compared to the depth and duration of natural life. The artistic intervention, however visually striking, is destined to dissolve. Nature, on the other hand, continues, true to itself, capable of regenerating and resisting. The work is therefore not only what can be seen immediately, but what happens over time, in the slow return to the natural order. It is an art that requires patience, attention and a willingness to listen.

In an era marked by climate crisis, loss of biodiversity and the increasing aestheticisation of nature, Giacomo Cossio's work takes on particular significance. We live in a world where nature is often reduced to an image, a decorative backdrop, a product to be consumed visually. Cossio overturns this logic, transforming the artistic experience into a symbolic and critical device. His actions do not offer solutions, but pose urgent questions: how do we inhabit the world? How do we shape it? What is the price of our aesthetic and design choices on living beings?

The performative dimension of his work directly involves the artist, who places himself at the centre of an ancestral dialogue between humans and nature. His body and his gestures become mediators of an ancient relationship, made up of care and violence, respect and domination. In



OvestLab ControNatura, Modena May 2019. Photo: Massimo Vicini



ControNatura, October 2019. Photo: Massimo Vicini



ControNatura Santarcangelo Festival, 2020. Photo: Sferisterio

this sense, Cossio does not hide behind his work, but exposes himself, taking responsibility for his own intervention. Art thus becomes a space for ethical confrontation, a place in which to recognise the contradictions of our relationship with the environment.

Giacomo Cossio's work is, ultimately, art that makes you think. It does not console, it does not simplify,

it does not offer easy answers. Rather, it invites collective meditation on our way of being in the world, on the fragility of the balances we have compromised and on the possibility, perhaps, of imagining a different relationship with living beings. A less arrogant relationship, more aware of the fact that, despite everything, nature continues to live, to resist and to remind us how, in the end, we are only temporary guests.

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