

The way life is organized in the environment has an influence on every kind of social identity, whether personal or collective, as well as on the mechanisms that underpin social and environmental relations. A landscape expresses its identity through its spatial qualities, an identity defined by Christian Norberg-Schulz as *Genius Loci*, that is to say the spirit of place. Any action or as it were movement in existence occurs within a place and a portion of space. So the place is not a mere location, but a living spirit with a precise structure that can only be described fully by bringing all of its many facets together. Human activities, on the other hand, are continually modifying landscapes. This thesis is the focal point of *Echo*, the solo exhibition by the Israeli artist Gal Weinstein, who is showing again in Italy after the great success of the Israeli Pavilion at the last Venice Biennale, where among other works composed for the occasion he created a monumental site-specific installation entitled *Sun Stand Still* that consisted of an aerial view of the fields of the *Jezreel Valley* made entirely of coffee dregs left to go mouldy. The experience of the Biennale was the point of departure for the works he has produced for the *Echo* project, hosted by the Galleria Riccardo Crespi in Milan. They are works that underscore the artistic processes Weinstein has always utilized, i.e. the dissolution, aging and decomposition of materials, in order to investigate with a touch of irony the metaphors that shape the reality of our social, political and geographical present.

In fact the artist analyses the activities of the landscape and material as human modes of expression that give rise to disturbances and modify the *genius loci*. Such activities, in turn, alter human identities and relations. A dialectical relationship, or to put it another way a mutual involvement, that Gal Weinstein usually tackles through the use of uncommon materials like mould and steel wool. Amongst representations linked to natural phenomena and critical analyses of contemporary society, his research does not neglect political questions and investigations of ambivalence and mimicry, as well as the complex character of the transience that is linked both to the human condition and to the spatiotemporal one.

In a recent interview granted to the writer, the artist declared: 'Connecting my research to nature is a constant theme in my life as well as in my artistic development. The question of what is natural and what artificial is an open debate that haunts us [...]. I re-create natural images by artificial means and use organic materials to create artificial images.'

It is precisely these natural images executed by artificial means that reorganize spatial characteristics and various forms of human interaction. For Gal Weinstein the spatial-concrete organization of the world and life is a fundamental condition for the possibility of our interaction and social orientation. But the geographical component that is evident in his work does more than provide a special situation or occasion; by conditioning the form of relationship, it influences the content of social ties. Thus Gal Weinstein carries out a concrete investigation focused on the dialectics of recognition as legitimation and therefore recognition of both the self and the surrounding environment. In every work on show in the exhibition the relationship between viewer and vision is reprogrammed, revealing the extent to which the affirmation of one's own identity and one's own history is or is not linked to the affirmation of the space or the memory of it. A sort of active/contemplative observation that is connected to the desire to analyse and record the development of every presence, whether natural or not, in relation to the growth of an organism.