Venice, Island of San Giorgio Maggiore

Longhena Library

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***Walking under the magnetic force of a place and becoming a magnet*** *|* by Ennio Bianco \*

**The idea of *Chameleon* has its roots in three layers of ‘materials’.** The first, in broad daylight, is the heritage of art, history, and architecture that makes the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore a unique place. The second layer consists of the projects, efforts, and intelligence invested in recent years to digitize that heritage. The third, finally, is a question: how to use all that digital material? The Fondazione Giorgio Cini has envisioned an unconventional answer: making it available to artists.

***Chameleon* is the second chapter of that answer.** In 2022, Mattia Casalegno and Maurizio Martuscello focused on a location on the island, the Teatro Verde, resulting in a visionary dramaturgy blending memory and contemporary themes. Now, Universal Everything's work focuses on the richness and complexity of the cultural and architectural environments of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, intertwining reflections on the fragile condition of the individual.

**We find ourselves living in an increasingly polarized society**, where discussions are simplified and easily manipulated in a haze of online communication that neither values nor promotes, but instead overwhelms the diversity of ideas, perspectives, and the richness of dissent.

From this perspective, a work that attempts to narrate the engagement sparked by such a complex context as the Fondazione Giorgio Cini is extraordinarily pleasing. This engagement not only resonates within the individual but also reflects back into society.

***Chameleon* allows, even visually and sensorially, for an ongoing dialogue on multiple viewpoints, not only concerning art but especially regarding the contemporary world.**

With regards to this group of artists, **Universal Everything**, the memory of their famous *Walking City*, which won the Golden Nica at the Ars Electronica Festival in 2014, remains indelible: the iconic figure they created traversed a city characterized by the utopian architectures of the Archigram collective. In *Transfiguration* (2024), the same creature undergoes a sequence of transformations that evoke the consequences of a dramatically underestimated anthropocentrism. Also of great interest is their ironic pop art piece, *Superconsumers* (2019), where a large number of characters are contaminated by passing through the luxury product displays in a department store.

Given the opportunity to work with the materials of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Universal Everything dedicated time to mutual understanding and the study of the materials and the island, which illustrates their creative process well. **The proposed technological solution is extremely fascinating**, as 'the walking figure' is no longer placed in an empty space and a timeless bubble (as in their other works), but moves within a real context and a specific temporal moment.

**It seems to me there are several ways to interpret this work**. However, what immediately stands out is that traversing the various architectural and natural environments of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini ultimately entails undergoing a metamorphosis that is not just chromatic or reflective—and therefore superficial—but deep and structural. What I mean is that 'the walking figure' transforms not through mimicry, but because it has been drawn by a magnetic force: the force of the great cultural history that has characterized the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore over the centuries.

There's no need to resort to physics or sophisticated metaphors to understand the roles played by these two polarities: the contemporary man is the negative pole, the man who sees but does not observe; his social life flounders in the ocean of fast, simplified communication, inundated with a multitude of messages that inevitably force him into a 'spam zone' within his own mind.

**For this man, traversing the places of the cultural universe of the Foundation means subjecting himself to a magnetic force that alters his perceptual and thought structure, transforming him into a magnet** capable of exerting a strong attraction towards those cultural values that are increasingly under threat.

\* **Ennio Bianco***.* Among the most important experts in digital art, he is an eclectic figure in the field of contemporary art. He has alternated his activities as an entrepreneur in the ICT sector with his earlier career as an artist—in the 1980s, he was part of the Electronic Generation of Renato Barilli under the name Bianco&Niero—and later as a curator and critic in the realm of Digital Art, particularly art created with Artificial Intelligence tools. He has written on these topics for the magazines *Arte Go* and *Espoarte*, and has given lectures at the Academies of Bologna, Como, and Brescia; at Arte Laguna; at the Baroque Music and Digital Arts Festival; at the [e]Design Festival; and at the ARCHiVe Online Academy of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini. He has curated and presented several exhibitions, the most recent of which is *Etherea - Digital Universe*, third edition, at Palazzo Doria Carcassi in Genoa (2024). He is the president of the Amici di Giovanni Comisso Association, which has organized the Giovanni Comisso Literary Prize, Region of Veneto – City of Treviso, for 44 years.