

STUDIO AZZURRO

Biography

In 1982 Fabio Cirifino (photography), Paolo Rosa (visual arts and film), Leonardo Sangiorgi (graphics and animation) gave rise to an experience that over the course of the years has explored the poetical and expressive possibilities of the new technological cultures. They were joined in 1995 by Stefano Roveda (interactive systems). Through the creation of video-environments, sensitive and interactive environments, theatrical performances and film, they have outlined an artistic path that has cut across traditional art forms while at the same time setting up a work team open to contributions from others and creative collaborations.

The artistic research, in the beginning, focused on the creation of video – environments (among which stand out *Luci di inganni* [Deceptive light], *Il nuotatore* (va troppo spesso a Heidelberg) [The Swimmer - goes to Heidelberg too often], *Vedute* (quel tale non sta mai fermo) [Views (that bloke never stays still)], film like *L'osservatorio nucleare del Sig. Nanof* [The nuclear observatory of Mr. Nanof], performed by Giorgio Baberio Corsetti. And it was alongside this exponent of the “new theatre” that the group began to develop a strong interest in the theatrical experience that led to the creation of three shows including *La camera astratta* [The abstract room, 1987], commissioned by Documenta 8 Kassel and winner of the Ubu prize for theatrical research.

Between the end of the Eighties and the beginning of the Nineties with the theatrical study *Delfi*, featuring Moni Ovadia and the video-environment *Visit to Pompei* (Nagoya Biennale '91), *Il giardino delle cose* [The garden of things] (Milan Triennale '92) and *Il viaggio* [The journey], introduced experiments using infrared and x ray techniques. At the same time, a few musical theatre shows were staged: *Il combattimento di Ettore e Achille* [The battle of Hector and Achilles, 1989] and *Kepler's Traum* [Kepler's dream, 1990] created for Ars Electronica in Linz, with the composer Giorgio Battistelli; *Striaz*, a night-time video opera that took place throughout the streets of Cividale for the Mittlefest with Luca Francesconi.

The first ten years of activity, that point to a line of research based on the integration between the electronic image and the surrounding environment with the aim of allowing the spectator to take an active role in the narrative development of the work itself is summed up in the major monographic exhibition *Studio Azzurro – Videoambienti 1982 – 1992*, organised by the Mudima Foundation in Milan and the Laforet Museum in Tokyo, Niigata and Kokura in Japan. At the same time the collaboration with Moni Ovadia continued with the show *Ultima forma di libertà, il silenzio* [Last form of freedom, silence] for the *Orestiadi* in Gibellina in 1993 and the short film *Dov'è Yanke!?* [Where is Yanke!?] screened at the Venice Film Festival in '94.

But it is from 1995 that a new and crucial development took place with the introduction of interactivity and multimedia that led to the creation of a series of works termed “sensitive environments” including: *Tavoli* (perché queste mani mi toccano?) [Tables (why are these hands touching me?)], *Coro* [Chorus], *Totale della Battaglia* [Overview of the battle], *Il soffio sull'angelo* [The angelic breath], *il gorgo* [The whirlpool]. Still based on interactivity was the production of *The Cenci* (1997, Almeida Theatre in London), a musical worked conceived in collaboration with the composer Giorgio Battistelli based on an Artaud text. With the same musician: *Giacomo mio, salviamoci!* [Giacomo my dear, let's save ourselves!] to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Giacomo Leopardi and *Il fuoco, l'acqua, l'ombra* [Fire, water, shadow, 1998] a dance performance in honour of Tarkovskij, for the KAH in Bonn.

Between 1998 and 1999 – firstly at the Niitsu Art Forum in Japan and subsequently at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome – the retrospective exhibition *Ambienti sensibili* [Sensitive environments], provided the opportunity to underline Studio Azzurro's approach to interactive installations. Based on the naturalness of the dialogue, achieved thanks to so called natural interfaces, the involvement of many people at the same time, and an attention for the social repercussions triggered by interactive technology rather than it's exploitation.

At the beginning of 2000, the Studio created *Dove va tutta' sta gente?* [Where are all these people going?] a major interactive installation for Visionruhe in Dortmund; it took part in the *Megalopoli* project, with a wall of synchronised video images 256 metres long for the Biennale di Architettura in Venice; it organised *Aristocratic Artisans*, an exhibition with 6 video-installations at the Ace Gallery in New York. For the theatre

they designed the multimedia side of the show *Wer möchte wohl Kaspar Hauser sein* in Nurnberg. The same year their feature film *Il Mnemonista* [the Memory man] was released in cinemas, a journey in the maze of memory freely based on the fascinative clinical study described by A. Lurija. In 2001 their strong relationship with Japan continued with the monographic exhibition *Embracing Interactive Art* produced by ICC – Museum in Tokyo.

In 2002, after two years of research and travels they present *Meditazioni Mediterraneo* [Mediterranean Meditations] at Castel S. Elmo in Naples, an exhibition featuring five “unstable landscapes”: interactive installations on the theme of the Mediterranean identity which the following year was transferred to the *Vieille Charité* in Marseille and to the *Mori Art Museum* in Tokyo. In 2004 they were responsible for the direction and staging of the contemporary opera *Neither* for the *Stuttgart Staatsoper*, with music by Morton Feldman and text by Samuel Beckett. In 2006, Studio Azzurro created *Galileo (studi per l’inferno)* [Galileo (studies for the Inferno)], an interactive performance featuring the corps de ballet of the *Nuremberg Staatstheatre* and, for the first time, a work specifically designed for a “special” audience, the interactive installation *La pozzanghera* [The puddle] for kids.

Since 2004 the Studio has taken part as a partner in the European project *Bricks*, run by the *Information Society Technologies*, that attempts to begin exploring another aspect of interactivity, based on the sharing of vast visual archives, the processing of deposited data and the full involvement in the creative act.

Remaining on the outskirts of the traditional sites of artistic experimentation, Studio Azzurro has also applied its research in recent years to the wider world of communication, in particular by designing exhibitions and theme museums: *il Museo Virtuale della città di Lucca* [Virtual Museum of the City of Lucca], the interactive exhibition for the *Museo della Resistenza* [Resistance Museum] in Sarzana; The installation *Il giardino delle anime* [The garden of souls] for *New Metropolis*, designed by *Renzo Piano* in Amsterdam, currently acquired by the *New York Hall of Science – Flushing Meadows*. For *Genoa European Capital of Culture 2004*, together with the studio *Cerri* it organised the large exhibition *Transatlantici* [Ocean liners]; in 2005 in *Biella*, *La fabbrica della Ruota* [The Wheel Factory], a museum on the history of wool and *Infinita Commedia*, a Dante journey through the village of *Gradara*. In 2006, it designs the multimedia side of the exhibition *Il teatro delle terre* [The theatre of earth] at the *Archivio di Stato* in Turin. All works that underline the interest for “projects” as well as “works”, that are connected to the social fabric and address territorial issues.

The *Fabbrica del Vapore* [Steam Factory], the current Studio Azzurro premises, falls into this same category as a site for cultural activity in the centre of Milan.

Studio Azzurro has been awarded a number of prizes including: *UBU prize* for theatre research, 1998, *Gabbiano d’oro* 1986, *Premio Alinovi*–1995, *Premio Quadriennale* 1996, *Gran premio Transmediale* 1998, (Berlin), *Sole d’oro* 1999, *Festival TTVV – Riccione*, *Ovidio d’Oro* for cinema. Recently the prize “*Il sogno di Piero*” from the *Urbino Academy* and the “*Pino Pascali*” prize for contemporary art. It carries out education and training work by taking part in workshops and seminars including *Pensare l’Arte* (1997) together with *Carlo Sini* and *Jacques Derrida*.

In the course of time, Studio Azzurro has written four books published by *Electa e Silvana editoriale*.

Besides *Cirifino*, *Paolo Rosa*, *Stefano Roveda* and *Leonardo Sangiorgi*, the following currently go to make up the Studio Azzurro team fulfilling various roles and functions: *Antonio Augugliaro*, *Marco Barsottini*, *Alberto Bernocchi* *Missaglia*, *Reiner Bumke*, *Ileana Cillario*, *Mario Coccimiglio*, *Ornella Costanzo*, *Laura D’Amore*, *Anna De Benedittis*, *Olivia De Muro*, *Daniele De Palma*, *Elisa Giardina Papa*, *Giulia Guarnirei*, *Tommaso Leddi*, *Silvia Pellizzari*, *Laura Santamaria*, *Lorenzo Sarti*, *Delphine Tonglet*.
info: www.studioazzurro.com



Selection of significant works

Il nuotatore (va troppo spesso a Heidelberg)

videoenvironment, 1984

project: Studio Azzurro, music: Peter Gordon, performer: Aurelio Gravina

production: Studio Azzurro

technical specifications: 12 programmi video sincronizzati, 24 monitor, 1 orologio elettronico/12 synchronised video programs, 24 monitors, 1 electronic clock

first presentation: Palazzo Fortuny – Venezia

Everything seems at rest: a blue tinted atmosphere and an embracing sound track welcome the spectator. The monitors, placed side by side, are crossed by the repetitive and belaboured swim strokes of the swimmer as he moves tirelessly from one screen to another. The installation (synchronised using twenty four monitors and thirteen video programmes) was created using twelve video cameras lined along the edge of a swimming pool, flush with the surface of the water. We see a swimmer who, with repeated, laboured strokes, “moves across” each adjacent television screens. A hundred microevents (a falling ball, an anchor sinking down..) are inserted into the main scene, and remain relegated in the individual screens. It is through this alternation of events that the first live spectator participation in the installation is achieved, a trait that will later become a feature of Studio Azzurro’s work. The spectator is not required to follow a narrative thread. The spectator becomes a part of the event that unfolds in that particular instant and will never be the same again.



Tavoli (Perché queste mani mi toccano?)

interactive videoenvironment, 1995

project: Fabio Cirifino, Paolo Rosa, direction: Paolo Rosa, photography: Fabio Cirifino
cameraman: Mario Coccimiglio, data processing project: Stefano Roveda, editing:
Fanny Molteni, Paolo Ranieri, sounds: R. Benucci, A. Ritratti, assistant director: Paolo
Ranieri, performer: Angela Parmigiani

produzione/production: Studio Azzurro

technical specifications: 6 videoproiettori, 6 tavoli sensibili, 6 CD-I, 1 PC/ 6
videoprojectors, 6 sensitive tables, 6 CD-I, 1 PC

first presentation: “Oltre il Villaggio Globale”, Triennale di Milano

Six tables, six seemingly still figures: a woman lying down, a fly buzzing over a tabletop, a drop of water obsessively falling into a bowl. This sensation of apparent calm was suddenly disrupted when anyone touched the image: it reacted, came to life, and a small part of it’s story unfolded. The relationship between what is real and what is virtual was tested on everyday experiences, without any apparent technological ‘interface’ – space was broken up, what was virtual and what was physical become one and the same thing. The significance of this work lay in the shift experienced by the image, that from being a simple object of contemplation became a direct source of experience that compelled the spectator to interact with it.



Museo Audiovisivo della resistenza

Permanent interactive installation

13 projectors, 6 screens, 6 interactive objects.

project: Paolo Rosa, Fabio Cirifino, Leonardo Sangiorgi e Stefano Roveda; video programs realisation: Paolo Ranieri e Cinzia Rizzo; video editing: Mariangela Romanò; video shooting: Mario Coccimiglio; sound and masters: Alessandro Rigratti; informatic project: Stefano Roveda; software: Orfeo Quarenghi; scenography: Esther Musatti; coordination: Reiner Bumke e Paolo Ranieri; scientific direction: Paolo Pezzino (Università di Pisa); documentary research, coordination: Francesca Pelini; interviews coordination: Giovanni Contini. Commissioned by: A.N.P.I di Sarzana Fosdinovo - Italia

This museum is dedicated to preserving and developing the historical memory of the Resistance movement in the provinces of Massa Carrara and La Spezia. Not just the memories of partisans but also of peasants, deportees, inmates, women, and an entire population all involved in the battle to survive under Fascist and Nazi domination. Inside, a table is divided into two halves by a series of vertical screens. By passing their hands over the surface of the table, the visitors can flick through a collection of stock footage as if it were a virtual book on the subject. The various sequences shown in the book are further illustrated on the screens on which the enlarged faces of the people interviewed appear. In this way the narrative form of the oral testimony goes hand in hand with technology, encouraging a shared visual experience as well as one that involves listening.



Meditazioni Mediterraneo

(In viaggio attraverso cinque paesaggi instabili)

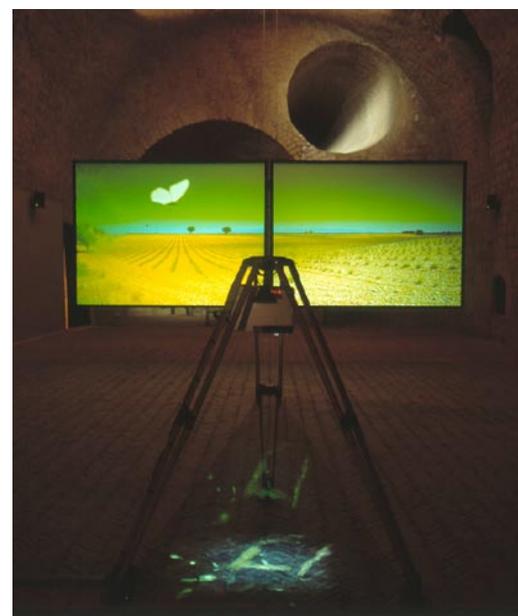
course of 5 interactive installations, 2002

project: Fabio Cirifino, Paolo Rosa, direction: Paolo Rosa, photography: Fabio Cirifino
interactive project: Stefano Roveda, production manager: Elisa Mendini, production and external relations: Delphine Tonglet, cameraman: Mario Coccimiglio, filming assistants: Marianela Romanò, Rocco Cirifino, Alice Rosa, 3D effects: Raul Sdrigotti, Vittorio Rossi de Rubeis, Francesco Paratici, software: Orf Quarenghi, Samuele Vacchi, Giovanni Civati, hardware: Luca Corti, Dario Gavezotti, editing: Mara Colombo, Fanny Molteni, Mariangela Romanò, sound engineering: Riccardo Castaldi, audio programming: Tommaso Leddi, stock footage research: Ciro Giorgini, set construction: Studio Azzurro, 235 Media with the collaboration of: Diego Quagliarella, Fabio Paradiso, Dominik Huber, executive coordination: Davide Sgalippa, manager Studio Azzurro's productions: Reiner Bumke, production: Studio Azzurro per Hermès
technical specifications: 19 interactive video programs and 16 synchronised video programs

first presentation: Castel S. Elmo – Napoli

notes: mostra itinerante: Vieille Charité – Marsiglia (2003), Mori Art Museum – Tokio (2003)

The exhibition is built around five large “unstable” landscapes which represent the flagship stages on an actual tour of the Mediterranean, its senses and places. It is the result of a journey within a particular geographic area, and its reduction to a set of signs derives from the extraordinary, tormented charm of these lands and also from the ancient richness of the culture, and the mix of religions, races and customs amongst the people living on this stretch of sea. It is a kind of research which, through the differences, also encounters the ideal genetic code of a common stratified identity, made up of primary elements: materials, sounds, colours, smells, gestures, processes and relationships. Once they are put together, these elements generate landscapes, they form scenes which become active: they are video-installations, interactive devices which use technology as a language to encourage the audience to participate and share in the numerous questions that this journey left us with. The overall viewpoint is positive; that the Mediterranean is developing, it is not only a root but also embodies hope» (Adonis).



Galileo (studi per l'inferno)

video and dance live show, 2006

direction: Paolo Rosa, stage project: Paolo Rosa, Daniela Kurz, Ensemble del Tanztheater von Nurnberg

art director: Frank Albert, texts: Andrea Balzola, lights: Fabio Cirifino, Olaf Lundt, music: Tommaso Leddi,

photography: Fabio Cirifino, cameraman: Rocco Cirifino, interactive systems and director assistants: Marco Barsottini, Lorenzo Sarti, editing: Antonio Augugliaro, graphic: Daniele de Palma, tracking software: Alessandro Valli, assistants: Paola Tognazzi Mahnas Esmaili, Luigi Boccadamo, Federico Perrone choreography assistants: Robert Con, Jean-Marc Colet a.g., stage assistant: Susanne Hofmann, performer: 7 ballerini del corpo di ballo Staatstheater Nuremberg, performer in video: Corinna Azzi, Andrea Valfrè, Walter Esposito, Simone Magnani, Fabio Ratti, Salvatore Giacomia, Antonella Marra, external relations: Delphine Tonglet, project coordinator: Reiner Bumke, 235 Media, Meike Ludwig, executive producer: Paola Tognazzi, production: Open Haus Norimberga, Studio Azzurro

technical specifications : 5 interactive platforms

first presentation: Open Haus – Norimberga

This show, inspired by Galileo Galilei, results from the artistic collaboration between the Norimberg Ballet and Studio Azzurro. The show is not a biographical portrait, but a visionary journey based on two lessons held at the Accademia in Florence. In these, Galileo comments on and reconstructs a hypothetical model of Dante's Inferno. This narrative combines "body moves" choreographed by Daniela Kurz and Studio Azzurro's changing, interactive projections, with snatches of words by Andrea Balzola and music by Tommaso Leddi.

The scene is conceived as a metamorphic organism whereby, throughout the progressive journey between macrocosm and microcosm, the dancers' bodies are like emanations of Galileo's thought that interact with the videoprojections, describing and mapping out an "anthropomorphic cosmogony".



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For more informations: www.studioazzurro.com