

Scuola di Diplomazie Interspecie, 2024

Installation

Courtesy l'artista

Mali Weil is a collective of artists who has spent years researching the need to reconfigure cultural, social and legal relations between human and non-human entities. Through a narration characterised by a fantastic and speculative approach, it constructs an alternative cosmology based on relationships between different species.

Within this scenario, Mali Weil also decided to engage on a pedagogical level, creating and activating the *School of Interspecies Diplomacy*. A place at once imaginary and real, in which concepts, words and visions come together to foster an intergenerational learning experience, capable of generating and reactivating ecocentric skills and sensibilities.

The School has recently identified the mountain as a place for conducting a series of studies to delve into the histories, traditions and stories of certain interactions between different species.

In particular, the collective has focused on conceptual aspects and historical customs of village hunting, falconry and taxidermy. These interactions, although not exclusively representative of the mountains, illustrate various forms of cohabitation, negotiation, intimacy and conflict with the environment and the species that directly or indirectly contribute to co-constructing it.

With environmental, political, economic, relational and epistemological implications.

The public is invited to sit on the large cushion placed on the ground and enjoy some of the content made available within the School.

The work is completed by the installation of large banners in the city centre, one of which is displayed here in a smaller size.

The image on the cushion and the one printed on the banners propose a scenario of participation, co-evolution and interdependence.

The inscription *We are all Guests at the Sun Feast* suggests that all living and non-living creatures on Earth are part of the same metabolic process.

Everything starts with animals. For millions of years, the brains of hominids and humans were shaped by their living environment, in particular by the ancestral dynamic that connected hunter and prey. The primary need, from *Homo habilis* onwards, was to physically and mentally pursue a universe of prey. If I want to catch an animal, I cannot just follow it on the ground, I must also picture it in my mind, because animals go away, they do not remain in the same spot, like fruit growing on a tree, or a termite mound, or a root underground. In order to hunt them, I have to imagine them precisely when they are not there, i.e. I have to anticipate their moves, act mentally as they do, virtually step into their lived ethology, and I have to think about what they are thinking. Practicing all this for at least two million years has turned

our brain into a machine of potential narratives. As Claude Lévi-Strauss said, animals are not just good to eat, they are good to think. Thinking about them allowed us to sharpen our predictive skills, trained us to put ourselves in other people's shoes, helped us build a zoological landscape that combined ecological skills, memory and desire. In that respect, animals gave us the invisible, pushed us to refine symbolic thinking, and to perceive the world as a complex narrative, bridging the tangible and intangible.

Mattero Meschiari

Anthropologist and Professor of Geography, University of Palermo

PARCO FLUVIALE
GESSO E STURA:
ESPERIENZA
DI NATURA

Stories of forgotten cartunè (traders with horse-led carts), pianchè (small vineyard) and bialerai (canal maintainers), of baths at the "Lame" and meetings at the "Pyramid"; stories of love and indifference for a space that was once really part of city life and was suddenly abandoned during the economic boom, only to be rediscovered and visited again today, thanks in part to the redevelopment projects undertaken by the Parco fluviale Gesso e Stura.

In the documentary "Il fiume sotto casa" (by Elena Valsania and Christian Grappiolo), the river is the main character of an unforgettable story: it's a source of inspiration, a space of daily discoveries and freedom. The work combines vintage photos and films with original footage, and it explores the transformation of life along the river over the past century. The images capture the seasonal changes of the landscape: trees torn out by floods, the expanses of stones in summer when

the river runs dry, the last heavy snowfalls, the countryside coming to life in spring and bearing fruit in summer. More than anything, they preserve the emotions and recollections of the individuals who have lived by the city's waterways, forming a deep connection with them that still endures. Today, when many traditional jobs have disappeared and Sunday outings and summer swims are but a memory, such a relationship seems unimaginable. Luckily, the memories and sentiments of a multitude of citizens were turned into a petition that was presented to the municipal authorities in the late 1970s, advocating for the development of a protected area along the city's waterways. Following this, there was a collaborative consultation process among the diverse territorial components to form an alliance, as well as a fresh culture and new policy that could accommodate the needs of all life forms in the region.