

ArtSeen

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

ANDREA GALVANI *The End*

by Martha Raoli

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Andrea Galvani's seven-channel video installation, *The End*, occupies the sixth floor gallery of Art in General. Projected onto walls and vertical plinths, seven synchronized video loops show the sun—rising from the sea and disappearing into the sky—as a set of glimmering orbs oozing upward like vapor, all wavy edges and soft pixilation. All seven suns are visible from a single vantage point, rising in unison. Shot with 16mm film and transferred to HD, the videos produce a haze of variegated pinks, oranges, and violets. It's gorgeous and, given the subject matter, impressively unsentimental or kitsch.

The piece was commissioned by Art in General, and to produce it Galvani enlisted cameramen positioned in five different countries along the east coast of Central America to film concurrently on the anniversary of Galileo's death. The press release explains that "*The End* is an homage to the heliocentric model of our solar system championed by Galileo Galilei," at a time when geocentricism was incontestable fact. Indeed, this installation may be read as an immersive paean to the courage of one man, but it also suggests that the certainty of all truths is perpetually shifting between proof and belief.

A kind of fabulist narrativity pervades Galvani's body of work which, otherwise speaks in a precise, geometric lexicon. Perhaps the most concise illustration of how the artist constructs complex narratives to express the limits of sound and light is *A Cube, A Sphere, and a Pyramid* (2012), in which said forms are introduced to bats, which emit an echo-drawing as they fly around these forms, which is then transcribed into an audible track and also presented as a line drawing. Form becomes sound and the invisible becomes audible. In *The End*, the hierarchies of light and sound have been called to reckoning, presented as a show that exists in various forms, both as live sonic performance and optical experience.



Andrea Galvani, *The End (Action #1)*, 2013-15. Synchronized multichannel video installation, 16mm film transferred to HD. Architectural elements and performance with 7 vocalists at specific times, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist and Art in General, New York. Photo: Charles Benton.

During the opening reception and several times over the course of the exhibition, the installation's structural elements become a stage for performers, who sit or stand atop constructed walls and pedestals vocalizing sound. When this happens the gallery becomes a chamber of voices, and one's pulse quickens in vascular response; thoughts vanish, as in a state of meditation or prayer. Cathedral voices, pre-lingual clucks, spiritual chants—liturgical sounds performed with the first human instrument, the voice. The paradox of working with the human voice, as Meredith Monk pointed out, is that it is universal and yet “each throat is totally unique. There is a universe to explore in each of our voices.”Galvani harnessed the combined vocal idiosyncrasies of seven performers, each versed in a unique tradition, each “throat” quoting Glass or Puccini in sounds reminiscent of pre-orchestral tuning. Their collective vocal exercises provide contrapunto to the videos. While the sunrises unfold at a hyper-real speed, the live voice marks the undeniable present.

Positioning the viewer before these various horizons, the installation maintains a rubric of looking as a communal simultaneous event. But it is less conversant with virtual technologies of social media than it is with the Renaissance notion of plural perspectives. Staged on this highly contrived architectural set is a cinematic experience, and it's within the rhetoric of cinema that we might interpret the show's title, *The End*, as a cri de cour against the current narrative of the dawn of time, by exclusion of that final frame of a film, existing instead as endlessly looped narrative. Despite being launched and closed by live vocal performances, this exhibition destabilizes the presumption that artwork begins or ends in a single medium, offering instead a model of perpetual motion between light and sound.

RECOMMENDED ARTICLES



LISI RASKIN *Recuperative Tactics*

by Juliet Helmke

JUNE 2014 | ARTSEEN

Kim Charles Kay's exhibition *you know it when you feel it*, nested within Lisi Raskin's installation *Recuperative Tactics*, is well named; its title being an apt descriptor of Raskin's piece, which takes up the entirety of Art in General's sixth floor.
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