

## ***Human Gravity – On human and non-human***

Text by Claudio Cravero

The exhibition *Human Gravity* explores the weight of human presence on Earth and our attitudes of superiority over nature, while also prompting us to consider the interconnectedness between humans and all other forms of life. Drawing on Opiemme's ideas, the exhibition addresses urgent issues surfaced globally during the 2020 pandemic. As Opiemme writes: "During that time of confinement, we saw animals rediscover and reclaim spaces vacated by humans".

At the heart of *Human Gravity* are the artworks by **Arthur Duff**, **Quayola**, **fuse\***, **Opiemme**, **Yojiro Imasaka**, **Silvia Infranco**, **Aldo Grazzi**, and **Alessandra Maio**. Although each artist offers a unique perspective, together they share a desire to raise questions about our responsibility to care for the world around us. Speaking about *Human Gravity*, cultural anthropologist and journalist Sabina Spada notes how both art and anthropology encourage us to question why we see ourselves as separate from or superior to nature when, after all, we're deeply connected to all lifeforms, both organic and inorganic.

**Arthur Duff** (Wiesbaden, 1973) explores the perception and transformation of organic and inorganic materials through light. In his *Fragments* series (2015), Duff uses iron frames woven with nautical polyester cords, creating a comet-like optical effect. He draws inspiration from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century French astronomer Charles Messier's catalog of celestial objects. Naming his pieces in a similar way reminds us that our existence began long ago through the movement of asteroids and comets. These gravitational forces that continue to connect us to the cosmos.

In his *Jardin* series (2018) **Quayola** (Rome, 1982) invites viewers to observe nature through a digital lens. Inspired by Monet's Impressionism, this series includes videos and two digital prints that merge natural and artificial patterns. Quayola's work questions whether the nature we see is truly "natural" or shaped by our technological manipulation. To what extent, he asks, will technology blend into daily life, perhaps erasing the line between the natural and the digital?

The works of **Opiemme**, a collective founded in Turin in 1998, investigate the interaction between humans, technology, and nature. Opiemme's critical impulse is fueled by the increasing distance from nature in our daily lives, which over time has depleted the spiritual and contemplative dimension that our relationship with nature once fostered. Two of their

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spray-painted, acrylic, and ink paintings on maps as part of *Unconscious Segregation* series (2023–24) raise the questions, “Can connections become barriers rather than promoting unity? And to what extent do our actions limit other living beings?” Displaying alarming statistics on maps of Trentino and Veneto, they remind us that in 2022 alone, 223 million birds and animals died on European roads, while humans — and not the climate change — caused 96% of mammal extinctions. Opiemme’s *Artificial Genesis* (2024) includes two engravings made using a 15<sup>th</sup>-century printmaking technique but created with AI. They depict a fictional botanical species from another planet, the *Luminospora Chromatica*. Here, Opiemme interacts with AI as a sentient being and co-author of the work.

**fuse\***, a studio founded in Modena in 2007, explores the boundaries where natural and artificial worlds merge. The *Unseen Flora* series (2024), presented in videos and prints, consists of surreal botanical illustrations inspired by four British scientists and artists. Created using machine learning algorithms, these images invite us to think about how, in the digital age, the lines between reality and virtuality are increasingly blurred.

**Yojiro Imasaka** (Hiroshima, 1983) blends dry plate photography with darkroom processes to create images that, while depicting real landscapes, resemble post-apocalyptic or otherworldly scenes. During an artist residency in Venice in 2023, Imasaka explored the *barene*, the small islands of vegetation typical of Venetian lagoons that sit 20–50 centimeters above sea level and are often submerged during high tides. His *VW-17* series captures nature’s magnitude while highlighting its vulnerability and adaptability. Through his photos, Imasaka asks, “How much longer will the natural landscapes we admire remain untouched?”

Using organic materials like wax, paper, and wood, **Silvia Infranco** (Belluno, 1982) investigates how surfaces respond to time’s effects through processes of accumulation and erosion. Her *Enarrationes in Psalmos* series (2024)—inspired by St. Augustine’s 4<sup>th</sup>-century commentaries on the Psalms—focuses on herbariums, healing practices, and rituals. Infranco’s work prompts viewers to consider how nature and time influence our perception of the world and asks what remains of what time erodes.

**Aldo Grazzi** (Mantua, 1954 – Perugia, 2023) centers his *Ruota e Rifletti* series on the human figure as the foundation for new creative forms. Though he rejected the term “organic artist,” Grazzi believed nature was a source of inspiration and contemplation. *Ruota e Rifletti* presents pieces that blur the lines between sculpture and painting, focusing on the connections between organic and inorganic, human and natural.

In her *So stare parlo al vento* series, **Alessandra Maio** (Bologna, 1982) interacts with the wind as a metaphor for her deep connection to nature, grounded in a physical dialogue with the earth. Expressing her frustration about the overuse of natural resources, Maio emphasizes

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the urgency of a more careful approach to the environment. Green and flesh hues blend in wordplay and colors that celebrate the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature.

While critical of humanity's current relationship with nature, the works on display in *Human Gravity* remind us that, despite we live in cities filled with concrete, we are part of a broader, interconnected "whole". Recognizing this interconnectedness is essential, not just for preserving nature, but for our own survival—as microcosms within a boundless universe.