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BEATRICE PEDICONI

By *Anna Mecugni*  May 30, 2011 4:00pm



Over the past five years, the Italian artist Beatrice Pediconi—an architect by training—has produced works that bring together painting, performance and photography. Pediconi is drawn to the gravity-defying world of water, in which forms are always in flux. Her practice consists of “painting” on the surface of water and then capturing the quickly changing images photographically. Both chance and control contribute to the results, recalling late 19th-century experiments in which photography was used to record movement.

In 2009 Pediconi began using digital video to register the sequence of her actions and the ways the paint changes over time. Her first video, realized in

collaboration with film director Luca Fantasia, was recently on view at the Italian Academy at Columbia University. It was Pediconi's first U.S. solo show, and it also included five large C-prints and six Polaroids. Together with the video, the photos belong to a larger untitled series (2008–09) that features amorphous whitish forms suspended in a navy blue field, strangely deep and flat at once. These forms evoke an array of natural and man-made phenomena, from the Milky Way and jellyfish to microbes, smoke puffs and plumes, lace patterns, and snail or airplane trails.

Each of the three mediums captures the same process in different ways, and the presentation of the works heightened the mediums' peculiarities. The C-prints, made with a large-format camera, enhanced the lushness of the most minute details; they were mounted under frameless acrylic glass that gave them the shine of reflective water and were installed to appear as if floating in front of the wall. The Polaroids were displayed in boxy white frames with disproportionately large mats that

made them look even smaller than they are, like miniature treasures from another era. In the 7-minute looped video, the strongest work in the show, the cosmic-marine universe that the photos allow us to peek into comes to life, and viewers witness the magic of white tempera giving birth to forms that metamorphose into one another like living organisms.

The works were installed in two architecturally contrasting rooms of the Academy, which offers an unconventional exhibition space. The first room, displaying the Polaroids and three of the large photos, is part of a 1990s renovation and features a white-cube-style gallery with clean walls and marble floors. The second room, which retains the original 1920s Neo-Renaissance interior decoration, has a heavier look, with parquet flooring and dark fluted wood pilasters that framed the second two large photos and the video. Both rooms suited the exhibition well; in the first, the Polaroids were given undisturbed space to breathe, and in the second, a connection was made, implicitly, between Pediconi's work and the Hermetic tradition of

the Italian Renaissance, with its occult sciences of magic, alchemy and astrology.

Photo: Beatrice Pediconi: Untitled XVII, 2009, chromogenic print on Diasac, 47 by 59 inches; at the Italian Academy at Columbia University.

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