

*"The goal is to generate kinship -to make kin- through inventive connections."*

*"This means being open to unexpected collaborations and combinations, being ready to be part of warm compost heaps. We either become together, with each other, or we don't become at all."*

Donna Haraway, *Staying With The Trouble: Making Kin In the Chthulucene*, 2016.

A few months ago, during one of the countless waits at the station, I found myself leafing through a botany magazine dedicated to plant genealogy. Among the numerous illustrations, one above all caught my attention: that of small but abundant drops of water lying on the feathery fibres of dandelion seeds which, close to flowering, take on the appearance of a pompom.

Had it not been for the detailed description of the image,—and the fact that I was looking reading a botany magazine—, I would not have easily recognised what I was looking at. A close-up image of salt-bleached eyelashes after a swim in the sea? A photograph of a spider web against the light after a rainy morning? The reproduction of the neural networks that regulate our emotions? Sure, it was a dandelion flower, but at that point it didn't matter so much.

There is a certain poetry in letting imagination fly free in front of an image. When the boundaries of what we see begin to vibrate and generate even more articulate forms—almost as if we were looking inside a kaleidoscope—the initial image ends up having the same importance as all the subsequent ones. As if the striations of a feather or those of a leaf could enclose the world.

In the Purifications (Καθαρμοί)—one of the few surviving writings of Empedocles of Agrigento (ca. 492–ca.432 BC)—, the philosopher synthesises previous Ionian, Pythagorean, Heraclitean and Parmenidean doctrines to tell us about the incessant change of things and the unchanging reality of the first elements that compose them. Empedocles calls these elements 'roots' and identifies four of them: fire, air, earth and water. According to this theory, the four roots are assimilated to the states of aggregation of matter and therefore determine the birth and death of all things, as well as their becoming. In other words, the transformation process of the world, as well as the occurrence of the most imperceptible phenomena, owes its *raison d'être* to these common first elements.

By following the thread—as well as the shape shifting image of the kaleidoscope, where everything merges and blurs—, even the dandelion flower, the raindrops, the sea salt, our eyelashes and a spider's web, would be nothing but the result of the amalgamation of fire, air, earth and water. In a continuous becoming far removed from dichotomous laws of superiority or submission.

In an all too fast-paced world, which favours individualism and the overpowering of human beings over nature, claiming the common origin of which Empedocles wrote becomes not only a poetic quirk, but also an essential reminder to weave increasingly conscious multi-species relationships. To "generate kinship (...) and inventive connections",—American academic and thinker Donna Haraway would say—; to build bonds that overcome the distinction between what is human (and therefore worthy of preservation) and what is not.

Albeit with their own formal and narrative specificities, the paintings, drawings and sculptures on display, as well as the videos selected for the screening programme, all contribute to creating a common narrative. That of new possible genealogies of the animal, vegetable and mineral worlds; that of surprising and possible kinships originating from one or four common roots.

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