

Laura Grisi

(Rhodes, Greece, 1939 – Rome, 2017)

It's hard to classify the work of Laura Grisi within a single group or artistic movement. At the time of her debut, around 1964, she was in frequent contact with the Scuola di Piazza del Popolo in Rome, and for this reason she is often included in Italian Pop Art. Grisi did not identify however in any specific tendency, preferring to occupy an autonomous and hybrid position that in her works would lead to elements of similarity with Programmed and Kinetic art, American Minimalism, *Arte Povera* and Process Art.

In the second half of the 1960s, she began travelling assiduously with her husband, the documentarist Folco Quilici, together with whom she reached the distant lands between South America, Africa and Polynesia. These journeys, and her early experimentation with the natural elements of many artists at the time, would lead her to go beyond the painting surface to the point of breaking out into the exhibition space, where she devised works capable of artificially reproducing atmospheric phenomena.

The first of the three works of hers in the collection dates back to this period. *Wind Speed 40 Knots* (1968) is a collection of footage shot in various places around the world, after the impressions aroused in the artist by a sandstorm in the Sahara Desert led her to discover the extraordinary creative and sculptural capacity of the wind. She thus began to study its movements, in various environmental conditions, measuring its speed with a special device. The subject of the film would then take on an environmental dimension in May that year, when Grisi participated at the *Teatro delle mostre*, the memorable event held at La Tartaruga di Plinio De Martiis in Rome. In the closed space of the gallery, through the use of a wind machine, on this occasion she simulated the speed of forty knots per hour referenced in the title of the film.

Only a little later comes *The Measuring of Time* (1969), which explores the repetitive, absurd and potentially endless gesture of counting grains of sand one by one. The film, shot in a single spiral sequence, opens with a close-up shot of the artist's hands, only to pan out of her whole figure on the beach and close a few minutes later, as if stuck on a loop, with the initial image. Part of the series *Distillations*, inspired by her journeys to distant places in which rituals and symbolisms still survive, the work reveals man's ever-failing attempt to harness and classify nature.

Lastly, along the same lines as this work, we also find the film *From One to Four Pebbles* (1972), which shows the artist once more as she repeatedly changes places between four pebbles found on the beach, of various shapes and sizes, with the view to discovering all their possible combinations according to the principle of permutation. In other works from the same series, titled *Variations*, Grisi studied the finite sequences that may be obtained on the basis of the faces of a number of coins, from six stripes of different colours and even from the mere rotation of a hexagonal shape. RA