

Rosa Barba

(Agrigento, 1972)

Just as we are witnessing the pre-eminence of digital animation, Rosa Barba turns her gaze back and begins to experiment with the cinematographic language and its most traditional and obsolete constituent elements. Her work, which includes film, kinetic sculpture and site-specific interventions, in fact exploits some of the material components of this expressive medium. The projector, the film spool, the beam of light that crosses the theatre and the square of images formed on the opposite wall are displayed without hierarchy, so as to make up a single installation capable of modelling the space in plastic terms. And while film is only a part of the whole, the projection device is always made visible, even when the viewers find themselves looking at nothing more than unexposed film going around and around in the projector. Sometimes, the beam of light is even aimed outside the building hosting the installation, towards the outlying urban environment, like in the series *White Museum*, reiterated in various contexts since 2010. On other occasions, the projectors are both the source and at the same time the protagonists of the narrative. This is the case of *Western Round Table* (2007), which draws inspiration from a 1949 symposium involving the most brilliant minds of the day, including Marcel Duchamp and Frank Lloyd Wright. In Barba's version, the memory of the round table is rendered through two projectors loaded with spools of transparent film, placed one in front of the other, hinting at the existence of a dialogue between them.

When her films are not entirely white, traces of ancient settlements, abandoned architecture and remote natural landscapes are among the key subjects of the artist's lens. Indeed, *Western Round Table* marks the start of her exploration of the Mojave Desert in California, thanks to an anecdote that situates a moment of the famous symposium in a far-flung military bunker in the region. In the same year, she also produced the films *Waiting Grounds* and *They Shine*: the former being a poetic narrative telling of a site which is anything but abandoned, dating back to the 1940s and used by the US army for launches and simulations; the latter follows the daily rotation of a number of solar panels in the middle of the desert, while in the background we hear interviews carried out with the few inhabitants of the area, who are asked to imagine the architecture of the future.

Just like her previous work, the film in the collection, *The Long Road* (2010), was filmed in the Mojave Desert and features aerial shots taken above a car-racing circuit which was used for no more than a few weeks before being abandoned. The images, filmed in 35 mm with a handheld camera, giving the viewer the feel of the trembling hand and the judders of flight, are accompanied with a text by the American poet Robert Creeley and by the music of the composer Jan St. Werner, with whom Barba collaborates on a regular basis. Filmed from above, the circuit looks like a drawing or a work of Land Art created to sculpt that remote landscape.

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