

## Keep in touch

In a field  
I am the absence  
of field.  
This is  
always the case.  
Wherever I am  
I am what is missing.

We all have reasons  
for moving.  
I move to keep things whole.

*Keeping Things Whole*, Mark Strand from *Selected Poems*. 1979

When I walk  
I part the air  
and always  
the air moves in  
to fill the spaces  
where my body's been.

A few lines to describe how the idea of this event originated.

It's been a while since I have wanted to gather in a common exhibition visual artists who, like me, are also devoted martial artists (by *devoted* I mean artists that are equally committed to their visual as well as their martial art); therefore, when I was afforded the opportunity to intervene in a dojo<sup>1</sup>, this event assumed its *raison d'être*.

I have chosen the title *Keep in touch* to be able to summarise different aspects: the resolve to share the progression of one's artistic journey, the concept of "encounter", typical of martial arts and lastly, and possibly most importantly, the idea to stay in touch with the world and one's surroundings, an expression to describe the artistic sensitivity able to unveil and show reality from different perspectives.

In martial arts, and especially Aikido, one often hears "keep contact", an expression which signifies "learn to maintain a connection with your training partner and all that goes on". In fact, keeping contact during an action is a way of protecting oneself and the fastest possible way to react to a situation. In the case of Aikido this idea is captured by the word "ai", from the word *Ai-ki-do*, which in Japanese means *harmony*.

The concept of "encounter" is not only found in Aikido, but in all traditional Budo<sup>2</sup> styles as well as other discipline, for example we say: "in their last encounter with Italy, England won 3–2." During the confrontation between two opponents the more appropriate question to pose is not "Who is going to win?", but "Where are our bodies going to meet?" This question better embodies the ideas of union and transformation. According to the ideal pursued by Aikido, the combatant who will first

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1 **Dojo** (道場) is a Japanese term which refers to the place where martial arts are practised. The term literally means "place (jō) of the way (dō)"

2 **Budō** (武道) is a term describing Japanese martial arts appeared between mid XIXe century and mid XXe century. In Japanese, the ideogram bu (武?) has two parts, the first illustrates the "spear" and the second "to stop". Budo can therefore mean "stop the spear" (the path that leads to peace) as well as "stop with a spear" (way of war) and dō (道) means « way/path » (in Chinese : dao or tao, see Taoism). The most famous budō styles in the West are karate-do, judo, aikido and kendo.

answer this question will be the one to be able to neutralise the opponent, who, as a reaction, will transform in his/her inner self and eliminate or change his/her aggression.

In the work of the invited artists the link with their martial practice is subtle and not explicit, what interests me is to highlight the aesthetic/formal references that unite them, as if a common inspiration can be recognized through their artworks. I believe that one thing that unites us is the vision of space, from the microscopic to the macroscopic.

In my work and in that of Natalia Blanch, it is as if we were looking for language and messages in the surrounding world, by weaving in Blanch's case and by cutting in mine, we create new empty spaces. As for Gianni Caravaggio, we pass through a cosmic reading of reality, which, thanks to often ephemeral elements, reveals unexpected magic; in his work we also find serious attention to empty spaces and to absences/presences.

Representing void through removal and presence through volume seem common elements, being in the moment is without any doubt a chief objective of martial as well as visual arts...*Being is always in a modality of its possible temporal being. Being is time, time is temporal. Being is not time, but temporality* (excerpt from *The concept of time* by Martin Heidegger).

Thus, it seems that for all three artists the method is linked to the search for this contact, which perhaps in each respective martial art is the encounter with the other, and ultimately with oneself and perhaps one day with the universe.

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