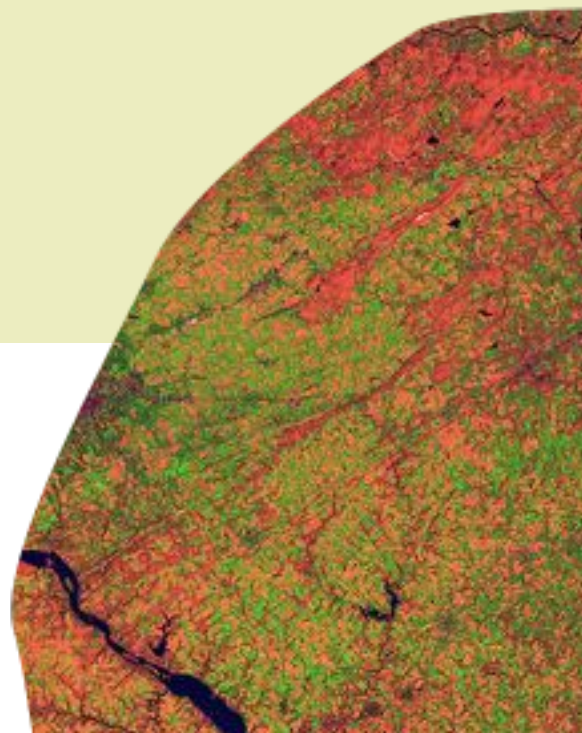**Title:** Studio Andreco's Climate Art Project

Author:

Occupy Climate Change (OCC!)
Grassroots initiatives entry

Studio Andreco's Climate Art Project
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When the process of artistic creation arises from research, passes through sensitization and awareness, and brings local communities closer to claims of social and climate justice.

Courtesy of Andreco studio, Photo of children taking part in the parade through the Lodhi neighbourhood for the CLIMATE05 - Reclaim Air and Water episode. New Delhi, 2019.
https://www.andreco.org/portfolio/climate-05-reclaim-air-and-water-delhi-india/

Where is this grassroots initiative implemented?

Climate Art Project was conceived by Andrea Conte, a visual artist and an environmental engineer PhD who's currently the director of *Andreco Studio*. It started in Paris in 2015 during the Cop21 conference on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement and the global Climate March, and then got expanded to involve cities all over the world. In this paper, I will analyze only some of his interventions, specifically the series *Climate 01-02-03-04* which took place in different regions of Italy and *Climate 05* which took place in India, in New Delhi. These interventions were conducted over a period of time ranging from 2015 to 2019. The scientific expertise of Andrea Conte is accompanied by the awareness that *in the climate change era*

the environment needs new symbols to withstand [1], so his research goes beyond the boundaries of disciplines seeking a dialogue between science, art, symbols of collective imagination, ways of inhabiting urban and natural space and deepening the contrasts and points of contact in the difficult relationship between human beings and the environment. In the artistic practice and activism carried out by *Studio Andreco*, social and climate justice are inseparable and contribute to the protection of the planet and the relationships that cross it.

> *I support the idea that individual and collective freedom of thinking is a primary value. The objective of my research is to produce new visions, symbols and formulas, to make the invisible visible, showing the beauty of the hidden natural process as a contemporary alchemist that learns from the past.*
> *My artworks are tributes to the ecosystems, I'm representing the non-humans, the world without us, a conceptual transition from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric view is needed. The aim is to convey the environmental and social urgency without losing complexity.* [2]

His expressive techniques range from mural painting, to sculpture and site-specific [3] installations, but also to the generation of community-based [4] processes in which users are directly called to be co-authors of the work. In fact, site-specific artistic interventions deal with factors that go far beyond the geometric and topographical coordinates of the installation, which is why they are often connected with audience-specificity, community and

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[1] Andreco Studio, Statement: https://www.andreco.org/statement/

[2] *Ibidem*

[3] The Treccani encyclopedia defines the expression site-specific as a neologism, widespread in the contemporary art system, which indicates that "which has been conceived and created to be inserted in a specific place or environment; creation, artistic performance conceived and created to be inserted in a specific place or environment". For a deeper understanding of the term, see Miwon Kwon's essay *One Place after Another. Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity,* The MIT press https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/5138.001.0001

[4] INTERSOS international humanitarian organization defines the Community-based approach as *an action strategy that starts from the valorization of the community in which a process of change is intended to be initiated. It therefore implies the active involvement of the people who are part of it, the recognition of their abilities and resources as the main tools with which to achieve the objectives of improving the living conditions of the population of reference. [...] This presupposes an accurate knowledge of the territory and the context of reference, of the political/social dynamics that animate it and of the management of relationships within the community, for example in ethnic-cultural and gender terms. The Community-based approach, therefore, can trigger a virtuous process within communities, to intervene on existing problems and prevent new ones, with a view to self-sufficiency and independence with respect to external interventions. It is a method of planning and action that makes the people directly involved protagonists, giving them back their dignity and the awareness of being able to autonomously manage the dynamics within the community to which they belong.* https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Community-based-advocacy-project-voci-per-R-esistere.pdf

project-based processes. At the basis of these methodologies, there is always the paradigm of action-research as a principle of involvement of local communities, of listening to their respective needs, and of respecting the peculiarities of the place where the artist moves. An operation that is placed on the border between different disciplines. On the one hand, the network that Andreco is building with experts on climate change enriches and legitimises his research from a scientific point of view. On the other hand, his propensity for active listening and ethnographic research in the places of intervention transposes the operations into the field of sociology \ cultural anthropology.

Who are the promoters? Who are the beneficiaries?

The **beneficiaries** of this series are from time to time the citizens of the vulnerable areas. Although locals are already aware of the risks to which the environment around them is exposed, this process can lead them to

- explore the peculiarities and risks of their territory in depth thanks to the expertise provided by the scholars involved by Studio Andreco in the introductory debates to the event.
- metabolize the issues related to climate change in a new, and in some ways more accessible, way. In terms of language, the visualization and creative reinterpretation of certain phenomena can facilitate their understanding. Furthermore, the fact that the users have a strong bond with the territory in question establishes a relationship of empathy and recognition in the work of art and consequently in the theme it addresses.
- imagine, at an individual or collective level, alternative scenarios for their own environment. The creative process could stimulate new strategies and communication languages to transform the present and fight for a more equal and sustainable future.

As for the **promoters** of the project, we can talk from time to time about a different network that the artist chooses to build around himself. The collaborations started by Studio Andreco see institutions, scientific research bodies, schools and universities, neighborhood associations and non-profits that choose to join the project. The process of involving the promoters can take place in an initial phase, when the promoter commissions the artist's intervention to highlight the critical issues that the environment is facing. The artist can also choose to involve scientific partners in a second phase, that of restitution and dissemination to the public to analyze the phenomenon together and propose solutions to mitigate the risks of climate change.

As regards the involvement of promoters and partners with whom the artist interfaces from time to time, there is always a careful ethical selection. According to the principles of the *Manifesto of Art for Radical Ecologies,* co-signed by Studio Andreco in 2022, a specific choice to collaborate only with supporters who are concretely active in the challenges of

environmental sustainability and social equality can be seen. As stated in Principle 14 of the Manifesto, the artist argues that: *Art institutions funded by toxic philanthropy must be abolished. Anti-museums and alter-institutions are the forms we adopt for the instituting common imagination.*[5]

Courtesy of Andreco studio, Photograph of the artist Andrea Conte creating a mural for the CLIMATE05 - Reclaim Air and Water episode. New Delhi, 2019.
https://www.andreco.org/portfolio/climate-05-reclaim-air-and-water-delhi-india/

How does this initiative engage with climate? Does it tackle mitigation, adaptation, both or other dimensions of climate change?

The multifaceted nature of artist Andrea Conte is reflected in his singular direction of the Andreco studio: a synthesis between his scientific training, which boasts a doctorate in Environmental Engineering and postdoc collaborations with the University of Bologna and Columbia University in New York on the sustainable management of resources in diversified climatic conditions, and the need to express himself through an artistic language that investigates the relationship between urban and natural ecosystems, between humans and the environment. His artistic projects aim to raise awareness on climate change issues through a process of study, metabolization and reinterpretation of local climate peculiarities (both in positive terms, therefore the specificities of the place, and in negative terms, therefore the

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[5] Manifesto dell'Arte per l' Ecologie Radicali, Studio Andreco website,
https://www.andreco.org/the-art-for-radical-ecologies-manifesto-is-out/?lang=it

risks and emergencies that that place is forced to face due to climate change). For this reason, the Climate Art Project was selected as a finalist in 2019 at the Environmental Communication Oscars[6].

Studio Andreco avails itself of the support of a network of experts and scientists in the different phases of the artistic process. This can happen: - in the preliminary research and study phase

- in the subsequent construction of the project also through innovative digital and immersive tools (to increase the educational and engaging potential of the experience) or in the selection of eco-sustainable materials and low environmental impact technologies
- in the dissemination and popularization phase, inviting experts to participate in workshops \ seminars \ conferences to strengthen the scientific basis of the projects.

What are the main objectives? What are the main values?

My desire to work on public art projects on climate change comes from a sense of responsibility towards the planet and future generations who will inhabit it.

As Andreco states on the occasion of his TEDxBari, the aim of the project is to raise awareness on Global Warming and to disseminate the Nature Based Solutions and the best practices for Climate Change adaptation and mitigation. The artist transposes on a personal level the ideal of a process that has its roots in the social and political conception of art. Art can be a tool of knowledge. It can provocatively turn public attention where oblivion reigns. It can be a tool to give voice to the needs of local communities through a universally recognizable language.

What is the timeline? Are there already visible effects?

Climate are Project started in Paris in 2015 during the Cop21 conference on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement and the global Climate March. CLIMATE01 was the starting point of an itinerary that will be broad all over the world and that's still a work in progress. In Paris Andreco conducted two different actions: the first was a site specific installation in the Jardin partagé Beaudelire, a community garden located in an empty lot of Rue Baudelique in the 18th district. The 5 meters-tall wooden sculpture was the result of a collective workshop with the neighborhood community. The second was the realization of a mural in which the artist offers his own interpretation of global warming's main consequences. There was then a final moment of restitution aimed at students of a school in the neighborhood.

In 2016 Andreco realized CLIMATE02 in Bologna, a site specific intervention focused on the causes of anthropogenic pollution. The decision of the location is crucial: he decided to paint on the boundary wall of the city bus station, one of the areas with the greatest vehicular

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[6] Established in 2004, the AICA Award aims to enhance the commitment of those who, through communication campaigns, bring environmental problems to the attention of citizens, contributing to the creation of a collective conscience and an environmental culture. In the 20019 edition, Andreco was among the finalists in the *Communicating climate change* section.

traffic. In this occasion the artwork was carried out as a part of the Cheap Festival, a local event that carries out interventions in the urban space of Bologna. What is interesting about this intervention is the way in which the artist reinterprets in a graphic language the climax through which pollution and effusion gradually invade the space (urban and the white one of the "canvas"). The ascension of this gradual process culminates in a completely black poster.

In the same year the artist decided to intervene again in Italy, in Bari, to address the theme of desertification with CLIMATE03. In this case the artist makes use of the support of Pigment Workroom, Poetry in Action associations and the support of the 'Joy of Creation' exhibition on architect Kuthz. Also in this case the site-specific intervention has a deep connection with the local context: Puglia is a region considered at risk of drought and desertification. Andreco creates a mural in Bitonto in which the aridity of the land is reinterpreted in a graphic way also through the contrast between the color gray and red, It is inspired by scientific maps that highlight precisely those areas most in emergency in terms of drought. The artist wanted to pay homage through this work to all the agricultural workers who fight every day to maintain these fertile lands and preserve them from environmental risks.

In 2017, a year later, his attention focused on the risk of rising sea levels. Andreco arrives with CLIMATE04 in Venice, a lagoon city constantly exposed to the danger of flooding. The artistic intervention takes inspiration from scientific researches conducted by IPPC (Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control), European strategy for integrated pollution prevention and control, and was conducted in collaboration with Università Ca'Foscari, Università Iuav di Venezia, and researchers from ISMAR-CNR. Interesting in this case how the deep mix between art and scientific research, between natural element and urban ecosystem have translated into a collaboration between public and private, which with the funding of the Veneto Region has seen the collaboration of artists, researchers and students.
Venice has thus seen the birth of three different interventions: a large mural, an installation and a talk of scientific and artistic analysis of the risks of climate change. Three different expressive languages to fuel citizens' awareness and increase interest in risk prevention and tools for protecting local waters, stimulating a public debate that from the specific dimension of the city of Venice could make people reflect on the global dimension of this emergency.

The last intervention of this series of works lands on the other side of the world after two years. In 2019 Andreco arrives in Delhi with CLIMATE05 , positioning itself as an art and scientific research project but also as a call to action.The project was part of the urban art festival St+art Delhi 2019 and was produced in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute – Delhi, and supported by Asian Paints, amongst other organizations. Just a year earlier, in 2018, Delhi was named the most air polluted city in the world, crossed by two rivers (Ganges and Yamuna) whose waters are also two of the most polluted water bodies in the world. This is where the name of the intervention "Reclaiming Air and Water" comes from.
Here too, the choice of three interdisciplinary interventions in conjunction. The first is a mural in which the expressive language is significant and decisive for the message conveyed: the artist decides to represent air pollution through Air Ink, a chromatic pigment made from

smog. Then a public parade that involves the local population in a collective performance: citizens marching with flags that represent local plants that possess a remedial power with respect to air and water pollution. And again a talk in which to analyze the climate situation and the local emergency to fuel public debate and increase awareness of the issue.

Who are the actors involved? What are their backgrounds?

From time to time the artist interacts with local citizens, territorial associations, schools and universities, research institutes and experts in the sector, but also local institutions that embrace his mission and choose to support his initiatives. In this sense, the background of his interlocutors has a wide range of experience on the topic of social and climate justice. Artistic language can act as a means of increasing the accessibility of the topics discussed, thanks to the graphic visualization of the processes examined and the bond of empathy and connection that users have with the territory to which the debate refers. For example, in Bari, farmers who experience the effects of aridity and lack of water on their land every day can easily recognize themselves in the debate on the risks of desertification caused by climate change; likewise, citizens of a lagoon area like Venice will have no difficulty in finding the urgency of finding concrete solutions to the rising waters.

Courtesy of Andreco studio, artist Andrea Conte reflecting on the process of desertification that gave rise to the CLIMATE 03 - DESERTIFICATION episode during the TedX talk - Petruzzelli Theatre. Bari, 2016.
https://www.climateartproject.com/climate-03-desertification/

Which limits (institutional, physical, social, etc.) does it encounter? Are there any shortcomings or critical points visible? What other problematic issues can arise from its implementation?

I believe that the major limitations of this project are the same ones that characterize any type of site-specific artistic intervention: the peculiarity of the place, which risks compromising the connection between specificity and global vision of the theme, and the ephemeral nature of the actions that draw strength from the here and now but at the same time risk losing their impact once the actions are concluded.

In general, when we talk about site-specific artistic interventions in which there is an ephemeral component (workshops, performances, seminars and conferences etc.) a concrete rooting in the soil is always necessary, understood literally as an emission of roots in the context of the intervention. This is because once the duration of the artistic event is over - be it an installation, an educational experiment or a performance - it is essential to have disseminated values capable of overcoming the ephemeral. The success of these strategies is not measured in the moment, nor in the short term, but in the capacity of the site to assimilate and reproduce what the intervention has given to that site. At the same time, the success of the intervention depends on the capacity of the graft to absorb all the specific peculiarities of the place from the soil and integrate with it in an organic way. Site-specific artistic interventions can take root by analogy or by contrast, creating assonance or dissonance, but they cannot ignore a complex study of the place and careful listening to its agents. As anthropological practices of active listening teach, empathy is a key factor in this procedural phase.

Another limitation may concern the aspect of community involvement. Community operations can be conducted by involving local actors in a preliminary phase, therefore questioning them about their expectations and needs and imagining a possible intervention together. Alternatively, the community can be involved only at a later stage, when the artist, after having conducted studies on the territory, has already planned the artistic operation to be carried out. Finally, it is possible to choose to involve local subjects only a posteriori, for a phase of dissemination and narration of the process conducted in that place.
Studio Andreco has experimented with the different types of interaction with the local community mentioned above. A possible limitation could be that of reducing the impact of one's artwork if one decides to start the involvement only in the second and third phase of the process. Questioning and letting the actors themselves imagine possible scenarios can enrich the transformative potential and the feeling of belonging to the work itself.

Courtesy of Andreco studio, photo from the Jardin partagé Beaudelire community garden involved in the CLIMATE01 - PARIS AGREEMENT episode. Paris, 2015.
https://www.climateartproject.com/climate01-sculpture-mural/

How would it be potentially replicable in other settings?

As emerged from the analysis of the different CLIMATE episodes, it is possible to replicate interventions of this type in different parts of the world and at different times over the years. I believe that the key element for the feasibility of the project and its continuation is to always respect the peculiarities of the place, to think of interventions closely connected to the area in which one will intervene and to conduct the operations through always different expressive languages, as accessible as possible (in terms of understanding and participation) combining moments of enjoyment with experiences of co-realization and active participation and finally moments of reflection, learning (in scientific and artistic terms) and reinterpretation in a personal and collective key. Once again, the site-specific artistic practice and the processual and performative component of its works inevitably bring with it the complexity and uniqueness of the here and now. This factor makes it difficult to replicate certain works of art but can elevate to a model the strategy with which the artist can intervene in a new context from time to time. The process is replicable, the work of art is not. This can be considered a strong point for the potential relationship that the work establishes with the local community of reference (which can perceive the artist's intervention as a tribute and an attempt to preserve their own land of belonging) but also as a point of weakness because a user who is not familiar with that place and those specific environmental risks might not empathize with the urgency of this claim and not fully understand its effects on a social and collective level.

Is this initiative conducive to broader changes (law, institutional arrangements, long-term sustainability or community preparedness, etc.)? If yes, which?

The difficulty I encounter in identifying an answer lies in the distinction between the institutional, political and social changes that are evident and therefore capable of legitimizing the concrete impact of this operation-action and the possibility of enhancing processes of reappropriation and social claims already underway in the territories of intervention and possibly activating and stimulating new similar processes. For example, in 2022, 5 years after the creation of CLIMATE04 - Sea Level Rise, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, in collaboration with the Veneto Region and Grandi Stazioni, supported the restoration of the work. The lines and numbers of sea levels that could be reached in the next decades have thus become evident again, as a warning of what has not yet been done to mitigate the risks.

> *The goal is to arouse curiosity, to spark a question on a problem on which we can act, the solution depends on us.*[7]

Also the fact that this work is included in the Art&Business project in collaboration with the Ca Foscari University of Venice, also demonstrates the desire to extend the reflection within entrepreneurial choices, with the hope of a mutual exchange between artistic and corporate culture aimed at generating a new method for doing business.

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[7] Andrea Conte, *Andreco's mural in Venice restored, the work of the Roman artist dedicated to the lagoon ecosystem*, InsideArt, 9 May 2022 https://insideart.eu/2022/05/09/andreco-2/

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