

Primal Sonic Visions Artists Statement

By Bill Fontana

Primal Sonic Visions aims to awaken a sense of astonishment, wonder and curiosity in the power and beauty of wind, solar, hydro and geothermal energy sources. Visitors to this exhibition are first met with a sonic beckoning in the entrance courtyard of the Ca Foscari exhibition hall. Venice's primal sonic voice of live and recorded underwater sounds of the Grand Canal and the Venice Lagoon softly resonate as a sonic invitation. Perhaps a visitor hearing this will stop and think why is this timeless ancient voice is calling?

Visitors then entering this exhibition are met with an organically flowing and immersive series of sonic and visual abstractions created from renewable power sources of wind, moving water, the sun and ancient heat from the core of the earth.

IRENA gave me the opportunity to visit and record such sites in Iceland, Portugal, Italy, Austria, California and the UAE. The resulting media artworks created from these experiences are not documentary in style but convey the emotional and conceptual responses I had visiting these sites.

In producing this body of work, I was always reacting to these sites from my first impressions of sound and vision. I was not thinking about how to accurately document these locations but rather how to capture their abstract sensory magic.

In the ceiling of the long ground floor entrance gallery visitors will pass under a video filmed just underneath the top of a rotating wind turbine blade in Northern England while the sounds of its blades cutting the air swirl around this space.

Upon reaching the end of this long gallery with a direct view of the Grand Canal, visitors will hear its underwater voice again.

An adjacent gallery that also faces the Grand Canal has a large projected video composition made from multiple views of wind turbines in a nature reserve near Fatima in Portugal. In this collage, visitors not only see and hear the rotation and shadows of multiple spinning turbines blades of singing birds at dawn and twilight.

In the historic inner courtyard, mysterious sounds from bubbling ancient geothermal pools in Tuscany and Iceland quietly murmur.

Upstairs, in the second exhibition level, the long gallery passage is filled with 3 large projections from magic geothermal landscapes in Western Tuscany, with their sounds creating an immersive composition.

Adjacent gallery rooms on this level have video compositions created at Hydroelectric power plants in Portugal, Iceland, Austria and California that morph images of outflowing water into dramatic views of their surrounding landscapes.

A large gallery on this level also shows my first media compositions made at MOSE, Venice's new flood barrier system. What is presented here are media studies and recordings that are the starting point of a larger project. It is my intention in the future to create a live media artwork with MOSE.