

***Natural Sovereignty*, solo show at the Saint James' Charterhouse in Capri  
October 9th – November 7th - Certosa di San Giacomo, Capri - Italy, 2021**

In Paolo Cirio's solo show, *Natural Sovereignty*, exhibited at the museum MiBACT Certosa of Capri, the artist presents a utopian vision of climate justice, using the conceptual framework of a "climate crime tribunal" that unfolds in the halls and cloisters of the Saint James Charterhouse.

Cirio presents the international tribunal of climate crimes with a vast body of material drawn from his research on the climate crises. Using prints on canvas, fabric and paper on which he intervenes, Cirio's informational visuals feature scientific and economic data, legal documents and biological studies. The colors, notations and compositions highlight specific evidence that illustrate the legal accountability fossil fuel companies have, creating greater public engagement with this complex theme.

Cirio aims to shift the cultural perspective on the responsibility for the current climate and ecological crisis, from individual citizens to the real culprits that remain unpunished. With this provocation, Cirio accuses the major oil, gas and coal companies in court with data and documents on climate change that directly correspond to their greenhouse gas emissions. The tribunal enables thousands of natural species—including humans—and damaged ecosystems to seek financial compensation from those who have caused the climate crisis on a massive scale. Court documents and graphics are presented as evidence, climate crisis experts intervene as witnesses, and visitors to the exhibition participate as a jury, with the potential to evaluate the evidence and identify as an injured party.

In this exhibition, the concept of sovereignty is extended to the natural world and envisions a future in which human beings, natural species and ecosystems acquire supranational rights codified by international public laws. The future climate policy will not only have to include a transition to more sustainable economies; it will ultimately require rebuilding economic, social and natural systems from climate disasters, and holding those who have caused damage of unprecedented proportions accountable for their actions.

Cirio's new works utilize art's versatility to illustrate the scientific, legal, and economic issues that humanity must face with climate change. Cirio's networks of data propose connections between the information systems of science, law and economics, which are integral to natural ecosystems. As humans have altered Earth's ecosystems and severely exploited its natural resources in the Anthropocene, we should conceive of the economic, social and information systems as the nerves of this new geological era.

The sovereignty of the future will inevitably be given back to nature. Climate change will overrun our inflexible human systems with its natural laws, forcing humankind to adapt to new realities. The concept of justice will evolve into a larger interconnected system, in which natural species, ecosystems and humans may constitute themselves as climate victims, while corporate and political entities will be identified as criminals. The design of such a system includes data, networks and algorithms that process climate, biological and ecological information to find economic, social and legal balances on a planetary scale. In the future of the Anthropocentric age, humans and the environment must be positively interconnected in order to achieve peaceful coexistence.

In the halls of the Certosa of Capri, Cirio exhibits hundreds of images depicting ecosystems, flora and fauna that are at risk of extinction, and places them in dialogue with the economic and political factors that have critically endangered them. In the largest cloister, twenty-four flags representing the fossil fuel companies that emitted over 50% of the World's greenhouse gasses are blacked with oil. Graphs, data, maps and images of climatic and economic anomalies are presented as comparative juxtapositions and points of analyses. Adjacent to these evidential documents, is a sound installation in the Certosa garden exhibiting interviews that Cirio conducted in conversation with international experts in the field of climate justice. In the final room, a participatory artwork invites the public to express their opinions as members of the tribunal's jury. Together, these works compose an atlas of ecological and human coexistence – Cirio's initial step towards the creation of a museum of climate justice for the 21st century.

Capri provides a fertile context and ideal space for the exhibition. Located in the center of the Mediterranean, with its peculiar biodiversity, the island becomes symbolic of the fragility and centrality of nature within human civilizations. Moreover, the political and transnational history of the island, from being the headquarters of Roman Emperors to Lenin and his Social Democratic Schools for Underground Party Workers, echoes Capri's history of modern art and natural sciences, hosting visionaries such as Karl Wilhelm Diefenbach, Joseph Beuys, and Edward.

## About the Saint James' Charterhouse in Capri, Italy.

The Saint James' Charterhouse (Certosa di San Giacomo) is a monastery on the island of Capri built in 1371 that now stands as a cultural museum run by the Italian Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage (MIBAC).

Capri may be well-known as a world-renowned hotspot and tourist attraction; however, it is also an archeological and historical site for artists and humanists concerned with environmentalism. In the mid-late 20th century, Capri became a designation for an international roster of artists, writers and environmentalists, including the likes of Thoman Mann, Norman Douglas, Edwin Cerio, Pablo Neruda, and Friedrich Alfred Krupp, amongst others. One such transplant, Swedish writer Axel Munthe, resided in Villa San Michele, which now functions as an international cultural center and the Swedish Honorary Consulate. Vladimir Lenin created the Social Democratic Schools for Underground Party Workers in Capri from 1909-11, where he held meetings with the socialists Maksim Gor'kij and Alexander Bogdanov. Joseph Beuys lived in Capri in 1974 while healing from an illness, when he composed the beloved artwork, *Capri Batterie*, which was dedicated to the island. Capri environmentalists include Edward Cerio and Friedrich Alfred Krupp, the German steel magnate with a passion for marine biology and the arts. During the early 1900's, Krupp personally collaborated with the Naples Zoological Station.

A lesser-known Caprese, Karl Wilhelm Diefenbach, was a German painter, naturalist and social reformer, who pioneered the peace movements and established his community in Capri in 1899. Diefenbach explored life in harmony with nature, the rejection of monogamy, and a vegetarian diet, and has artworks exhibited in the permanent collection of the Certosa of Capri.

## **"Natural Sovereignty", solo show by Paolo Cirio. Descriptions of the works at the Certosa of Capri:**

### **Room 1**

#### ***Climate Human Plaintiffs***

Online platform, data and prints.

Visitors are invited to fill out an online form created by Cirio, where they can indicate how they have been personally harmed by climate change, and what financial compensation they expect from major fossil fuel firms. In the installation, these claims are printed and displayed on a bulletin board.

### **Room 2**

#### ***Climate Species Plaintiffs***

10 panels of prints on watercolor paper in B/W A5 format colored with watercolors. 105x177 cm each.

Cirio aggregated data of over 40,000 species at risk of extinction and published them on the website, Extinction-Claims.com, where visitors can claim financial compensation from major fossil fuel firms on behalf of endangered species. The installation consists of 10 panels with 750 photographs of animal, insects, and plant species that are at risk of extinction. The images are printed in black and white, then painted with watercolors by the artist and children participating in the educational activities.

### **Room 3**

#### ***Climate Newsroom Evidence***

3 prints on paper, 130x220 cm each.

This work is composed of newspaper headlines related to the climate crisis that are printed on paper to form a dense column of news. The selected articles represent the research materials which Cirio focused his investigation on, both as an artistic process and as a historical record that portrays the evolution of the climate crisis and its legal, economic and human implications.

### **Room 4**

#### ***Climate Geopolitics***

1 globe, 1 print on fabric 80x80 cm, 1 table.

This work consists of a globe upon which Cirio notates the complex geopolitics of climate change accountability, in which the major governments responsible for emissions enter into political and economic relations. The globe is displayed on fabric that is printed with data and graphs concerning the major participants in the production and consumption of coal, gas and oil.

### **Room 5**

#### ***Climate Ecosystems Plaintiffs***

3 prints on cotton fabric, 150x200 cm each.

This work consists of three semi-transparent fabric prints that include photographs of ecosystems, glaciers, rivers, lakes and forests of the world. These ecosystems, being victims of climate change, are critical environments in which all living species are immersed, and should therefore be preserved with economic compensation.

### **Room 6**

#### ***Climate Financial Evidence***

4 canvases printed and painted in acrylic.

This work is composed of data and graphs selected by Cirio that denounce the major financial institutions and company executives responsible for the climate crisis as indicated by their profits, investments and wages. Cirio's brush strokes upon the canvas prints highlight key data points on the graphs which make evident the capital availability to provide compensation for the unethical climate crimes they've committed.

### **Room 7**

#### ***Climate Anomalies Evidence***

17 prints on A2-A3 tracing paper, oil pastels.

This work is composed of maps and satellite photographs provided by NASA, which report the most significant anomalies of temperatures, droughts, fires, and floods in the world. Cirio uses oil pastels to highlight the data shown on these maps, providing comprehensive evidence of the severity of the global climate crisis.

### **Room 8**

#### ***Climate Legal Evidence***

4 canvases printed in B / W and painted in acrylic.

This work consists of canvas prints of graphs taken from internally commissioned studies by Shell and Exxon in the early 1980s that had assessed the effects of their emissions. These studies had already precisely established that the greenhouse gas would have produced a rise in temperatures, acidification of the oceans, and many other negative effects on the climate. These documents remained undisclosed for decades and are now used as evidence in lawsuits against Shell and Exxon. Cirio highlights the graphs taken from these historical documents by painting them in bright colors.

### **Room 9**

#### ***Climate Comparing Evidence***

2 painted canvases, 195x200 cm each.

This work consists of a pair of canvases in which two graphs are recreated with hand-drawn brushstrokes. The resulting abstract diagrams compare sea level rise with emissions data from fossil fuel companies on the same time scale. The visual similarities between the two graphs creates a tangible image of the direct connection between the increase in emissions and their natural consequences.

## Room 10

### **Climate Sentence**

1 canvas printed and painted in acrylic.

This work consists of a printed canvas showing a list of major fossil companies and their emissions. This document from the 2017 historical study, “*Carbon Major Database*”, is the first that established precise responsibilities each international fossil fuel firm has. National companies are highlighted in orange, while private companies are marked in yellow. Cirio then designed an algorithm to process this data and calculate the financial compensations with respect to the economic damage caused by each company.

## Small cloister

### **Climate Gas**

7 written and colored fabrics. 125x390 cm each

This work consists of tens of meters of painted fabric depicting the chemical symbols of the major greenhouse gases and their symbolic commercial value equivalent to one dollar. The tons of greenhouse gasses produced today are treated as financial vehicles with the “carbon credits” system that allows the industry to keep polluting. Greenhouse gases are assigned a single price that fluctuates according to the market, even if some of them, such as carbon dioxide or methane, have completely different polluting and permanence properties in the atmosphere. Cirio highlights the paradox of the discrepancy between these monetary values and the social and environmental damage each specific greenhouse gas creates.

## Large cloister

### **Climate Culpable**

24 flags, fabric prints, 140x100 cm each.

This work consists of 24 fabric flags featuring the logos of the 24 major fossil fuel firms responsible for over 50% of total global emissions. Cirio blacked the flags with motor oil, creating an installation that invites audiences to reflect on the grim principles these companies have adopted. These fossil fuel firms are mostly unknown to the general public, as they operate in secrecy without any legal responsibility and often in countries with authoritarian governments.

## Garden

### **Climate Testimony**

4 speakers, solar panels, glass ampoules 40x40 cm each.

Cirio conducted audio interviews with experts in climate justice and economics, who represent the witnesses at the tribunal. This installation consists of four speakers positioned inside glass ampoules, powered by photovoltaic panels that turn on automatically with the sun's rays. Each interview runs 10 minutes long with looped audio. Among those interviewed are Ivan Novelli, the president of Greenpeace Italy, Marco Grasso, author of “*From Big Oil to Big Green*” published by MIT Press, and other experts in environmental law.

