

Presentation

The botanical garden a source of artistic inspiration and a home for art, or even a venue where artwork can be exhibited: this is what the Botanical Garden of the University of Palermo is today. It is a garden where nature and art expressions coexist, but also a place where various forms of art are regularly displayed for the public. The garden becomes a perfect venue especially for works of art inspired by plants, which are the indisputable protagonists of botanical gardens. As is well known, plants have been the subject of painting and sculpture throughout the ages, and what's more, sometimes, it was thanks to their pigments and woods that the material rendering of art was made possible.

After e series of exhibitions, which include Vittorio Aliquò's *Insecta et Plantae* and those of the students of Noc 32-Parco delle Madonie, MariaVinci's *Il respiro del Tempo (The breath of Time)*, andAlessandro Giudice's *Scatti d'Orto (Garden snapshots)*, the year 2010 offers our Botanical Garden the opportunity to host Cristina Cocco's works which were inspired by the earliest still extant scientific botanical garden, the *Hortus Simplicium* of the University of Padua.

From the *Hortus Simplicium*, which dates back to the Renaissance, Cristina Cocco's art exhibition entitled *Evolution* has come to us thanks to Prof. Giuseppe Silvestri's kind support. Since in 2010 we are celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB), *Evolution* contributes to offer a new occasion to celebrate it.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I am presenting the catalogue of the exhibition. I am fully convinced of the quality of the message that the artist

conveys through her work and of the perfect match between *Evolution* and the mission of the hosting institution.

When it comes to nature, Cristina Cocco is a highly appreciated artist also thanks to her insightful yet delicate interpretation of the natural world. Her artwork exalts the inspirational quality of botanical gardens in general and of plants in particular. Cristina Cocco provides an interpretation of their multifaceted expressions filtered not through the light of the camera lenses, as in photography, but through the artist's interpretive sensibility which bestows upon the paintbrush the task to transpose the images she intimately perceives and elaborates.

My warmest congratulations go to the artist, and I submit my critical appreciation to that of the visitors who will be willing to share with us the value of biodiversity as a resource for the balance of the Planet as well as a source of renewal for the humankind.

Palermo, May 2010.

Francesco Maria Raimondo

Director of the Botanical Garden of the University of Palermo