"Greenwashing"
FONDAZIONE SANDRETTO RE REBAUDENGO
Via Modane, 16
February 29—May 18
"Cyclus Offset," "KeayKolour Recycled May," "Shiro Alga Carta": A
series of “all natural,” “ecologica” papers color the catalogue for
"Greenwashing" in a muted rainbow of earthy greens, yellows, and
pinks. Designed by the exhibition’s curators—Ilaria Boracossa and
Latitudes’s Max Andrews and Mariana Canepa Luna—the volume
offers its own version of “green sheen.” Are the Fondazione and the
organizers self-consciously engaging in the same banal posturing
they set out to critique? Or do they see the printing of an art catalogue
on recycled paper as a step in the direction of philosopher Félix
Guattari’s exhortation to “think transversally,” toward a reconciliation
of the nature/culture dichotomy? Like most of the show’s twenty-five
participating artists, the organizers are uncompromising in their
ambiguity. They neither propose grand solutions nor shy away in
passive resignation. An ambitious project that occasionally falters,
"Greenwashing" is largely successful in broadening and interrogating
the narrow views that dominate environmentalist debates.

Works by Jorge Peris, Lara Almarcegui, and Chu Yun provide the
most exemplary models of this approach. For Fairy, 2008, Peris bolted
slabs of wet clay to the walls of a back room, transforming the space’s
frigid architecture into a musty den of soft, sweating walls kept moist
by a network of sprinklers. Like Peris’s installation, Almarcegui’s slide
show and postcards, titled A Wasteland: Rotterdam Harbour,
2003–2018; Genk, 2004–2014; Arganzuela Public Slaughterhouse,
Madrid, 2005–2006; Peterson Paper Factory, Moss, 2006–2007,
documents microenvironments that are at once constructed and
deconstructed, simultaneously additive and subtractive. In A
Wasteland—wilderness by design—the artist negotiated with
municipal authorities and landowners to preserve the atmosphere of
disuse in a selection of urban lots, sparing them from the restoration
and clean-up of urban planners. In Chu’s Constellation, 2006, various
appliances set to “sleep” mode are arranged in a dark room. Their
twinkling red, blue, and green lights are the stars of a heaven
inhabited by obsolete electronics, including VHS players and
soon-to-be-outmoded technologies, like CRT television monitors.
While Chu’s work evokes what Andrews calls the “What can I do?”
response to climate change,” it also explores the seductiveness of
the spectacular apocalypse scenarios frequently invoked in
environmentalist rhetoric. Such eschatological visions aren’t the
province of environmentalists alone, however. As Noam Chomsky
affirms in Cornelia Parker’s video, Chomskian Abstract, 2007: “About
a third of the population probably believes it doesn’t matter what we
do about global warming . . . because Jesus is coming and so . . .
what’s the difference? . . . Those of us who are saved will rise to
heaven, and everyone else will be massacred—and it’ll be
wonderful.”

—Emily Verla Bovino