



•|• ria lussi



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CHI HA PAURA DEL ? ROSA?

*Testi di Umberto Palestini, Gloria Fossi,
Roberto Valenti, Ria Lussi*

MAJA
ARTE CONTEMPORANEA

Fashioned in a circle

by Umberto Palestini

Who is afraid of pink? One question. Maybe a challenge? A claim?

I have some doubts. If I think of Ria Lussi's research, I would never be able to confine her to a gender context and perhaps she herself would be horrified at the very thought that someone would force her into the rigid meshes in an expressive vein, albeit laudable and just. Her art has always directed its aim towards the search for a totality in which the female universe has always been a founding element, but not the only one, of a cosmogony that tends to embrace the entire universe. For this reason, the evocation of pink does not take me back to a colour, which in her recent work is in any case the star, but to the flower and the passion it embodies. We think of the blood of Aphrodite left on the thorns of the brambles to save the beloved Adonis which turns into roses. The idea that death is defeated by love seems to me more in keeping with her creative model in which rebirth, preserving forgotten or distant figures, bringing them back to a new life, is a *modus operandi*.

Today Ria Lussi asks us a question that is also an exhortation not to dodge questions and she does this with a series of circular works, which we know refer to perfection and cyclical time. On the surface of the circular works, in her very personal way, she creates a series of self-portraits, detailed figures poised between irony, haughtiness and subtle enchantment, even going as far as touching on eroticism with *La Giocosa*, in a refined manner.

Part of the works unfolds on opaque backgrounds, with a powdered effect created with acrylic, where the vibrato is provided by the different shades of pink that get brighter and brighter until they become deep purple or shocking pink. In others, and this seems to me to represent the most interesting new aspect, the circular works are enhanced by thick, caressing brushstrokes that, in some cases, render the self-portraits not entirely evident, as if they were deliberately hidden, giving them a new perspective composed of precious tiles as in glittering mosaics and mother-of-pearl medallions.

Ria Lussi's new works are repeated like a mantra and bring to mind a famous verse by Gertrude Stein contained in the poem *Sacred Emily*, "A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose". In a lecture, Stein said about the verse: "And then later made that into a ring I made poetry and what did I do I caressed completely caressed and addressed a noun."

Ria's self-portraits, fashioned in a circle, manage to include myth and avant-garde, they become poetry and caress as in Stein's poem, which contains a memorable phrase, the subject of attention and distinguished studies, such as the one by Umberto Eco: The

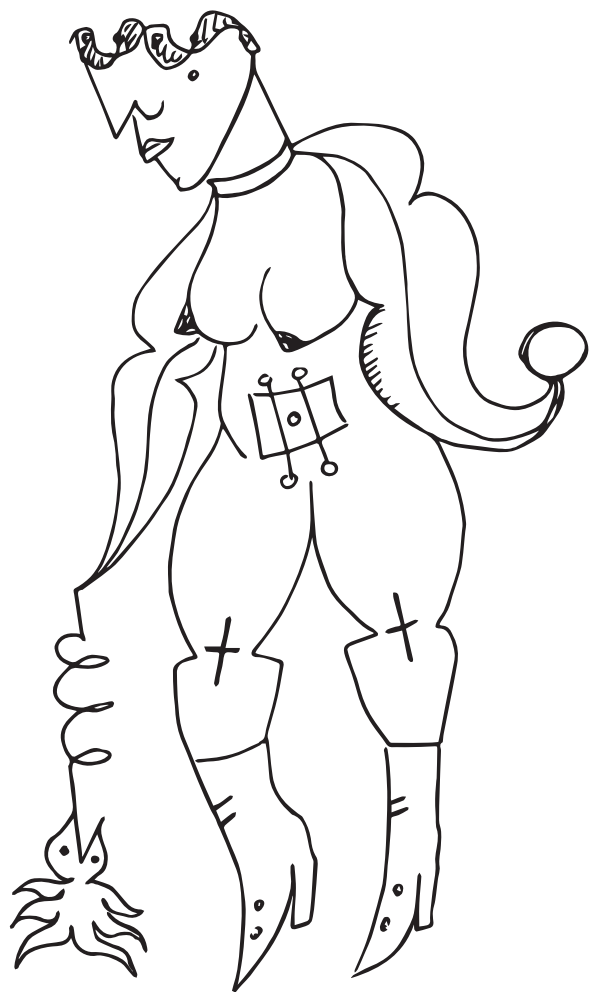
Absent structure. The semiologist asks himself a question: "What do I understand of what Stein is saying to me? She only says "rose", and leaves me free to fill that word with meanings that most belong to me and feel close to me. She calls into question reading, feelings and conjectures. She calls me into question."

Eco's reflection perfectly covers Ria Lussi's work in its structured complexity; the research of an artist who has nourished herself with studies, readings, who offered the observer the freedom to interpret and gave feelings and conjectures by directly involving them, calling them into question.

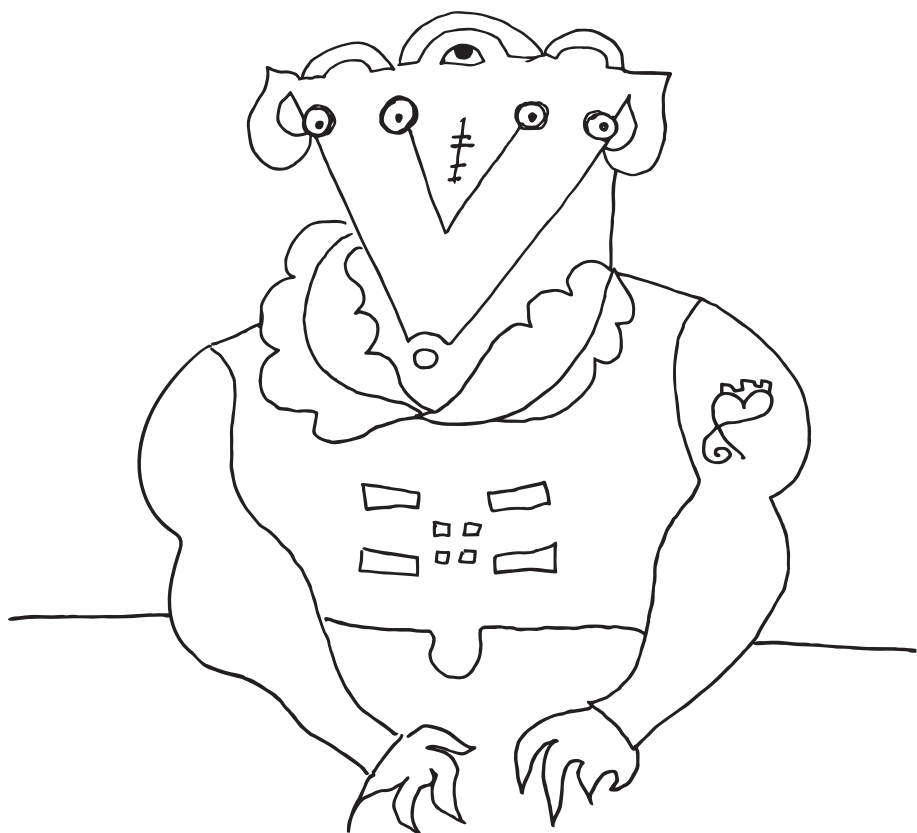
Yes. Ria Lussi calls us into question. Who is afraid of pink?

*"una rosa è una rosa
è una rosa è una rosa"*

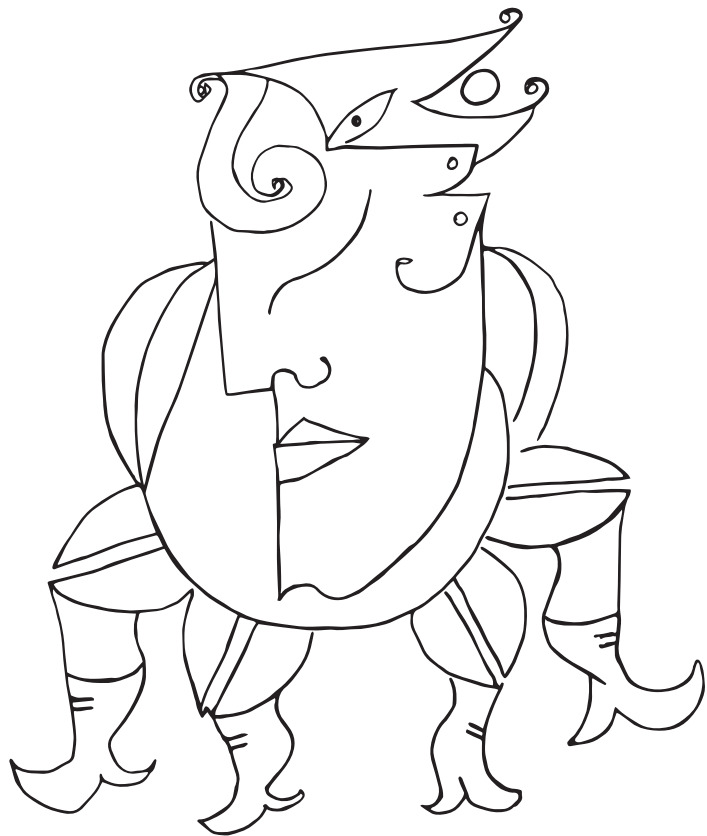




La Rosa giocosa, 2021 | Acrilico su tela | d. 125 cm



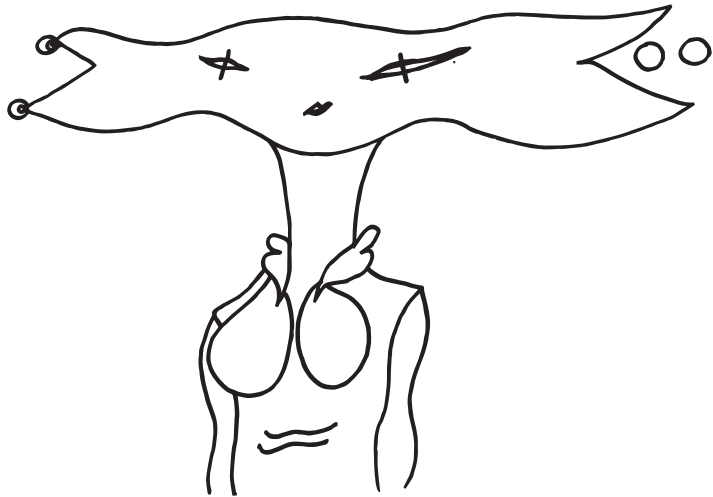
La Rosa premurosa, 2021 | Acrilico su tela | d. 125 cm



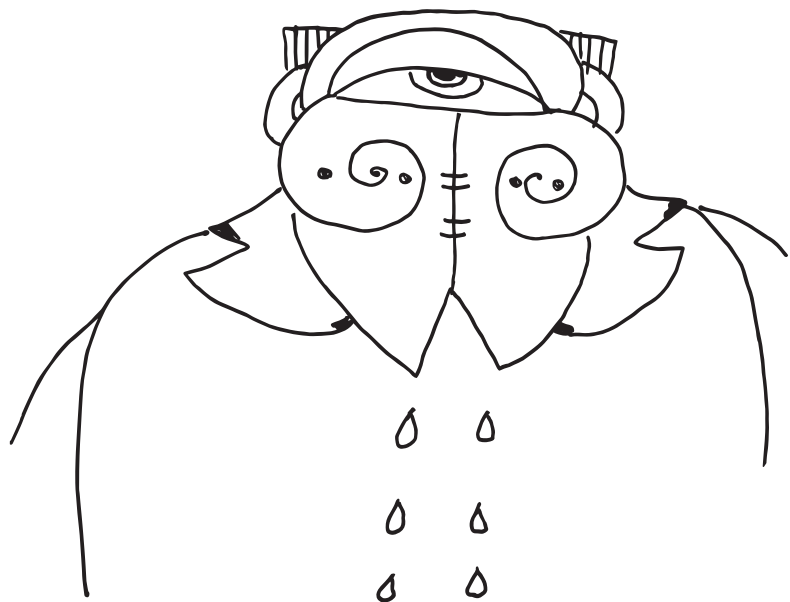
La Rosa avventurosa, 2021 | Acrilico su tela | d. 125 cm



La Rosa amorosa, 2021 | Acrilico su tela | d. 75 cm



La Rosa presuntuosa, 2021 | Acrilico su tela | d. 75 cm



La Rosa permalosa, 2021 | Acrilico su tela | d. 75 cm



La Rosa curiosa, 2021 | Acrilico su tela | d. 75 cm

2021
Acrilico su tela
d. 37 cm



la Rosa lacrimosa



la Rosa timorosa



la Rosa spiritosa



la Rosa pensierosa



la Rosa misteriosa



la Rosa religiosa



Antique pink, modern pink, freedom pink

by Gloria Fossi

Who is afraid of pink? The title chosen by Ria is in question form, and presupposes, in my opinion, personal answers. I will say then, first of all, not to fear pink, God forbid. Nor do I recall ever having identified this colour with the female gender (this was not done in past centuries, at least in the figurative arts, as I will later mention). Nor do I suffer from phobias about other colours. I love them all, although I prefer shades of orange, yellow and pink: cherry pink, Tiepolo pink, powder pink, violet-pink. Since the 14th century, pink has been a frequent colour in Tuscan, Florentine and Sienese painting (as well as in the north, such as the 15th-century Mantegna of Paduan origin). I have no intention of touching on ecphrastic values, symbolic or semantic meanings of this colour in art here, as the issue cannot be addressed in a few lines. However, pink was often used by the great masters, and in a sublime way. I could cite an infinite number of examples, but here it is enough to recall some of the most famous works of the early fourteenth century, such as the admirable pink, almost transparent robe of the baby Jesus in the *Maestà* by Giotto in the Uffizi or the tunics of the saints in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's paintings. Illustrious examples of the early 15th century are the synthetic, earthy robes of the apostles in the Florentine frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel in the Carmine, or the light pink of two gentle angels in the oldest known, yet enchanting, work by Masaccio: the *Triptych of Saint Juvenal*, in the Cascia Museum near Reggello, south of Florence. The faces of those two teenagers are not without identity, or rather, as I happened to call them, *profil perdu*, an expression dear to authors closer to us such as Théophile Gautier or Henry James. Why are angels pink? Was it because angels were the first to ignore gender differences?

Then there are the pink buildings of the fifteenth century and early Mannerism (for example, the architectures of classical ancestry by Domenico Veneziano are pink. And then, there is the metaphysical, cold pink of the ethereal young man depicted by Pontormo in the *Capponi chapel* in Santa Felicita in Florence. His skin is a magnetic and surprising colour. Skipping endless passages, we come to the unsurpassed pinks of Tiepolo's skies: dazzling light, and below figures of an "unhindered, effortless fluidity" that ascend "to all the heavens, without forgetting the earth", as Roberto Calasso wrote in his *Il rosa Tiepolo*, where he also evoked the *Albertine* of *La Recherche*. Taking a prodigious leap forward, one of

the most intense works that stands out by Lucio Fontana is the pink series of the Nineteen Sixties. And just a few months ago – forgive me for making a slightly blasphemous comparison – I couldn't help remembering the pink T-shirt (and cap) worn on the tennis courts by the legendary Roger Federer. In retrospect, years ago, I travelled the spectacular Overseas Highway south of Florida with a pink scooter and a matching hat. Why did I choose that colour, among the many that were offered to me in the rental shop? Perhaps because, in a play of contrasts, it blended so well with the intense blue of the sea, almost flush with the paved road linking Miami to Hemingway's iconic Key West, thirty miles in the face of Cuba. Or rather, because it gave me the sense of what was to be the first of many trips purposely made alone? Pink as a taste of freedom. Leonardo – I mean Leonardo da Vinci – admonished his pupil: 'If you are alone, you will be all your own', even though he often contradicted this statement, as well as many others of his, at the court of the powerful with affable nonchalance. Even Leonardo loved to wear a very elegant pink jacket. He was not the only one, in the 16th century: among the most remarkable examples is the Bergamasque knight Gian Gerolamo Grumelli, portrayed full-length as a king of Spain, dressed entirely in coral pink, including socks and shoes: that is how he was depicted again in the 1560 portrait by Giovanni Battista Moroni. Both, the painter and the client, evidently did not fear pink; on the contrary, they were proud of it. And then, one cannot ignore the primary meaning of the term 'rose', the botanical one. Close to home, I have friends with a nursery of old roses, who taught me how to grow them. This helped me to study them in Botticelli's paintings, and to try to identify the species present, especially the pale pink ones that swirl in the *Birth of Venus* and fill Flora's robe in *Primavera*. Roses, by far, stand out among the many other colourful species depicted by the painter loved by the Medici. Obviously, artists have also loved other colours – think of Cézanne's 'Naples yellow' or Matisse's *Fakarava* blue, named after an atoll in the Tuamotu archipelago in Polynesia, which the great French master visited in 1930, almost as a gamble (but also dear to Melville, Jack London, Stevenson, and lastly Simenon). It is all too obvious to recall the oranges and chrome yellow used in the late 19th century by Gauguin and van Gogh. Now I am curious to see the pinks of Ria/Rosaria, which I think is a beautiful name. Among other things.



The many existing roses

by Roberto Valente

The Rose, much more than any other species, is closely interrelated with the history of Man. I wrote the word “species”, because if you try to count the exact number of Roses in existence, you will realise that you are facing a puzzle, just like the Myth of Sisyphus. Their ancestral cultivation, the hybridisation known since ancient times, the practice of grafting, practised and perfected more and more over the course of the centuries, has allowed a very large number of Rose cultivars to be created, which, today, amount to about three thousand, selected from the most attractive, the most fragrant and the hardiest. I wrote the word “history”, because it is an undisputed fact that, among all the flowering plants, the Rose is the most ancient known and used, for its objective qualities of beauty, fragrance and use in pharmacopoeia and cosmetics. The appearance of the Rose dates back more than four million years, which is much earlier than the appearance of man. In Ancient Egypt, for example, oils and perfumes were obtained from roses that were used in the ceremonies in honour of Isis, and in the cult of the dead. In Persia, roses were used to beautify gardens with their colours and fragrance. In the kingdom of Babylon, the Rose became the symbol of the authority of the state, albeit together with the eagle and apple. In China, from 500 BC, rose cultivation spread to the point that even Confucius mentioned the beautiful blooms in Beijing’s rose gardens. In Greek mythology, the rose was consecrated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, marriage and fertility. A legend tells that the goddess, in love with the young Adonis, could do nothing to prevent his death, inflicted by a boar. In an attempt to rescue her beloved, Aphrodite injured herself on some brambles, and started to bleed, the drops of blood fell to the ground causing fragrant, red roses to bloom, as if to represent the ambivalent soul of the Rose, that is joy and pain. The Romans used to import Roses from Egypt, but later in order to optimise trade, they created real nurseries, where the crops were used mainly for making ointments and perfumes. At the ancient city of Paestum, you can still see the remains of an ancient perfumery, where the Damask Rose, called the “bifera” by the Romans because it bloomed twice a year, was processed. Among the many legends that the Romans told about roses, one tells of how the goddess Flora, who symbolises spring and flowers, begged the other gods to bring her deceased friend back to life by turning her into a Queen of Flowers. Accepting the plea, one god brought her back to life, one immersed her in ambrosia,

one gave her fragrance and one fruit. The last act was left to the goddess Flora, namely that of giving her petals. The result of this complex resurrection was the Rose, from which comes the extreme relevance of the gesture of giving someone a rose, symbol of the generosity of the gods, the perfect flower for giving love, the true queen of flowers. From a botanical point of view, the Rose is nothing more than an erect shrub, which can sometimes also be a climbing or trailing plant. It has from 5 to 11 dark green leaflets, with single or double toothed edges, which may or may not be hairy, depending on the species. The flowers, grouped in inflorescences, have differing numbers of petals, depending on the species, and give off a more or less intense perfume. It has a stem with thorns, which again change according to the species. The fruit is a rosehip, with a variable size and shape, depending on the species. We can therefore safely say that it is the species that marks the true difference of roses! In short: not much can be done! Whether the Rose is a medium, or the Rose is an instrument, the fact remains that the Rose is an elegant and versatile flower. A flower that with its splendid colours could lay bare your deepest feeling to make those you love happy. A flower that has the innate ability to reveal a multitude of feelings based on the colour of its petals. And if by chance you are doubtful about the color to use, don’t worry, because here are all the meanings of roses according to their colour:

- Red rose, means passion and love
- Orange rose, symbolises charm and attractiveness
- White rose, expresses irreproachability and righteousness
- Pink rose, unequivocally indicates femininity, love and friendship
- Blue rose, represents wisdom and faith
- Yellow rose, means jealousy and insecurity
- Coral pink rose, symbolises desire and craving
- Musk rose, expresses a strange beauty
- Green rose, indicates strength, tenacity and perseverance
- Black rose, represents class and magnetism
- Violet rose, means romance and sentimentality
- Fuchsia pink, means rationality and courage
- Powder blue rose, symbolises freshness and brightness
- Peach rose, expresses the desire to start a relationship



Rosario #Teo, 2016 | Vetro di Murano | 33x35x28 cm



Rosario #Cost, 2016 | Vetro di Murano | 37x43x32 cm

CHI HA PAURA DEL ROSA?

dbyria lussi

Rosa rosae rosae..rosae rosarum...
la rosa ...il rosa...

a mantra like the rosary, like the Hindu japa, the meditation technique shared by all religious beliefs that teaches us how to clear the mind of silly thoughts and concentrate on the heart, because, it seems, that the pronunciation of the r (R!) is good for it...

I am Rosaria, marked for life by a Sicilian name, born in an original Milanese family from Trieste who intended to call me Ria, a first prediction, since my first daughter was later born in Sicily...and I now teach Latin with a passion to the new digital generations starting with rosa-rosae-rosae the rose, the flower that I loved least as a child, because it was too haughty pink, a colour that is not a colour because it has such a strong symbolic value. Pink, the colour I have never liked and never worn.

As third daughter, I grew up like a boy, treated by my father as if I were; I had his confidence, I learned to shoot on the other hand, my great teachers, Leonardo and Proust, were not perhaps in turn poised on an uncertain boundary line that goes far beyond the sexual matrix. (very modest in comparing myself to them, right? just like a rose!) In this exhibition, 17 monochromatic round images, in which the drawing absolves white like embroidery from the texture of the canvas, created from a little phrase (WHO IS AFRAID OF PINK!) written in watercolour in one of my countless notebooks. Seventeen ironic acrylic self-portraits in which the adjectives attributed from time to time to the different "Rose" suggest an interpretation of the metamorphic linear figures that emerge from the laborious variation on the colour.

Now, I don't care about female - male - gender fluid, tall or short or flimsy, blue or pink or transparent, because I have reached a philosophical dimension that has allowed me to understand that I simply do not identify myself in any form! So, theoretically I shouldn't even care about the question of "gender equality". An issue so current that it is on the UN agenda together with the urgent issue of climate change (which I am also addressing artistically!). However, this would not be enough to make me interested in the issue, were it not for my strong and instinctive sense of justice.

I believe that the female gender, a gender to which I belong quite casually and transiently, is treated with a great deal of injustice.

Thus, knowing that I will be reborn many, many times, in different genders and forms and matters, I am rebelling.

I'd rather dress up as a boy than be considered a girl, but if I were a boy I'd still rebel against the injustice that has been perpetuated for tens of thousands of years on our planet due to a physical frailty and sensitivity that made women the most enslaved of all slaves, the last of the last despite all their spiritual superiority.

Yes, because it seems obvious to me that F-females are much more than equals, they are better. So clear, in fact, that I consider it superfluous to be here explaining or discussing that. Despite the aberrant fact that the number of women found in all positions considered of value, "of power" is always below 10% ... in the field of art as well as in all other fields. Theotokos, is mother of God, more than enough.

Perhaps biotechnologies will change the future...the creatures that are created by my bic or my brush and that are processed by natural and artificial intelligence, very sophisticated machines and processes to maintain their original spontaneity, are ready to interpret the future, to make it better, much fairer! A future in which there will no longer be a need to "distinguish yourself" and distinguish, based on external shape, or colour.

Together with the Tondi, as well as a Leonardo da Vinci in Murano crystal, and part of the Mitochondria exhibition held in 2016 at Raphael's birthplace in Urbino, a poignant "face" of Irene, from 2014, the only empress in the fifteen centuries of history of the Eastern and Western Roman Empire!

Before them, in 2016, an set of 5 "rosaries", in blown Murano glass, anthropomorphic vases inspired by a Sicilian Boccaccio novel at the end of an in-depth research on the imperial portrait as a representation of power rosaries or only for roses I've never decided...only for long-stemmed roses.



“Le figure che disegno sono esseri indefiniti. In procinto di prendere sostanza, tra l’umano e il vegetale, l’animale e il minerale e ancora un po’ indecisi, suscettibili ... assumono l’intensità e la forza di chi li osserva.”

Nata a Milano vivo a Roma. Ho studiato pittura a Parigi, traduzione poetica a Trieste, visual design a Urbino.

Affronto tematiche di preferenza filosofiche, con l’intendimento di suscitare riflessione, curiosità, e meraviglia.

Coinvolgo nei miei progetti maestranze eccellenti nella loro arte.

Mostre recenti:

“Allegoria”, Mucciaccia Contemporary Art Gallery, catalogo Cambi Editore, Roma 2020.

“Io sono Giordano Bruno”, residenza al MACRO, Museo di Arte Contemporanea, Roma 2018.

“Fragile”, Mucciaccia Contemporary Art Gallery, catalogo Cambi Editore, Roma 2017.

“Mitochondria”, a cura di Umberto Palestini, Casa natale di Raffaello e Giardino botanico, catalogo Baskerville, Urbino 2016.

“Lussi di Penelope”, Biblioteca del Daverio, catalogo Giunti con testo di Philippe Daverio, Milano 2015.

“Matrix, Mater, Mother”, a cura di Gianluca Marziani, Palazzo Collicola, Spoleto 2015.

“Close Up” – “Primo piano sulla pittura italiana”, a cura di Gianluca Marziani, Palazzo Collicola, Spoleto 2015.

“Imperatori di luce”, a cura di Gianluca Marziani. Mostra itinerante: Genova, Villa del Principe; Spoleto, Palazzo Collicola; Roma, Galleria Doria Pamphili; Milano, Villa Necchi Campiglio. Testi in catalogo di Gianluca Marziani e Adriano Berengo, 2014.

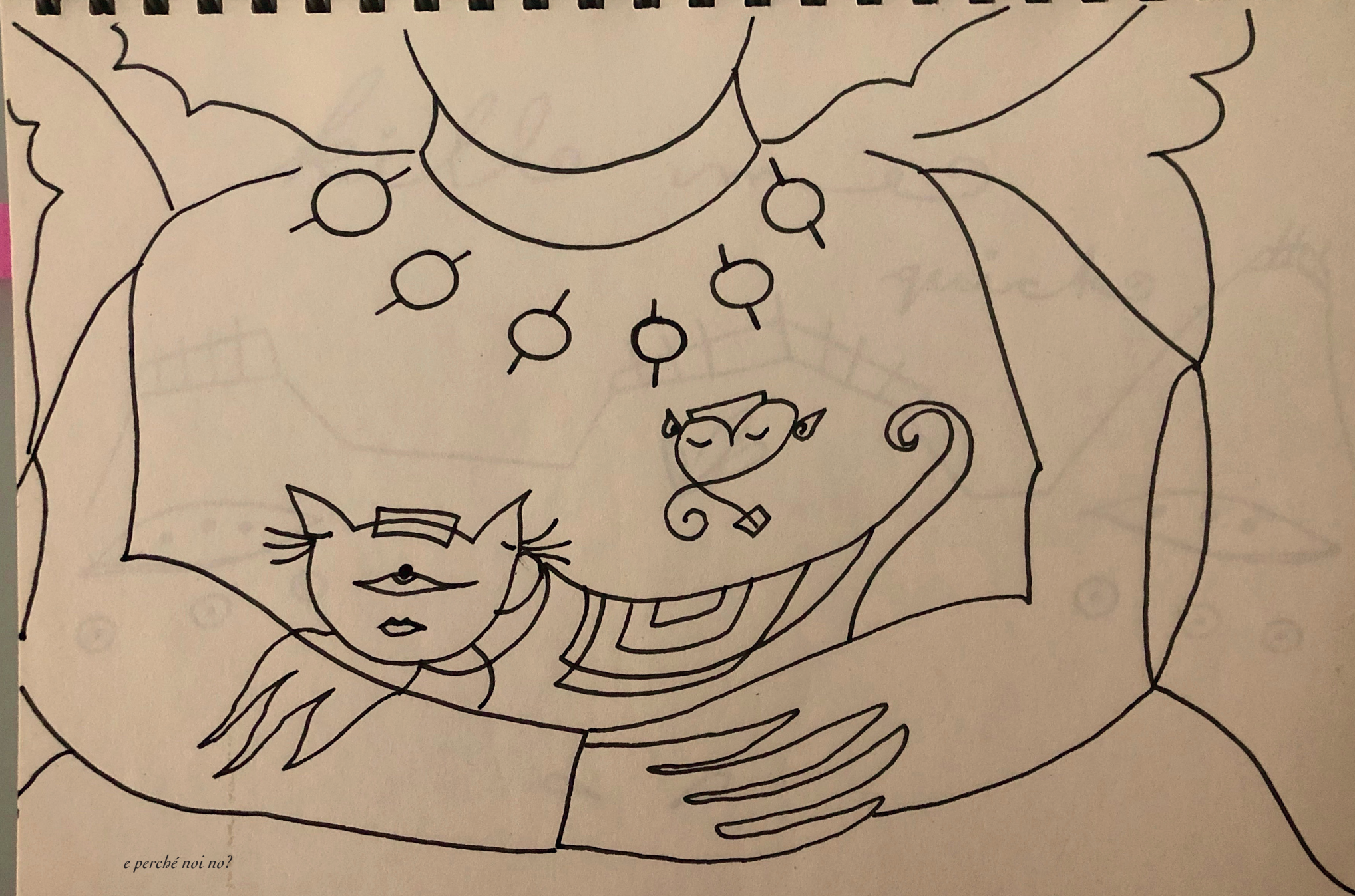
“Guerrieri di Luce”, Galleria Blanchaert, testo in catalogo di Jean Blanchaert, Milano 2012.

“Excesses of an estuary”, Mel Sembler Gallery, Ambasciata Americana, Roma 2012.

“Have a dream”, Galleria L’Affiche, testi in catalogo di Umberto Palestini e Massimiliano Floridi, Milano 2010.



Irene e il suo Rosario, 2016 | Vetro di Murano



e perché noi no?

Chi ha paura del rosa?
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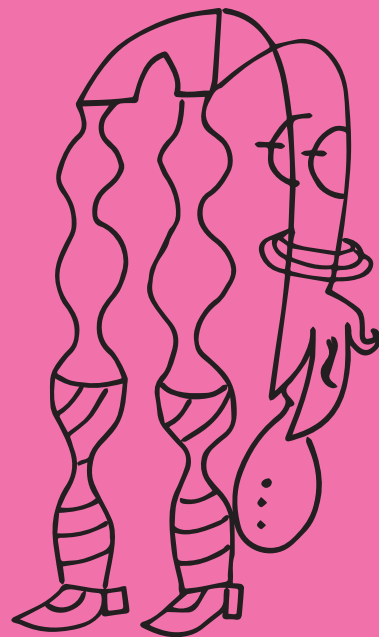
Testi
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Foto
Anna Di Paola
Alessandro Vasari

Impaginazione
Valentina Di Micco

Stampa
O.GRA.RO Officine Grafiche Roma

Roma, 30.09.2021 - 13.11.2021





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