

**DAMIEN
&
THE LOVE GURU**

Raffaella Naldi Rossana
Le Nemesiache
Giuseppe Desiato
How She Spins

9 March – 16 April 2022

How She Spins brings together a selection of works that share a performative practice addressing language as a form of rebellion and ceremonial celebration. The modern mythology and cartography of the artist is replaced by de-egoised subjectivities, geographically deriving from the coasts and the city of Naples, whilst belonging to multiple existences. Dedicated to the practice of Raffaella Naldi Rossano and expanded through a dialogue with works by Giuseppe Desiato and Le Nemesiache, the exhibition project explores possibilities to revisit and rewrite narratives and mythologies of modernity, with thanks to ritual and spiritual interventions. Raffaella Naldi Rossano (1990, Naples) has founded her practice at the intersection of post-historical narratives, magical language and the rewriting of Mediterranean mythology, breaking down the bonds of language and logic of secularised power. Her work evokes a political and spiritual confabulation based on gestures, stories, and the recovery and invention of symbols, bodies and objects. Oracular foretellings, divinations, regressive hypnosis, and ephemeral actions inform her practice on display, which dialogues with the intimate and ritualistic artistic practices of others that focus on sinking the nature of existence in the transformation; a perpetual contrast with a fixed identity. Giuseppe Desiato (1935, Naples) embodies the rejection of the artist's identity by playing the role of a popular storyteller, embracing the events of the everyday. In his work Desiato addresses tales of the past and present life within the limits of acceptability from the system of social languages. Le Nemesiache collective, founded by the philosopher, artist and writer Lina Mangiacapre in 1970, embeds mythological methodologies in feminism. The group proposes a different perspective on the relationship with the world of 'work and the economy', working together to create multi-disciplinary projects involving re-writing, re-visiting and re-staging of old storytellings in order to invoke ancestors, beings and entities. In this regard, the exhibition project adopts a transhistorical approach that experiments with temporalities. The constellation of drawings and moving images that traverse the space of the gallery articulate an emanation of multiple realities, through works of a pluralized 'I', of a doubling 'me'. The title of the exhibition, *How She Spins* refers to a tarot card¹, Wheel of Time. This card bears the number 23, symbolically resonating with the multiple meanings within Naldi Rossano's site specific drawing installation for the show² and the process of care and weaving that characterises both her drawing and her work in general. The 23 drawings on salt-washed

paper are realised through ritual materiality and composed of symbols and secret codes. In the space, they compose the script of a divination: traces of purification and initiation for different and alternative forms of worlding. The drawings are an attempt to create an alphabet whose narration agency is inscribed in the body unconsciously: signs of a script that would like to overcome the space and time paradigm of our culture. Symbols and traces from the drawings not only seek a different language and world, but embody the strength of intuitive desire, moving toward the unspeakable. Every drawing, immersed in sea salt water resonates with personal, solitary and collective rituals. Created on cotton paper from Amal, sprinkled with organic materials such as sand and mended in a continuous gesture of repairing and transforming, the work is placed and framed on mirrors. Since ancient times, water and reflective surfaces have been considered a source of magical power and prophetic visions. Additionally, the mirror suggests a sense of relationality, like the mutual existential transformation that guides the gesture and the forming of their being. In the same spatial script, Giuseppe Desiato's works on paper reveal the chromatic and formal refined care of his work. The tension doesn't renounce joy nor vitality of an erotic and mystic process of creation. His drawings unfold ancestral contradictions and sensibility eradicated in Mediterranean culture, emanating poetical and political sensation from and beyond its cultural limits. With Desiato as with Le Nemesiache, Naldi Rossano shares ephemeral processes, expressed by ritualistic components of their works, articulating an attempt to overcome the power and social structure through symbolic and sacred elements. Temporal and subjective rhythms of bodies are presented through artworks in a way that destabilises the rational register and re-structures the system of language and power on which it is built. In the film 'Le Sibille'³ Le Nemesiache presents a ritual to disclose an archaic and mythic past to denounce the historic and present violence suffered by women and to express the consciousness of the environment's and social anomalies. The Sibyls, mythical and allegorical figures, are chosen as a symbol for their ability to predict the future, embodying insurrectional spirituality and ritual celebration. The women's bodies, the landscape and props of the film, present poetry through rituals embodied practice wholly distinct from the linear structure of our language. Naldi Rossano mirrors a different path, wheeling a journey that crosses the sea and its islands, chasing the powerfully charged origins of archaic (pre-classic) rituals around the mediterranean sea, which disrupted the conventional idea of domesticity and social convention. The divination already reflects another vision: "La casa sarà sempre la chimera, basa il tuo istinto sull'incontro"⁴. A metal fence⁵, whose surface gathers messages, continues to link to the body and the unconscious. The irrational, emotional and magical sphere become the insurrection to language and cultural norms influencing the will for the subject to escape from the sense system. The encounter over the railing is a 'Chimera', a female monstrosity:

I am Medusa, one of many monsters, one of the unacknowledged sovereigns [...] Formidable Gorgon.

I am she. She, me. My sisters, Stheno and Euryale, howl with ferocity and mourning and rage. We are.

Monster Women. So many many many more of us. My sisters. My kin⁶.

Historical narratives and classical fiction are reversed and re-addressed by a plurality of voices: the sound of waves, the echo of many waters, the voices of different sirens, the seduction of mythical figures. *She spins* the wheel, poetically. She has become an autobiographical fragment, whose desires and uncertainty crash on the shores of a city to be re-found from the source. Parallels and sundials mingle with a new language, ceremonially infused. Oppressive structures of meaning and narration inscribed within the language have been refused. She is becoming a 'prophet of the present'⁷, lying beyond the realm of information and exceeding a linguistic map⁸ emerging from spiritual communication and generating imaginative possibilities.. Within this realm of imaginary and sacred languages, she spins multifarious possibilities of meanings. Becoming is a trace of existence and an affirmation of erotic and mystic power, changing the present modes of perception and representation, transcending the existing hegemony. Prophecy is not a prediction of the future, but an awareness of what is not recognised or perceived.

Sonia D'Alto

1) Tarot cards from a system of divination of the Tantric tradition. Crafted by artist Penny Slinger, the cards are a mirroring device that evokes subtle memories, sentiments, desires and fears.

2) The number 23 is used here to propose a score, mirroring many meanings. The divination of the 23rd tarot card is to locate oneself in the position of the spinner, indicating the need to transform the world. 23 is also the number of the letters from the Latin alphabet, the number of chromosomes that determine human sexuality, the number which the old Egyptian calendar started with. In this regard, 23 as reference to androgyny that relates to the possibility of recomposing the original male/female laceration, also introduces the possibility of overcoming polar division and sexual repression.

3) The film was awarded Best Direction at the Trieste Science Fiction Festival. Venice Biennale 1987. Cannes Film Festival 1981. First Feminist International Film & Video Amsterdam.

4) 'Home will always be the chimera, base your instincts on encounters'.

5) CET 14°13'55.78"E 40°50'9.53"N is a metal railing made in 2021 for the terrace of Residency 80121, the experimental platform founded by the artist in Naples. Naldi Rossano also works with architectural and domestic conventions and norms. Its' surface is inscribed with a code of symbols, articulating possibilities beyond the household language, as a further rebellious proposal to change conventions we inhabit.

6) Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', trans. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1.4 (1976).

7) Hélène Cixous, *L'indienne ou l'Inde de leurs rêves*, Théâtre du Soleil éditions Théâtrales, Paris, 1987

8) Federico Campagna, *Prophetic Culture, Recreation for Adolescent*, Bloomsbury, London/New York, 2021.

Raffaella Naldi Rossano (b. 1990, Naples) lives and works in Naples, Italy. Her installations integrate sculptures, moving image, sound, group experiences and poetry, and are conceived as in-between spaces where meaning around hidden and suppressed histories, individual or collective, is recreated and exposed. Through them, she aims to pursue a breakdown of the architectural environment and a feminist re-appropriation of space and landscape, in a poetic articulation of the territory.

She is currently working on an on-going research and film project, entitled 'Tessitura/Warp', which revolves around the myth of the Siren Parthenope—the founding myth of the city of Naples—utilised here as an open vessel of meaning and desire, a space for shared narration and relationship. In her grandmother's home in Naples, she established Residency 80121, an on-going renovation and transformative project to host others to inhabit the space and create alternative ways of being together. Raffaella Naldi Rossano is one of the participating artists in the 2020 edition of Quadriennale D'Arte, Rome, curated by Sarah Cosulich and Stefano Collicelli Cagol. Among her recent exhibitions: 'Utopia Dystopia: il mito del progresso partendo dal Sud', curated by Kathryn Weir, Madre, Naples (2021); 'There is no Time to Enjoy the Sun', Fondazione Morra Greco, Naples (2021); 'Waves between Us', Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Guarene; 'I Confess', curated by Chus Martinez, der TANK, Basel (2019); 'Doing Deculturalization', Museion, Bolzano (2019); 'Partenope', Aetopoulos, Athens (2019); 'May the Bridges I Burn', Manifesta, Palermo (2018).

Giuseppe Desiato (b. 1935, Naples) lives and works in Naples. Intimately linked to his city, he has lived its popular culture but also entered the international debate thanks to frequent associations with Fluxus and Viennese Actionists. Desiato stands out for his deeply transgressive practice. Despite his approach being far removed from the art market and its dynamics, from the 1970s onward he came into occasional contact with historic galleries, most of which are no longer active today but were at the time closely allied to body and performance art. A first retrospective exhibition was dedicated to him on the occasion of Manifesta 7 (2008). Recently, his work was included in the group exhibition *Tutto. Perspectives on Italian Art*, Museion, Bolzano (2018), and *Sammlung Goetz*, Munich (2019). A solo exhibition of his work curated by Elena Re was recently presented at Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin (2021).

Le Nemesiache Taking their name from Nemesis, the Greek goddess of revenge against the masculine Hubris, Le Nemesiache was a group and a political reality who embedded mythological methodologies in feminism. Founded by philosopher, artist and writer Lina Mangiacapre in 1970, they have been active in Naples for many decades from the 1970s through their militant engagement and artistic practice ranging from performance to activism, from films to poetry, costumes to colleges and from theater to music, blurring the lines between art and politics. Their approach was always addressing history and landscape issues, activated through a radical spirit of solidarity. Rooted within the struggles of women who have resisted colonisation, their ritualistic practice was entangled

with the sensibility of harmony and beauty in regard to the archaeological ruins and the landscape of the Neapolitan territory. As they themselves wrote in 1981, the references to the mythical past of Naples were not a nostalgic gesture but a way to “reject the reduction of an entire civilization, such as the Neapolitan one, to the folklore and subcultural status in which it has been confined. Feminism in Naples was born from Naples and its roots, from the reality of the struggles of women who have never allowed themselves to be colonized and will continue—alongside men, and sometimes against or simply distant to them—, the story of the life of HARMONY, to revenge all the violence that has been done to Naples; to the SIBYLS, to life, to Beauty.” (Statement, 1981). In 2020, the activity of Le Nemesiache was rediscovered and presented in the exhibition *From the Volcano to the Sea. The Feminist Group Le Nemesiache in 1970s and 1980s Naples* curated by Giulia Damiani in dialogue with Sara Giannini (Curator, If I Can’t Dance) and Arnisa Zeqo (Artistic Director, Rongwrong) at If I Can’t Dance, in Amsterdam.

THE SIBYLS

I read in the past and in the future, and they open up before me, here in this room other stories of women take shape through your destinies, forgotten women you are not alone, with you there are stories buried in memory, in the sea, in fire, in the earth, in the air. There are many traps that want to prevent you from becoming aware of your past, of yourselves. This face always remains confined in the dream and in madness. We are in the land of Cuma, the territory of the Sibyls. Through the stones we should find them and find ourselves again. We are the heirs of the siren Partenope, who committed suicide because she was unable to stop the cunningness of Ulysses. We must be able to read this legend. Let's not reduce Naples to the image to which it has been confined.

Music dance music dance music dance music dance music.

Murderers, thieves, give us back our music, the music of life, the music of the Siren, you have killed all the Sirens.

To my fear, to my silence, I call you - answer, answer sisters, answer.

I will call you. Life is death.

I have searched for you, woman. To find me, to live, where are you?

I am waiting for you. Fire, fire, my dance, my madness. Fire, fire, no witch is dead. All women scream: revenge!

Open old age, love.

Without you, without you. Me with me, without you.

Playing with the sun, sunrise, sunset, being there, not being there.

Never will anything be forgotten about our past. Never anything, never anything.

I love you like the sea of this raped city. I love you, I love you like the sea. The street is the dance.

No, not only the figure of a woman, not arms but seagull wings.

No, not just the figure of a woman, not arms but seagull wings.

No, not just the figure of a woman, not the head but the setting sun.

Boats stay still in the sea, men go back to your lairs and do not leave, tonight nature is mine.

No, not just the figure of a woman, not hunched shoulders, tired, but hard rock unexplored, im-penetrable.

No, not just the figure of a woman, not legs, not two legs but the many legs of a jellyfish, streaked with red that comes out of the water just for a moment.

No, not just a woman's figure, not an empty belly, aching, but a swollen sail in the wind, a white sail, guided by the wind that wants to sail endless seas, to seek out women who are not just figures of women.