

RICHARD SALTOUN

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decentering in Ceramics

Richard Saltoun Gallery Rome
28 February – 22 April 2023



Richard Saltoun Gallery presents *decentering in Ceramics*, a group exhibition curated by Giulia Pollicita that celebrates ceramics' symbolic power and highlights this medium's political, social, identity and imaginative declinations through the work of eight female artists. The exhibition situates seminal sculptures by Franca Maranò and Nedda Guidi, pioneers in technical and formal experimentation, alongside new works by an international group of artists: Chiara Camoni, Gaia Fugazza, Florence Peake, Raffaella Naldi Rossano, Holly Stevenson and Zoe Williams. Through this intergenerational dialogue, the exhibition reverses the narration of a medium historically relegated to the 'decorative' realm, partially retracing its history and highlighting its potential for freedom.

The works of **Chiara Camoni** (Piacenza, 1974) originate from the alchemical composition of relational practices and organic matter. Using a collaborative approach, the artist shares her creative experience with friends and family in her studio in Fabbiano, in Alta Versilia, Tuscany, where most of the natural and plant-based elements that make up her sculptures are made. The large sculpture *Sister* (2022) created especially for this exhibition, is an eco-feminist goddess who serves as a propitiatory presence within the gallery space.

Artemis Multimammia (1964) by **Nedda Guidi** (Gubbio, 1927–Rome, 2015), is a terracotta figure inspired by the Artemis Efesia of the 2nd century AD, preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Naples. Goddess of nature and abundance, dominatrix of fairs, Artemis is portrayed by Guidi according to a process of synthesis that reflects the artistic trends of the late 1960s, thus conceptually declining the formal representation of ceramics. The work of **Raffaella Naldi Rossano** (Naples, 1990) also draws inspiration from mythology and results from iconographic and symbolic stratifications. *A Liquid Confession IV e V* (2020) reference the

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Kastalia fountain, considered a ritual element of purification also by the Christian faith, here filled with lemons to evoke a Mediterranean dimension.

The artistic practice of **Florence Peake** (London, 1973) is based on the body. Using a unique process-based approach, she choreographs immersive performances using dancers, performers, and even entire communities. Her live actions result in paintings and sculptures that are an extension of the body and capture the intrinsic multiplicity of being. The work on display results from the action *Interior Pull* (2022), in which the artist and performers Vanshika Agrawal, Flaminia Celata and Anica Huck performed a burial/unearthing of their bodies in response to the remains of the ancient Basilica Ulpia situated within the exhibition space of cultural association FOROF, for which the action was conceived.

Franca Maranò (Bari, 1920–2015) was a key figure in the Italian art movements of the 1960s and 70s. Profoundly nonconformist, Maranò chose to remain in southern Italy to challenge its patriarchal structures, and in 1970 she founded Bari's first avant-garde gallery, Galleria Centrosei, to promote the work of her contemporaries such as Maria Lai and Tomaso Binga. To safeguard his creative freedom, Maranò decided to work outside the conventions of tradition and use new materials, including needle, thread, fabrics and ceramics, which at the time was limited to male artists such as Fausto Melotti and Lucio Fontana. *Third Sand Storm* (2022) by **Gaia Fugazza** (Milan, 1985), is a swirling wall installation in black clay, with a hand-carved surface. Fugazza's works are a tribute to the female body and are characterised by the hybridisation of materials, techniques and manufacturing processes, thus exploring the border between performativity and plastic arts.

Holly Stevenson's ceramics have been produced during her artist residency with Laboratorio Piramide in the Bravetta district. Mixing the suggestions of Catholicism that permeate the city of Rome with the daily life of the neighbourhood and its community, her pair of sculptures *Priest Beast and Coat Hanger Angel* (2022), represent a process of transposition and sublimation of innovation in the wake of tradition, in which conservatism and progressivism coexist. Referencing the abolition of the right to abortion in many American states, the crutch, used in the past for the illegal and often mortal termination of pregnancies, becomes a symbol of the claim of freedom against the oppressive patriarchal power.

Zoe Williams (Salisbury, 1983) has instead created floral and carnal still-lives with a sinuous sculptural language reminiscent of Rococo style. The fluidity of modelling and glazing creates evanescent visions in which a play of artificial and candlelight illuminates Venuses, octopuses, anemones and dreamlike images.

The works of Gaia Fugazza, Florence Peake, Holly Stevenson and Zoe Williams were created in Rome in 2022 as part of Laboratorio Piramide's residency programme, a project financed by the Lazio region to promote the encounter between contemporary art and craftsmanship, which allowed the artists to work in the historic Bottega Paolelli in the Bravetta district, experimenting with materials, techniques and processes of the Italian tradition.

decentering in Ceramics, is a tribute to the decentralisation of ceramics from the official historical-artistic discourse to celebrate its subversive potential while remaining in the wake of its millenary tradition. The title alludes to the ability of these works to reflect the current historical and artistic moment, "decentralised" with respect to univocal categories and readings, referring to the text published in 1989 by Mary C. Richards, *Centering in Pottery, Poetry, and the Person*, which alludes to the gesture of centering on the wheel in the traditional processing of clay and to the discipline imposed by the processing of ceramics as a philosophy of life.

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Images:
Gaia Fugazza, *Blue Roly-Poly*,
2022; Chiara Camoni, *Sister*,
2022 Courtesy SpazioA.
Both images © the Artists.

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Notes to editors:

Giulia Pollicita (Palermo, 1996), lives and works between Naples, London, and Rome. She is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of the Art in London and is curator of the Fondazione Morra Greco, Naples. She is curator of independent projects such as the artist-in-residence programme at Laboratorio Piramide, Rome; coordinator of Una Boccata d'Arte 2022 for the region of Sicily, promoted by the Elpis Foundation, Milan; and a founding member of the research collective, curatorial collective and independent publishing house Istituto Sicilia, a nomadic association based in Sicily.

Chiara Camoni (1974, Piacenza, IT) lives and works in Fabbiano, in Alta Versilia, with drawing, plant prints, videos and ceramics. Her works are often created in collaboration with friends and relatives, in impromptu groups or through organised seminars and workshops. "Il Centro di Sperimentazione" has been appearing alongside the artist for some years and collects the various forms of shared authorship. Together with other artists, she founded the MAGra, Museum of contemporary art of Granara, and the Vladivostok group. With Cencilia Canziani, she has been developing a series of seminars titles "La Giusta Misura" for some years

Gaia Fugazza produces paintings, performances, and sculptures that explore the troubled relationship between man and the natural environment, plant knowledge, reproduction and transcendental practices. Her work with clay refers to a direct relationship with the unconscious and tacit knowledge, using it as a tool to access areas of intelligence often underestimated in contemporary Western society. Fugazza has had solo exhibitions in major galleries and institutions, including The Zabłudowicz Collection in London, and her work has been featured in Biennials and institutional exhibitions such as the 13th Baltic Triennial, The London Open at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, and the Royal Academy of Arts.

Nedda Guidi (Gubbio, 1927) was an innovator of techniques and languages who combines the figure of the expert craftsman with the genius of art. Graduated in philosophy, she continued her investigation into man psyche throughout her life. In the 1950s, having moved to Rome, she experimented with three-dimensional plastic forms rich in thick glazes, which then evolved into a 'geometricized figurative' language made up of 'modules', volumes repeated in organized schemes. She continued the elaboration of the 'code-module' until the 1970s when, with the search for the 'form-colour', Guidi dedicated herself to the study of the different clay mixtures, colouring them naturally through oxidation processes. Guidi died in Rome on April 13, 2015. Her work has been exhibited in major Italian museums, including the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Rome, and worldwide in Korea, Japan, Turkey, the United States, Australia, Germany.

Driven by the need to operate outside of the traditional pictorial means to recover meanings that appeared lost, from the mid-70s onwards **Franca Maranò** revised the terms of her previous pictorial research and resorted to using needle, thread and canvas. She also began to work with sculpture and ceramics, receiving commissions from public institutions as well as private collectors. In 1970 the artist was one of the founders of Centrosei, the first avant-garde art gallery in Bari, with which she participated in various editions of Bari's Expo Arte, Arte Fiera Bologna, and Art Basel. Maranò has had numerous personal exhibitions in Rome, Milan, Turin, Pescara, Trieste, Naples, and Lecce. She passed away in Bari in 2015.

Raffaella Naldi Rossano lives and works in Naples. Her installations – which integrate sculptures, moving image, sound, collective experiences, and poetry – are conceived as spaces of transition where the meaning of hidden or suppressed histories, both individual and collective, is recreated and exposed. Her artistic practice pursues a decomposition of the architectural environment and a feminist reappropriation of space and landscape in a poetic articulation of the territory. Naldi Rossano is currently working on a research and film project that revolves around the myth of the Partenope siren, the founding myth of the city of Naples. The artist participated in the 2020 Quadriennale D'Arte in Rome and in the 2018 edition of Manifesta, and had solo exhibitions in various important institutions, including Madre museum and the Morra Greco Foundation, Naples, and Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin.

Active since 1995, **Florence Peake** creates immersive paintings, sculptures, films, and performances grounded in the body, and are at once sensual and witty, political, and intimate. Focusing on notions of materiality and physicality, her work explores narratives around the experience of vitality, our bodies, and their multiplicity of being. Peake has exhibited internationally and worked with notable directors, artists, and choreographers, including Joe Moran, Tai Shani, and Jonathan Baldock. His work by Peake has been featured in numerous internationally renowned spaces and events, including the British Art Show 9 (2021), a Hayward Gallery touring exhibition, the Venice Art Biennale (2019), the Palais De Tokyo (2018) in Paris, and the Serpentine Galleries, Whitechapel Gallery, and the ICA (2016) in London.

British artist **Holly Stevenson** works predominantly with clay. Her artistic research is linked to psychoanalysis and feminism. Drawing inspiration from Sigmund Freud's favourite ashtray, kept at the Freud Museum in London, she creates fluid ceramics that explore it as an analytic metaphor. Stevenson has received numerous awards. She holds a master's degree in fine arts from Chelsea College of Arts, London, and a master's degree in history of art from the University of Glasgow.

Zoe Williams lives and works between France and the UK. Her artistic practice combines moving image, ceramics, drawing and performance to create immersive objects and environments that evoke a playful and corrosive exchange between notions of eroticism, craftsmanship, magic, gender, hedonism, and excess. Through the cross-contamination of these influences, she wishes to provoke conversations about the pressures of power, the politics of sex and the

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economics of production. Food also plays a prevalent role within her practice, as a tool of exchange, disgust, and sensuality. Williams is represented by Galleria Ciaccia Levi, Paris and Milan, and has worked with several national and international institutions including Tate St-Ives, Le Crédac, Paris, and Spike Island, Bristol.



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