

CHIARA CAMONI

*Chiamare a raduno.
Sorelle. Falene e fiammelle.
Ossa di leonesse, pietre e serpentesse.*

*Call and gather.
Sisters. Moths and flame twisters.
Lioness bones, snakes and stones.*

curated by Lucia Aspesi e Fiammetta Griccioli

Hangar Bicocca, Milano

Upon entering the exhibition, you will find yourself in a unique place that may remind you of a “garden,” or an ancient amphitheater.

It is a barren landscape, at the same time elaborate and decorated, composed of works made of geological and perishable materials, such as minerals, wood, herbs, and ceramics; ascending and descending rhythms of natural elements that create volumes and indentations; and moments of brightness and shadow.

We invite you to stroll around this space, sit on the benches, look around and get to know the works that compose it with the delicacy they require, paying attention to the many elements arranged on the floor.

Chiara Camoni’s exhibition “Call and Gather. Sisters. Moths and Flame Twisters. Lioness Bones, Snakes and Stones” features the most comprehensive body of works ever presented by the artist in Italy. Large sculptural groups such as the *Sisters* (2019–ongoing) series and numerous new productions are brought together in a radial architecture inspired by Italian gardens and specially conceived by Camoni for the Shed space.

The title, which hints at a poetic composition in its musicality, anticipates some of the themes explored in the exhibition, including the interest in the mystical dimension of reality, explored through everyday gestures and rituals in the sphere of craftsmanship, and the relationship between animals and the natural context, intended in the artist’s vision as a generative and cyclical system.

The symmetrical arrangement that defines the space and stems from the empty center recalls the paths typical of late Renaissance Italian gardens. Visitors can walk through the various rooms illuminated by natural light that—just as in a garden—creates a bright atmosphere alternating with more secluded shady areas where they can immerse themselves in a contemplative and collective experience.



The exhibition opens with two Lecce stone sculptures specifically made for the occasion and composed of several elements that form animal figures with carved faces that look like lionesses. The dimensions of the blocks resemble those of the felines and their figurative heads, adorned with two eyes made from glass and labradorite stone, contrast with the square, abstract bodies. Traces of fossils, including shells and bones, sedimented over thousands of years in limestone, emerge from the compact surfaces of these parallelepipeds, designed as though they were architectural elements. The *Lionesses* lie on the threshold of the exhibition, in a pose reminiscent of the lions on the gate of the ancient Greek city of Mycenae or the column-bearing ones in Romanesque churches, as symbolic guardians of the space.

Leonesse / Lionesses, 2024

Pietra leccese, inserti di vetro e pietra labradorite / Lecce stone, inserts of glass and labradorite stone

Due elementi / Two elements

90 × 180 × 60 cm ciascuno / each







Sister, 2020

Terracotta policroma, ferro, vegetale secco, candele, fuoco /
Polychrome terracotta, iron, dried vegetal matter, candles, fire

140 × 70 × 140 cm

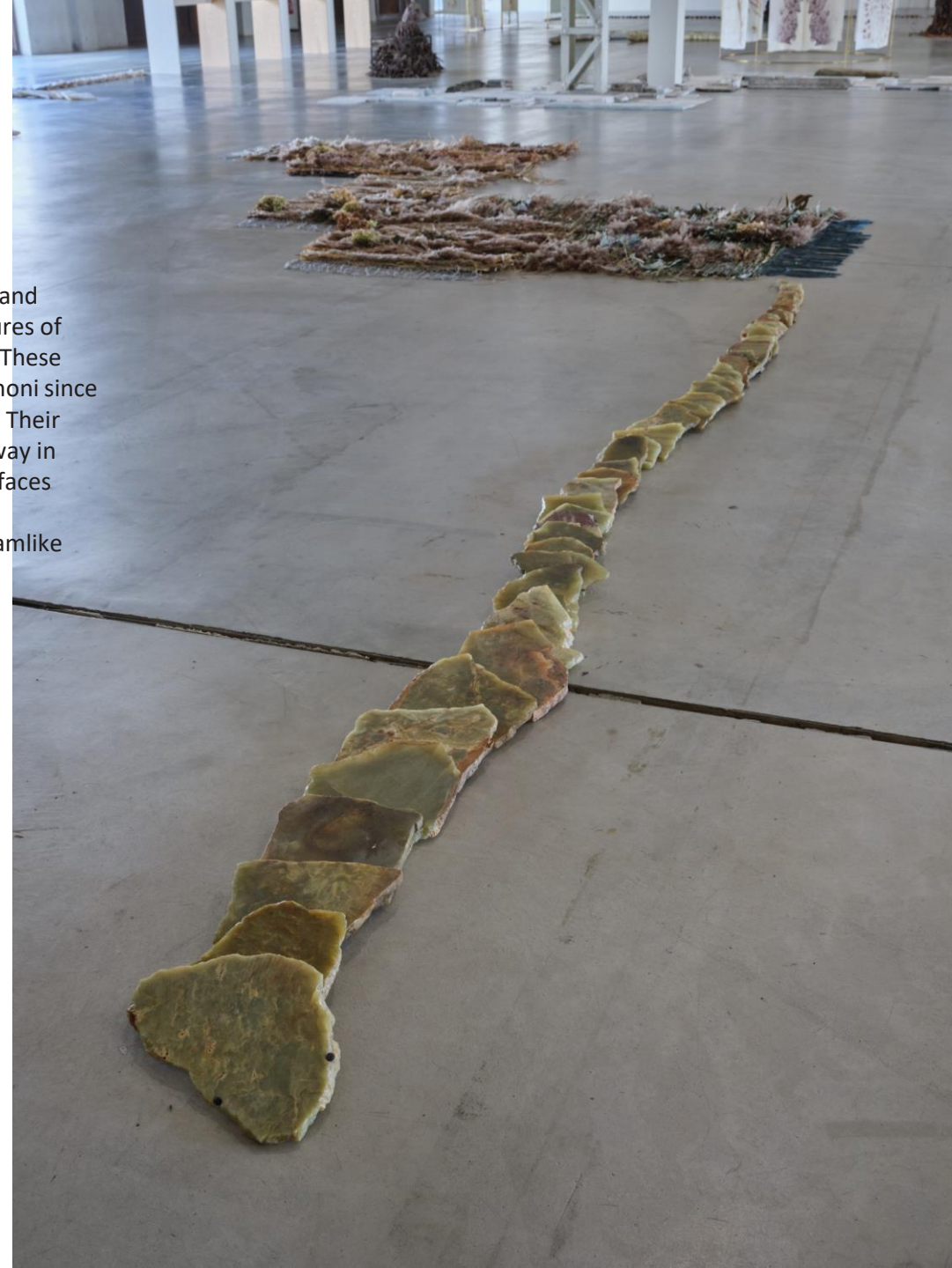
In the exhibition ten *Sisters* are presented together with two works which led to the genesis of the large sculptural group. Clay is employed in its natural state or with colored glazes, modeled in various formats as rough blocks with flowers and branches inserts, or thousands of little ringed pieces that still bear the prints of the fingers that shaped them. **Regarding why everything winds leftward in Nature #02** and **Untitled (Laocoön)** are agglomerates of mutable and ductile—sometimes sharp—forms that anticipate several distinctive elements of the more recent *Sisters*, such as the repetition of gestures and the long, encircling garlands wrapped around themselves. Starting from these primordial and generative figures, arranged to adapt to their architectural setting, Camoni conceived other creatures, the works entitled *Sisters*, which seem more stable and autonomous in the variety of their human-like poses. Some appear to be kneeling or sitting, illuminated by the glimmering lights of multicolored candles, others hold small discarded objects in their laps, while others unsheathe their claws made of agave flowers. The enigmatic faces give these presences that seem to emerge from a fantastical past an aura that is both benign and terrifying. Protective deities such as the ***Sister (Hut)*** sculpture create places of contemplation, while others, like ***Sister #04***, who proudly shows her she-wolf face, always seem on the verge of possible new metamorphoses. Each embodies its own essence that emerges from the combination of natural materials and tangled threads, whose mutable forms render their different temperaments: ironic with a barely noticeable smile or assertive with a scepter-like branch. Displaying multiple facets of femininity, the *Sisters* series conveys the concepts of sisterhood and solidarity, central themes in Camoni's art. The sculptural group also opens a dialogue with previous generations of women artists whose work, recently rediscovered, has had a considerable impact on forms of artistic expression.





Senza titolo (Laocoonte) / Untitled (Laocoön), 2017
Terracotta refrattaria bianca / White refractory terracotta
Dimensioni variabili / Variable dimensions

Composed of hundreds of salvaged onyx fragments (*Serpenti e Serpentesse*) or little porcelain and stoneware bowls made by the artist (*The Three Snakes*), these sculptures form the stylized figures of snakes whose scales wind their way across the floor to mark the edges of the exhibition paths. These new works are part of a series of symbolic figures resembling prehistoric reptiles, made by Camoni since 2019, and highlight the artist's approach towards the sculptural element as a functional object. Their bodies assume an architectural dimension within the exhibition space, tracing or blocking the way in specific areas. With their variegated hues—greenish, milky white, yellowish-brown—and their faces embellished with artificial or semi-precious stones that look like eyes, the snakes appear as archaeological finds and seem to invite the audience to immerse themselves in an archaic, dreamlike dimension.



Serpenti e Serpentesse, 2024

Onice, inserti di ambra, perle, pietre dure, vetro, plastica /

Onyx, inserts of amber, pearls, gemstones, glass, plastic

Dimensioni variabili / Variable dimensions



Living Room, 2019-24

Terracotta, ferro, vetro, fiori,
foglie, erbe selvatiche, cotone,
canapa, plastica / Terracotta,
iron, glass, flowers, leaves,

wild herbs, cotton, hemp, plastic

Dimensioni variabili / Variable
dimensions





Carrozzone, 2021
Materiali vari, trovati e presi in prestito / Mixed media,
found and borrowed materials
Con / with Il Centro di Sperimentazione
220 × 300 × 150 cm

Carrozzone is a structure in the shape of a small caravan reminiscent of a traveling theater or an old traveler's wagon. Presented as an assemblage of salvaged materials, it contains numerous shelves that house the memorabilia and books that collaborators and friends employed to adorn the work at Camoni's invitation. Colored doors and drapes, just like a little stage curtain, reveal the objects inside, among which the text of the performance *Ombre Solide*, 2024, presented on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition. A pinhole offers an upside-down view of the world, and a monitor displays a video selection that changes according to the setting. The body of the sculpture, with its large wheels and puppet-like figures on the sides, renews the sense of wonder and links the imagery of this work back to the Italian fairytale tradition.





Senza titolo / Untitled, 2019
Terracotta policroma, legno,
ferro, porcellana, paraffina,
fuoco /
Polychrome terracotta, wood,
iron, porcelain, paraffin, fire
143 × 130 × 80 cm







Sister (degli Scarti) / Sister (of Scraps), 2023

Terracotta policroma, ferro, vegetale secco, plastica e materiali vari dal seminario "Lo scarto inconfessabile" / Polychrome terracotta, iron, dried vegetal matter, plastics, mixed material from the workshop "Lo scarto inconfessabile"
150 × 220 × 150 cm (dimensioni variabili / variable dimensions)



Sister, 2022

Terracotta policroma, gres smaltato con cenere vegetale, terra e sabbia della Val Gardena, vegetale secco, candele, fuoco / Polychrome terracotta, stoneware glazed with vegetal ash, soil and sand from Val Gardena, dried vegetal matter, candles, fire

155 × 166 × 145 cm (dimensioni variabili / variable dimensions)



Pavimento (per Clarice 02) / Floor (for Clarice 02), 2022
Gres smaltato con cenere vegetale, terra del giardino e sabbie
di fiume / Stoneware glazed with vegetal ash, garden soil,
river sands
Dimensioni variabili / Variable dimensions





Tavolo Insetto / Insect Table, 2022

Legno patinato verderame / Verdigris-patinated wood

70 × 180 × 145 cm

Su *Tavolo Insetto* sono esposti / On *Insect Table* are displayed:

Piatti / Dishes (#03, #05, #06, #07, #17, #20, #28), 2021

Brocche / Pitchers, 2024

Gres smaltato con cenere vegetale e sabbia / Stoneware glazed with vegetal ash and sand

Sette piatti / Seven dishes

Tre brocche / Three pitchers

Dimensioni variabili / Variable dimensions

Piatti, 2021 (particolare/detail)

Grès smaltato con cenere vegetale e sabbia/Stoneware glazed with vegetal ash and sand

Dimensioni variabili/Variable dimensions

Insect Table is a zoomorphic sculpture that has been transformed from display stand to art object, extending its form and function. The coated wooden boards open up like the wings of a beetle, whose back houses a selection from the ***Dishes*** and ***Pitchers*** series, their distinctive glazed protuberances resembling tentacles or branches. Tables are a central feature in Camoni's oeuvre, and she often creates her sculptures starting from the tables in her kitchen and garden, in a process closely connected to what she calls "the promiscuity of everyday life" and which, she believes, gives the right perspective frame to her artifacts. In this group of sculptures, the domestic and aesthetic essences intermingle, blurring the distinction between artwork and object. Everyday convivial moments, such as a table carefully set to welcome diners, become occasions for performances during which Camoni uses the precious ceramic tableware in floral or zoomorphic shapes to organize special dinners and events, thus bringing her work back into the real world, in a process of continuous metamorphosis.



Sister #02, 2021

Legno, porcellana e gres smaltati con cenere vegetale e sabbia di fiume, erbe e fiori, piuma di ghiandaia / Wood, porcelain and stoneware glazed with vegetal ash and river sand, grasses and flowers, jay feather
64 × 150 × 64 cm (dimensioni variabili / variable dimensions)









Sister, 2023

Terracotta policroma, metallo, gres smaltato con terra,
sabbia e cenere da Borger-Odoorn / Polychrome terracotta,
metal, stoneware glazed with earth, sand and ash from

Borger-Odoorn
200 × 130 × 1200 cm



Senza titolo (Mosaico) / Untitled (Mosaic), 2024
Marmo, onice / Marble, onyx
Dimensioni variabili / Variable dimensions



Senza titolo (una Tenda) / Untitled (a Tent), 2019
Stampa vegetale su seta, ottone / Vegetal print on silk, brass
183 × 211 × 211 cm

Serpenti e Serpentesse, 2024

Onice, inserti di ambra, perle, pietre dure, vetro, plastica /

Onyx, inserts of amber, pearls, gemstones, glass, plastic

Dimensioni variabili / Variable dimensions

Installazione site-specific / Site-specific installation





Sister (Capanna) / Sister (Hut), 2022
Terracotta nera, ferro, fiori freschi e secchi / Black
terracotta, iron, fresh and dried flowers
220 × 140 × 150 cm (dimensioni variabili / variable dimensions)





*Sul perché in natura tutto
avvolge a sinistra #02 /
Regarding
why everything winds leftward
in Nature #02, 2013-23*
Terracotta azzurra / Blue
terracotta
Altezza / Height 2200 cm
Installazione site-specific /
Site-specific installation



Made from stoneware and modelled by hand, the **Butterfly Vases** form an extensive series of sculptures that probes the ambiguity between the dimensions of craft and art. Indeed, the shape of these works reminds of various archaic traditions: from the vessels made in antiquity to preserve food, to Egyptian canopic jars with the sacred function of housing the organs of the dead, and the magnificent decorative vases that have recorded human history over the millennia. Camoni adds her own glazes to this process, mixing sand collected from rivers with the ashes of flowers from her garden that, when fired at high temperatures, vitrify to create iridescent multicolored reflections. The sculptural form of the double-sided vases is embellished with plants and dried flowers that recall the alluring and monstrous shapes of the wings and antennae of butterflies and moths, as well as insects, bird feathers, and coral.



Burning Sister, 2023
Video monocolore,
colore, suono / Single-
channel video,
color, sound, 23'30"



Casetta, 2024
Legno patinato
verderame, calce, gres
smaltato con cenere
vegetale proveniente
dalla combustione della
Burning Sister,
alluminio, oro, argento,
ottone, rame, pietre
dure, ambra,
agata, cotone, lana /
Verdigris-patinated
wood, lime,
stoneware glazed with
vegetable ash from the
combustion
of *Burning Sister*,
aluminum, gold, silver,
brass, copper,
gemstones, amber,
agate, cotton, wool
Dimensioni variabili /
Variable dimensions

Conceived for the exhibition at Pirelli HangarBicocca, **Casetta** is a wooden structure in the familiar shape of a dresser that, however, is stripped of its usual features to become an installation. Its whitewashed back wall acts as a screen for the **Burning Sister** video, which shows a *Sister* made entirely of plant material, burning in the twilight on a deserted beach in Greece. Unlike the other works in the *Sisters* series, made of clay, this one is composed of garlands of flowers, leaves, and berries, which disappear among the flames. The video captures its combustion from beginning to end, revealing the true essence of the *Sister* in the very instant it disappears. The artist collected the ashes and transformed them into a glaze, whose rosy hues color the bowls placed on one of the few remaining shelves on the front of the dresser. The single shelf in the structure also houses some jewelry, which is the result of the action of fire: a necklace and rods made from pieces of other melted-down jewelry and aluminum flakes recovered from the casting of *Dogs (Bruno and Tre)* included in the exhibition.



Ninessa #01, 2015
Terracotta nera / Black terracotta
26 × 16 × 12 cm

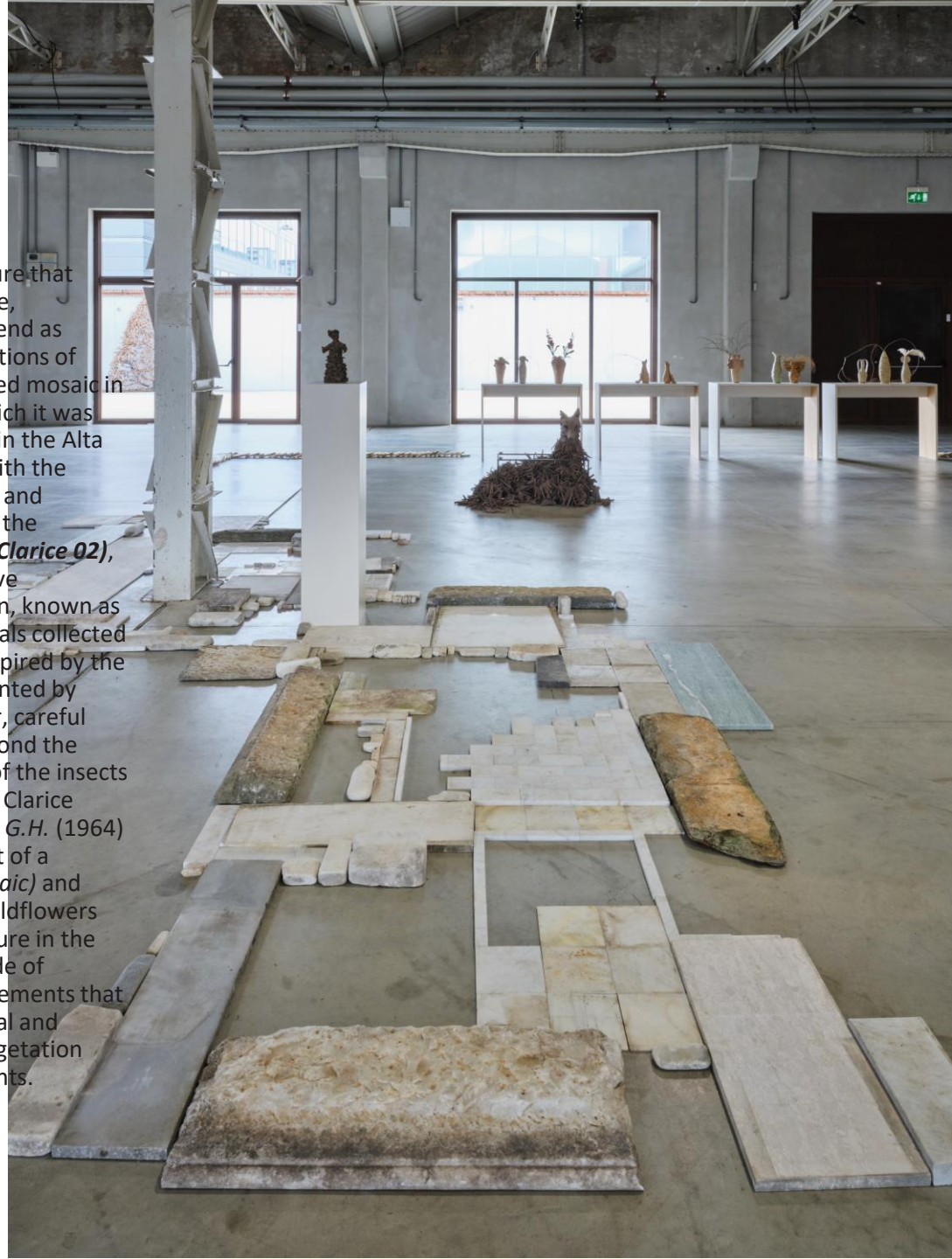


The sole work in the exhibition displayed on a pedestal, *Ninessa #01* is entirely made of clay and takes the form of a female figure emerging from the shapeless material. The sculpture is part of a series of small characters modeled by the artist with quick, instinctive gestures. Prior to the sculptural group *Sisters*, *Ninessa #01* alludes to Neolithic statuettes of the Mother Goddess, a primordial divinity linked to the concepts of fertility and abundance found in numerous civilizations. In this case, the artist interprets these little idols in autobiographical terms, dedicating the series to her daughter Anna, having made it during the months immediately following her birth.





The series of site-specific floors on display forms an architecture that takes shape from the generative center of the exhibition space, delineating different areas and corridors. The three floors extend as disjointed, sparsely distributed surfaces, similar to the foundations of mysterious places. **Untitled (Mosaic)**, develops as a fragmented mosaic in golden-yellow, grey, and greenish tones. The marble from which it was made was found by the artist on her walks along the streams in the Alta Versilia area, where she lives and works, near the quarries. With the passage of time and the flow of water, the previously dressed and squared marble slabs have been smoothly polished, revealing the archaeology of the stone itself. Another example is **Floor (for Clarice 02)**, an open, angular paved composition, started during a collective workshop. The tiles (partly made in Nove, in the Veneto region, known as “the town of ceramics”) were glazed by mixing various materials collected by the artist, such as sand, soil, and vegetable ash, and are inspired by the floral motifs of traditional ceramics. The decorations were painted by several hands with multiple overlaps, in some cases with clear, careful strokes, in others with explosions of color that, extending beyond the outlines, allude to transformation and merge with the world of the insects that inhabit them. The work is a tribute to the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector (1920–1977), whose novel *The Passion According to G.H.* (1964) offers a profound existential monologue triggered by the sight of a crushed cockroach. In contrast to the solidity of *Untitled (Mosaic)* and *Floor (for Clarice 02)*, **Living Room** is made by interweaving wildflowers and herbs and is accompanied by a suspended ceramic sculpture in the shape of an owl. While the marble and ceramic floors are made of durable materials, *Living Room* is characterized by arboreal elements that symbolize the life-giving force of nature that is both ephemeral and resilient. The presence of the grassy ground may recall the vegetation that grows over ruins or takes root near abandoned monuments.







*Senza titolo (una Tenda) #03 /
Untitled (a Tent) #03, 2023*
Stampa vegetale su seta,
ottone / Vegetal print on silk,
brass
205 × 200 x 200 cm



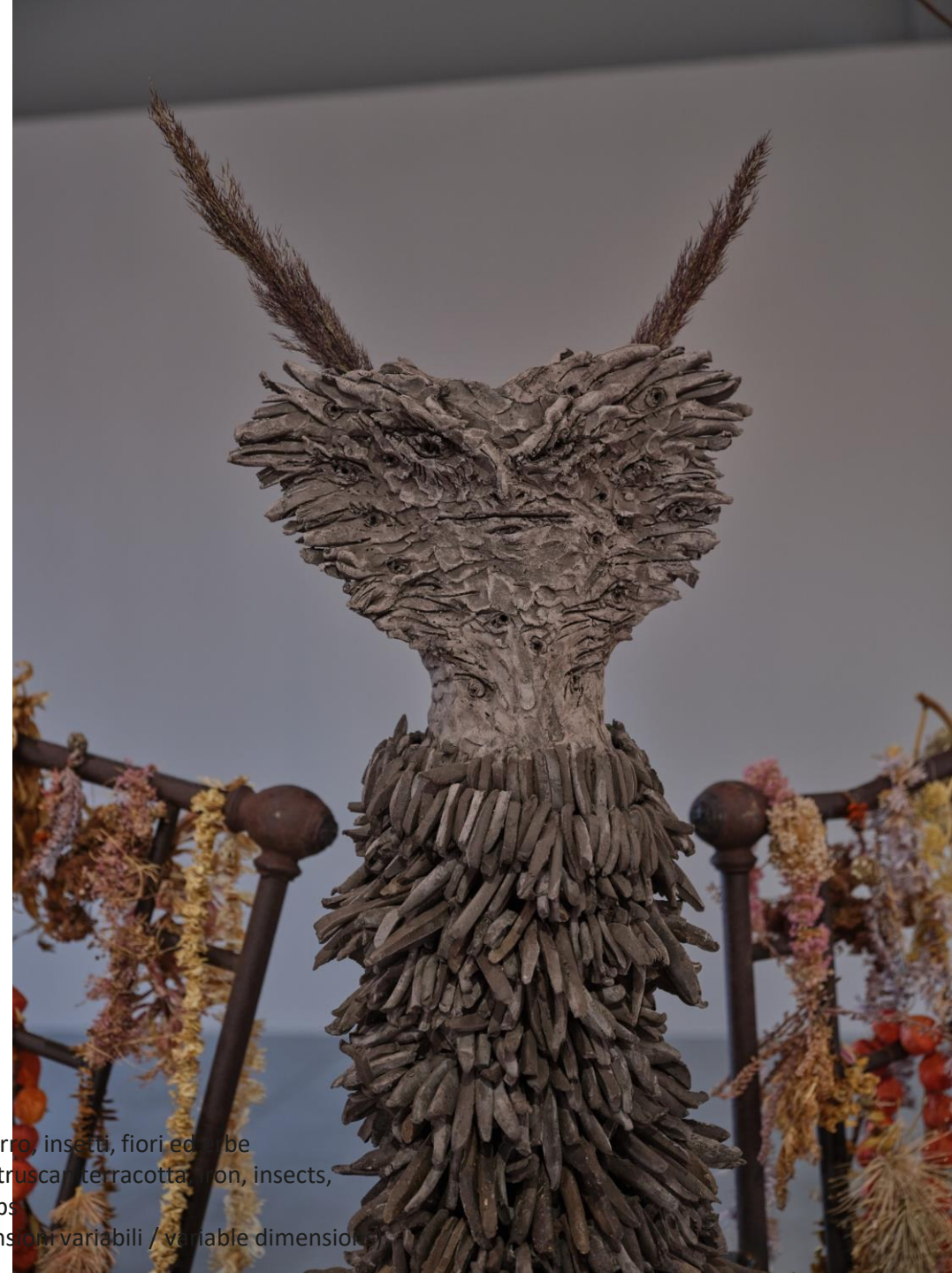
Selezione di *Vasi Farfalla* esposti a gruppi su sei tavoli
disegnati dall'artista / Selection of *Butterfly Vases* grouped
on six tables designed by the artist

Sister #04, 2021
Terracotta nera, ferro /
Black terracotta, iron
85 × 150 × 80 cm



I Tre Serpenti / The Three Snakes, 2024
Porcellana e gres smaltati con cenere vegetale e sabbia di fiume / Porcelain and stoneware glazed with vegetal ash and river sand
Tre elementi / Three elements
Dimensioni variabili / Variable dimensions





Sister (Flowers), 2022

Terracotta nera etrusca, ferro, insetti, fiori ed erbe
selvatiche secche / Black Etruscan terracotta, iron,
insects, dried flowers and wild herbs

170 × 280 × 100 cm (dimensioni variabili / variable dimensions)



Sister #01, 2020

Terracotta policroma, ferro, legno, erbe e fiori secchi /
Polychrome terracotta, iron, wood, dry grasses and flowers
125 x 70 x 60 cm (dimensioni variabili / variable dimensions)

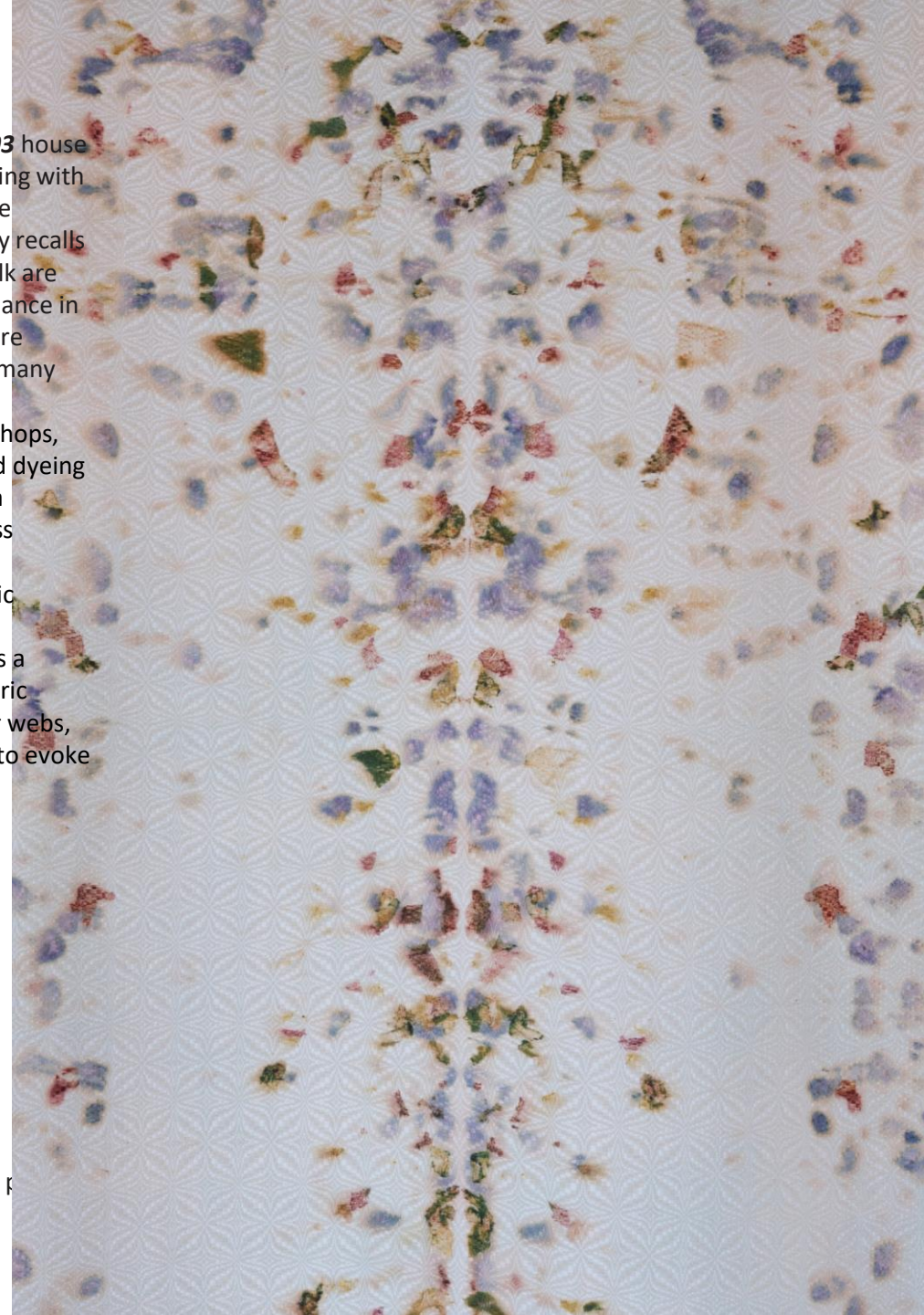


The two circular brass structures *Untitled (a Tent)* and *Untitled (a Tent) #03* house several silk drapes on which figures are impressed by means of direct printing with flowers, leaves, and herbs with dyeing properties. The process results in the appearance of mysterious beings, whose specular composition immediately recalls corporeal, albeit elusive and ethereal, presences. The spirits fixed on the silk are emanations of the very landscape in which the plants were sourced; they dance in a circle as in a ritual, transforming themselves from thin veils into a sculpture within the space, whose shape reminds to a tent or a hut. The artist made many vegetal prints using herbs from her garden or the surrounding woods, or sometimes from elsewhere, expanding the creative process, holding workshops, and collectively creating new silks. In the *Tapestries* series, the printing and dyeing process remains the same, while the brass structures change, arranged in a modular configuration that suggests domestic features such as stained-glass windows or paravents. The fabrics on which the essence and colors of the landscapes are printed were made by the artist while in Puglia for an artistic residency, when she closely collaborated with the Constantines, a group of craftswomen and philanthropists who have promoted the art of weaving as a means of women's emancipation since the early 20th century. The geometric patterns that make up these canvases may resemble snake scales or spider webs, which Camoni "stains" with organic materials from her home and kitchen, to evoke abstract and ambiguous incorporeal entities.

Arazzi / Tapestries, 2024

Stampa vegetale su cotone, ottone / Vegetable print
on cotton, brass

210 × 270 × 270 cm



Barricata #1 / Barricade #1, 2016
Terracotta policroma, fiori, acqua /
Polychrome terracotta,
flowers, water
Dimensioni variabili / Variable
dimensions



The line composed of numerous clay pots, which blocks the way around the edge of the Shed, invites visitors to reflect on spatial perception. Each vase in *Barricata #1* contains natural and ephemeral elements, such as fresh cut grasses and flowers, suggesting fragility and care as opposed to their function of containment and resilience. The work leads back to the idea of collectivity and craftsmanship found in some of the sculptures in the exhibition, such as *Sisters*. Indeed, the vases are hand-modeled by the artist and symbolize archetypal concepts, but also the idea of the manual nature of sculpture, as she explains: «When I work with clay strips, proceeding from the bottom up, I repeat one of the oldest gestures in the history of mankind, probably the first sculptural form: a hollow and a convex space, a solid and a void. I have the sensation of building the whole universe.»



At the end of the exhibition path, the aluminum castings of two dogs lie on a soft, light grey wool carpet. With its shimmering lunar silver glints, *Dogs (Bruno and Tre)* marks the exit while dialoguing with the stone *Lionesses* at the entrance. The two domesticated animals are set in contrast to the hieratic alert felines, from which they also differ in their naturalistic features and contemplative poses. The show thus opens with the warm colors of Leccese stone and ends with the cold hues of aluminum, echoing the natural cycles of light.







Performance *Ombra Solida*



Simposio *Tracce impermanenti*