

FLAMINIA VERONESI

Social motherhood Greatmothermom

curated by Andrea Lerda



OPENING

March 7th, 2024
6—9 pm

EXHIBITION

08.03—20.04.2024

OPENING HOURS

thur—sat
3—7 pm
(morning by appointment)

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On June 4, 1966, the exhibition *She - A Cathedral*, a collaboration between artists Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely, Per Olof Ultvedt and museum director Pontus Hultén, opened at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm.

A giant female figure in an advanced state of pregnancy - lying on the ground with her legs spread apart, as if to evoke the position of childbirth - showed itself to viewers. A 23-meter-long and 6-meter-high “cathedral” invited the audience to make a crossing experience, bordering on the performative, between the symbols of the feminine and the maternal.

If for Niki de Saint Phalle the work represented the image of a liberated woman, an independent, good, generous and happy mother, the path of emancipation from the authority and the shackles of the patriarchy was a historical process in slow progress and still ongoing, as is testified by recent events, together with this exhibition, which came into being about a year ago.

Today, the entrance to the exhibition is once again a passage. Indeed, Flaminia Veronesi chooses two large maternal breasts as portals of entry to a futuristic world. Crossing this threshold is a doubly symbolic experience: on the one hand, it represents an initiation rite, necessary to activate the cultural deflagration that the artist invokes; on the other hand, it allows us to physically access the interior of Flaminia Veronesi's metamorphic, dreamlike, surreal, yet necessary universe.

This first crossing can in fact be understood as a real manifesto of the theoretical-creative vision behind this exhibition project.

The artist re-reads and updates the thought of Maria Montessori – a pedagogist, educator and among the first women to graduate in medicine in Italy – who, in the early twentieth century, outlined an innovative perspective in the context of feminist reflections and claims.

In the 1902 paper entitled “The Way and the Horizon of Feminism”, she describes a woman as a “pioneer” who is entrusted with the responsibility of fighting to mark a historical passage: from the ancient domina/mater to the “new woman” whose task is to bring women's values into society; she insisted that the goal of feminism can only be achieved alongside that maternal social victory which definitively shifts attention from motherhood as procreation to motherhood as the source of humanity.

In the reality represented by Flaminia Veronesi, the female presence is therefore not a reason for a simple reflection on women (just as her research is not merely feminist), but the emblem of a feeling of “social motherhood” (as Maria Montessori defined it) which has now deflated.

The figures drawn by the artist are mutant creatures that, while retaining the sexual traits of the female gender, allow for a metamorphic fluctuation that embraces an expanded conception of the human being.

In so doing, Flaminia Veronesi declares her intention to rethink the idea of “mother” and to go beyond the stereotype that relegates this experience to the female sphere alone.

In the newly born world in which we are immersed - a place where steaming breasts appear as primordial mountain ranges and where a cosmic catharsis has reconfigured not only the cultural models but the DNA of reality itself - each of us is a maternal being that acts according to the principle of “giving” and in favor of life.

The new symbolic imagery of the maternal has become practice and universal feeling. The virtues of the feminine, such as care, hospitality and the bond with nature, are now free to escape from the house in which they were held prisoner and to finally strengthen the human species.

Eve, the objectified and procreative woman who was the victim of a condition of inferiority and submission for a long time, has given way to the Mother, a “social Mary”¹

for whom motherhood is understood as caring for the other and as responsibility towards life.

Now that motherhood has been loosened from its biological dimension, that “the genital differences between humans no longer have any cultural importance”², everyone can take up the care of children, existence and Mother Earth.

In a world in which, as suggested by the xenofeminist perspective, we are witnessing the proliferation of genders, breasts have multiplied enormously, as if to symbolize or legitimize a process of ectogenesis that, nevertheless, is certainly not intended to deny or replace the real biological dynamic on which the origin of life is based.

In the exhibition *Social motherhood Greatmothermom*, Flaminia Veronesi mobilizes the imagination and resorts to the power of the dream not only in the Andersian and negative sense of prefiguring future scenarios of cultural and global catastrophe, but also in the positive one of hypothesizing and thinking about alternative scenarios, so as to guide the birth of a new concept of “community motherhood” necessary for the “care of the World”³.

Her universe of visual, theoretical and conceptual references fluctuates between the real and the fantastic, between past, present and future. The artist combines feminist theories, references to the History of Art and personal intuitions that, thanks to the sensitivity of a modern shaman, place her in the condition of being a messenger of Pacha Mama.

The organic, molecular and magmatic aspect of the works produced specifically for this exhibition, reveals the creative power of the artist and the visionary intuition that feeds her polymorphic research, in which we can find references to the works of other recent and contemporary artists, including Louise Bourgeois, Sarah Lucas, Nathalie Djurberg, Carol Rama, Laure Prouvost and Judy Chicago.

Andrea Lerda

¹ “...This is what society needs, which groans in its raw struggle and in its moral depths, while the external victories of science and industry shine forth: now this great social family feels the need of the woman who refines it in her work, of the mother to protect her.”

In: M. Montessori, *Per la causa delle donne / The Cause of Women*, Garzanti Editore, 2019, p. 41.

² Radical feminist and activist Shulamith Firestone claims that

“just as the end goal of socialist revolution was not only the elimination of the economic class privilege but of the economic class distinction itself, so the end goal of feminist revolution must be [...] not just the elimination of male privilege but of the sex distinction itself.”

Firestone moves away from a conception of reproductive corporeality (firmly anchored in the conception of two distinct sex classes) as the source of oppression and division of labor, and envisions the eradication of this oppression by means of the dissolution of gender itself.

In: H. Hester, *Xenofeminism*, Nero Edizioni, Rome 2018, p.32.

³ As the philosopher Elena Pulcini writes, “caring for the world means then, in the first instance, preserving the world, protecting humanity from the spectre of self-destruction, defending life”.

In: E. Pulcini, *La cura del mondo. Paura e responsabilità nell'età globale*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2009, p. 266.

