



SYMBIOSIS THE INTERCONNECTED THREADS OF FUNGI

POST SCRIPTUM / 01

TAKASHI HOMMA
CLAUDIA LOSI
LAURA PUGNO
FLAMINIA VERONESI

OPENING
14 SEPTEMBER 2023
6—11 P.M.

EXHIBITION
15.09—5.11.2023

OPENING HOURS
TUE—SAT
3—7 P.M.
(MORNINGS BY APPOINTMENT)

POST SCRIPTUM

is the format through which the Peola Simondi Gallery opens its exhibition season. Every September, a collective exhibition will be inaugurated, conceived in close collaboration with an artist from the gallery who, in turn, will invite other artists to participate. The exhibitions will address different and current themes, deeply interconnected with each other. Like a matryoshka, the Post Scriptum exhibitions will unfold one after the other. Through the network of collaborations and partners involved, Post Scriptum promotes the development of circular thinking, the activation of new connections, and the sharing of thoughts and ideas.

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Peola Simondi Gallery is pleased to present *SYMBIOSIS. The Interconnected Threads of Fungi*, the first edition of Post Scriptum. Curated by the gallery in collaboration with Laura Pugno, the exhibition focuses on the world of fungi and the connections they create on our planet. The artists invited to participate alongside Laura Pugno (Trivero, 1975) are Takashi Homma (Tokyo, 1962), Claudia Losi (Piacenza, 1971), Flaminia Veronesi (Milan, 1986).

The installation, conceived by Laura Pugno, opens with a photograph, serving as an access portal. Laura Pugno's *Abendland*¹ [Land of the Sunset] (2023), is a sunset landscape with a dual soul, a metaphor for the end and the beginning of a new era. The photograph depicts a rock immersed in shadow that emerges and stands out against the setting sun, a huge creature that forcefully lifts the forest and promises salvation. *Abendland* is also the title of the film poem by Austrian documentarian Nikolaus Geyrhalter. The concept of human failure, implicit in the documentary, is linked to Flaminia Veronesi's poetic works, particularly in *Rosa* [Pink], from her series *Ori* [Gold] (2023), in which, thanks to the acceptance of this failure, a circular dance of rebirth and joy materializes: natural elements and imaginative figures interweave with each other. This idea of interconnection also emerges in the work *Come micelio, noi multipli uniti* [Like mycelium, we have multiple Unions] (2023) is a sculpture in polymer clay in which an entangled web of human beings takes shape. Like mycelial filaments, each living being is connected to others having both collective and individual identities.

If the notion of entanglement is akin to Flaminia Veronesi's artistic research, Claudia Losi's *Tavole Vegetali* [Vegetable Tables] (2012) are the tangible and material representation of the concept of symbiosis. In this series of works, which began in 1995, Losi has used embroidery to reproduce lichens - symbiotic partnerships resulting from the association of an alga and a fungus - of which she has collected images during her travels, creating moving microlandscapes.

Resulting from the interaction between art and science, *Morfologie celesti* (2023) are two works by Laura Pugno created in collaboration with biologists Enrica Lumini and Samuele Voyron.² The mycelium, grown in a laboratory, has been shaped to obtain the representation of a night sky, which seems to observe and protect us. In the darkness everything seems still, but in reality, nature continues to move inexorably, grow, and create relationships. If one were to close their eyes, they might perceive the scent of the night, the scent of the undergrowth, its sound, - that which Takashi Homma would call *Symphony - Mushrooms from the Forest*.

Inspired by Ed Ruscha's *Colored People* series in 2011, just six months after the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, Japanese photographer Takashi Homma began a series of photographs of radioactive mushrooms collected in the forests of Fukushima. The research continues on three other continents, in the forests of Scandinavia, Chernobyl, and Stony Point, NY: nuclear contaminated places where various mushroom species began to proliferate shortly after the disasters. As explained by Merlin Sheldrake in his book *Entangled Life*,³ mushrooms have extraordinary metabolic properties. This trait allows them to break down and recycle waste and they seem to harness radiation as a source of energy.

Unlike Takashi Homma, who, through photography, presents a realistic portrait of mushrooms, Flaminia Veronesi's research draws a profound source of inspiration

from playful and fantastic elements, finding a cure for the wound between humans and the world in the dimension of play. Her works take shape using hierarchically equal materials: colored graphite, water-based enamel, acrylic, polymer clay, clay, and paper-mâché. The sculpture *Fist of Fire* (2023), represents the mushroom in its maximum strength: a maternal fungal deity, entirely covered in blue, abundant and fruitful, with numerous breasts from which mycelial filaments flow like milk.

Fascinated by Sheldrake's studies, Laura Pugno has collaborated with Cristina Portinaro, a cosmetologist, and pharmacist, to create an innovative cream with Tremella mushroom extract with anti-pollution properties. This cream gave rise to the series *Sintomo* [Symptom] (2023), depicting views in which the landscape appears fragmented. The series title, which also gives its name to the cream, reflects the symptom of a society seeking palliatives to alleviate the sense of responsibility that afflicts us in the face of the crisis we are going through.

An anthracite gray ladder, entirely covered in graphite, emerges from the white wall. On it, plant forms, lichens, mushrooms, and rocky elements climb upwards.

Su quella scala salirono le mie parole [Up the ladder climbed my Words] (2013) is the title of the work suggested to Claudia Losi by her mother just before passing away. I imagine Claudia Losi's hand tightly gripping the pencil in a constant and rhythmic movement, intent on covering the entire surface of the ladder with gray. Whoever climbs those ladder steps would find the signs of their passage on their hands and the soles of their feet, like memories to carry with them.

Mushrooms are everywhere. Often they are invisible, but if we pause for a moment and we listen to them, we realize that like Claudia Losi's graphite, the incredible world of mushrooms can impart a mark on each of us, becoming a source of inspiration and change to revolutionize our way of living and relating with each other.

NOTES

- 1 *Abendland* is a German term that translates literally to "evening land" or "land of the evening," often used to refer to the West and, by association, "the sunset of the West".
- 2 Enrica Lumini is a CNR researcher at the Institute for Sustainable Plant Protection in Turin (IPSP). Samuele Voyron is a research technician at the Department of Life Sciences and Systems Biology (DBios) at the University of Turin.
- 3 Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds, and Shape Our Futures*, Random House, New York, 2020.

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