

Testi Art Curating x mostre MaXXI

Federica_Chiarucci_“Take” -

“Take the performer by the hair and take her somewhere else” this is the central premise of **Take**, performed by **Federica Chiarucci**. It is neither an order nor a plea. It is simply just an instruction. It provocatively examines the moral implications of using another human being as a mere object for personal experience. The artist’s deliberate vulnerability and exposure serve as a mirror reflecting the audience’s moral compass.

The performance forces a confrontation with uncomfortable truths about how we view and treat others, especially when given explicit permission to break the social norms. By doing so, the artist not only critiques the objectification and exploitation inherent in certain societal structures but also provides a space for introspection and moral reckoning. It is not just a performance; it is an experience that lingers, compelling its audience to reflect even long after the final act.

Henky Tjoeng

Rodrigo M. Soto - “44” (*Ascoltame II*)

The title of this artwork in English is ‘Listen to me!’ – a sentence we encounter often in our lives, an urgent appeal for attention, a demand to be seen and heard. However, how often have we heeded this plea, and how many times have we truly paid attention? Even when we listen, are we merely using our ears, or are we also listening with our hearts?

“It was a hot night, and loud.

I woke up on a different place where everything was darker.

It is a black that makes you stare into it... so you call them. But they never answer back.

My body flew away in all directions and it took with it all that kept me, me.

The only part the things in the dark couldn’t take from me. Do you hear it?”

These are the words whispering from the heart of **Ascoltame II**. Can you hear them?

Ascoltame II, is a one-meter-high humanoid creature made of plastic, plaster, coating foam, steel and wires; installed with a speaker inside. It is a compelling sculpture that speaks directly to the core of human experience and communication. Inspired by Pedro Reyes’s *Disarm (Mechanized) II*, 2014, the artist, **Rodrigo M. Soto** introduces a chilling metaphor for the concept of kidnapping and people disappearances in Mexico. It evokes the harrowing image of a human being trapped in a plastic bag with a tiny hole for breathing and screaming out loud to get help. This metaphor is not merely a visual reference but a profound commentary on vulnerability and the desperate struggle for life. It invites viewers to consider the experiences and stories of those who might be marginalized or ignored. It also urges viewers to engage more deeply with the piece and, by extension, with the world around them.

CHANTAL SPAPENS (*GARLAND OF TEARS*)

Can pleasure be pulled from our painful experiences? Chantal Spapens continues to explore this concept with her durational performance piece “Garland of Tears” at the MAXXI. People raised as women within a western capitalist society experience unspoken expectations to uphold the domestic sphere, including the nurturing of children, who will become future workers of society. Social reproduction, such as this emotional care, largely falls on women in the form of unpaid labor.

Garland of Tears explores the slow, repetitive destruction of the physical body through this lifetime of labor. The silent power of holding the proverbial house up at all costs, all while maintaining a firm grip on the soul. Considering the habits one picks up in the process that will ultimately shape their destiny within a system that predetermines identity before exiting the womb.

Chantal becomes a sort of religious idol in this performance: meditating over her slow building garland, accepting no interactions and no rest. She is closing a chapter in her life surrounding grief and subordination, moving towards self liberation. Allowing herself the time to process her decisions, a luxury literally not afforded to any body under capitalism. There is a question arising in this process of building: can we all move from a place of self flagellation, inflicting pain as a measure of self fulfillment, can we queer the narrative and be brave enough to structure new visions?

Victoria Froberg

Giulio Gamba «*Untitled (yet)*» (2024)

Gravity defining weight is the force that originates between objects thanks to their individual masses. This force of attraction exists between all bodies in the universe, and that therefore can vary depending on an infinity of variables. And if every body exerts its own gravity on that of others, it becomes so imperceptible that we all fail to notice it.

What attracts, repulses in equal strength when bodies are thrown towards the same point of convergence. There cannot be the same volume of mass which occupies the same space unless they clash.

Giulio Gamba

ANA MARDESIC *Self Portrait*

The artwork of Ana Mardesic seamlessly blends video art and oil painting, inviting viewers to explore the intersection of personal memories and everyday scenes through powerful emotional experiences.

Mardešić's art challenges our perception of time, creating a sense of temporal collapse that blurs the line between past and present. Her ability to evoke a strong emotional response makes her exploration of memory and daily life both profound and captivating.

"People in the Roman Metro," is an oil painting that captures the narratives of diverse individuals within Rome's metro system. With this piece, she painted her two classmates' selfportraits from her class. Also the art work when paired with her video installation, offers a compelling portrayal of the urban experience. The video art documents the full duration of time spent in the metro environment—from waiting at the station, traveling within the metro, to the final arrival. This combination creates an immersive experience, evoking a sense of constant motion and continuity.

Through her art, she transforms the mundane into the extraordinary, highlighting the shared human experience in the bustling urban landscape. Her work not only documents these moments but also invites viewers to re-experience and reinterpret them, offering a fresh perspective on the connections between personal memories and everyday life.

Ayda Ozcan

Luisa Figueiredo, *"Rooming around"*

Luisa Figueiredo's work "Rooming Around" is an immersive exploration that blurs the boundaries between painting and sculpture, inviting visitors to a unique experience of interaction and altered perception.

At the heart of the installation is a decomposed oil polyptych, which allows visitors to visually immerse themselves in perspective of the painting. The work depicts a room characterised by a parquet floor and animated by floating, undefined red figures, hallmarks of the artist's painting. To amplify the immersive effect and the transformation of the represented reality, a platform extends from the wall painting, replicating its surface in a verisimilar parquet effect on which red foam sculptures are placed. This platform does not merely extend the painting, but acts as a threshold between the real and imaginary worlds. Visitors are invited to step onto the platform to touch the foam figures, which will deform and recompose themselves through interaction. The climax of the experience occurs when visitors step further onto the platform and find themselves immersed in an altered reality: the floor becomes unstable and foamy, thanks to the foam placed underneath the surface. This dramatic change transforms the experience, making visitors feel involved in the painting itself, moving through a surreal space that accentuates the complete representation of the estrangement caused by the work.

In line with the exhibition theme "Unstable Realities: Interact, Distort, Stretch", the work fits perfectly into the exhibition context, exploring the multiple ways of visually reinterpreting reality. "Rooming Around" presents a visual narrative that develops and deepens through human interaction. This process invites deep reflection on the relationship between the artwork and the viewer.

"Rooming Around" makes the mutability of perception tangible: through interaction, what is static

becomes dynamic, what is solid becomes unstable. The fluidity of reality emerges in every aspect of the work, from the foam figures that deform and recompose, to the floor that changes under the visitors' feet, creating a continuous oscillation between the real and the imaginary.

This dynamic experience challenges our perceptual certainties and forces us to recognise that reality is not fixed but constantly negotiated and reinterpreted. As visitors move through this transformative space, they experience first-hand the fluidity of reality and the instability of perceptions, embodying the theme of the exhibition and underlining how each interaction can alter and redefine our understanding of the world.

Elisa Pannison

Lale Jo Kirschner - "Schweben über dem Sinn vom Leben"

Lale Jo Kirschner's work, entitled "Schweben über dem Sinn vom Leben", is a sculpture representing the floating on the meaning of life.

It depicts two figures in pink fabric suspended in the air by their elongated genitals. Their oversized hands and feet recall the sensitive homunculus, a traditional symbol in human anatomical representation. The male figure levitates thanks to his elongated scrotum, while his penis hangs like an umbilical cord. Similarly, the female figure displays elongated, pendulous breasts with large, transparent nipples pointing downwards. The support that connects them symbolises a milky fluid, recalling the vital fluids of semen and mother's milk.

The nails and nipples in the figures represent human elements that emerge before gender is evident, emphasising the unity of life and the interconnectedness of all human existences. The elongated genitalia of the figures symbolise the ageing process, highlighting the physical and symbolic transformation that takes place in the course of human life. These details and the work's construction materials, combining iron for the structure and delicate fabrics for the figures, suggest a complex dialogue between strength and fragility. The contrast between the strength of the metal element and the delicacy of the textiles not only emphasises the duality of the human condition, but also invites viewers to reflect on the complexity of relationships and interactions between individuals and the world around them.

Physical interaction with the sculptures is essential to fully appreciate their meaning. The figures suspended in the air by their elongated genitalia not only suggest a feeling of fluctuation and instability, but also an oscillation between different states and meanings. Visitors are encouraged to touch and interact with the figures, while the structure itself is designed to move slightly on contact, creating the perception of a life of its own, a slow and steady breathing that manifests itself through movement. For the visitor, the experience with these sculptures is not only visual, but an invitation to explore the fluidity of perception and human identity. The suspended and interactive figures offer a space to reflect on the complexity of life and the continuous negotiation between the real and the imaginary.

Lale Jo Kirschner's sculpture fits into the exhibition theme "Unstable Realities: Interact, Distort, Stretch", exploring the nuances of human reality through a provocative visual expression that challenges conventional perceptions of identity and body. "Schweben über dem Sinn vom Leben" is an opportunity for the public to explore the deeper meaning of "unstable realities", embracing the variety of interpretations that life itself can offer.

Elisa Pannison

Daria Shoshani - “Add Water to Water”

The work "Add Water to Water" by Daria Shoshani is an immersive audio-visual installation consisting of a video, which can be viewed through a screen set on the floor, and concrete fish sculptures.

The video tells the story of a sleepless dreamer who builds aquariums during the day, creating a microcosm within his own home. The narrative explores themes of agoraphobia, creation from destruction and inner conflicts, developing through virtual journeys in Google Street View.

The protagonist, through screens, windows and aquarium walls, observes and reinterprets the outside world, separate but at the same time connected to it.

The creation of this internal universe is intimately linked to the external world observed through the windows. This creative process parallels the construction of aquariums, micro-ecosystems containing life, sun, earth, plants and water. These small worlds, enclosed between sheets of glass, can be observed both from the outside and from the perspective of the fish, but they always represent a form of containment of the wild nature and fluidity of water.

The artist decided to transform the glass balcony of the Maxxi exhibition space into a site-specific installation, embodying the elements of the video's set design. The installation plays with the tension between reality and fantasy, bringing to life the creatures imagined by the protagonist. The choice was made to represent the flying fish, an element of intrinsic contrast, made of concrete, bricks and metal. These simple, industrial materials, usually associated with construction and destruction, are transfigured into the realm of the oneiric. The installation invites viewers to explore the complexity of creation and perception. The interaction with the aquarium symbolises a dialogue between confinement and freedom, between tangible reality and the imagined world. The flying fish, symbolising this duality, represents the contrast between the everyday and the fantastic, transforming ordinary materials into extraordinary creatures. Through interaction with the video and sculptures, visitors are encouraged to explore the complexity of human life and the constant renegotiation of boundaries between the real and the imaginary.

In line with the exhibition's theme "Unstable Realities: Interact, Distort, Stretch", "Add Water to Water" explores the fluidity of reality and the mutability of human perceptions. The work encourages deep reflection on the relationship between inside and outside, between fantasy and reality, offering an immersive experience that challenges conventional

Elisa Pannison