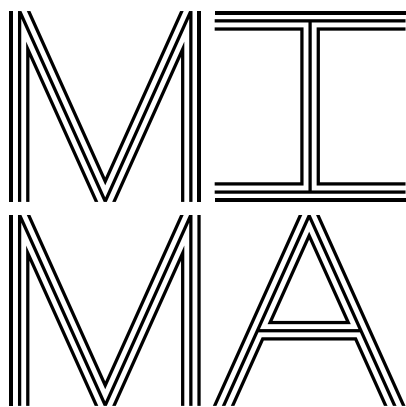




CHIARA CAMONI  
SELECTED PRESS ARTICLES  
&  
INTERVIEWS



## Chiara Camoni

### Hearing from Artists

*Chiara Camoni works mostly in drawing, sculpture and installation, often using materials found through chance encounters. Camoni lives and works in Fabbiano, in Tuscany's Versilia Hills, Italy. In 2018 three works from her series 'Sisters' were gifted to the Middlesbrough Collection at MIMA through the Contemporary Art Society's Jackson Tang Award Ceramic Award. In 2019 the sculptures were shown at MIMA, their candles lit daily by a range of people from the communities around the museum. Here she is in conversation with Elinor Morgan, Head of Programme, in August 2020.*

**EM: Your work seems to have a strong relationship with archaeology and excavation, both through the materials you use and the histories you draw on.**

CC: Whenever I visit a museum or an excavation site, the fragments of things, humble household objects used daily, or small ritual sculptures that populate display cases or dusty archeological sites never fail to fill me with emotion. They seem to bring the gestures of the long-dead hands that modeled or used them here into the present.

For me, archaeology offers a vision of time in sculptured form. Painting went from two to three dimensions through the development of perspective. Sculpture has always possessed a third dimension, and can be have a relationship with a fourth one: temporal processing - time.



Chiara Camoni. Courtesy of the artist

In archaeological sites, we're faced with piles of stones, the remains of walls, floors, and cobbled roads. If we consider the parts relating to humans, we can be taken back millennia. But the stones in themselves have a much longer story. They were formed millions of years ago, and to them it makes precious little difference if this or that marble form was shaped yesterday, ten years ago, or two thousand years ago. On the contrary, a stone holds all these times inside it, and perhaps even future changes as well. We can think of other materials with the same approach, for example ceramics, considering the clay as soil...

I live near the marble quarries in Upper Versilia. The marble is worked in workshops near rivers and streams. Marble scraps are sometimes thrown into the running water. The hands of time and water wear the pieces down, rounding, staining, smoothing. During months of walking the riverbed, I have looked at them and collected them.

They illustrate a cycle: the marble, torn from the mountain, was transformed to objects of human use and then tossed into water, before slowly being turned back to being a stone. The installation *Senza titolo, mosaico* shows all these different stages. I think that this work really resembles a landscape because it's made solely from bits of land.

Some years ago I heard the philosopher Stefano Velotti cite a letter written by John



*Senza Titolo, mosaico 2012, marble, variable dimensions (detail).  
Courtesy SpazioA*

Keats in 1817: the poet described the art of knowing how to “live with uncertainty, puzzlement, and doubt without being impatient to get to the facts and draw conclusions”. This means that an attitude of suspended judgment is not a neutral state but, on the contrary, an active state, a special way of acting manifested in the ability to wait, to accept, and to allow events to take their course, to allow oneself to be carried along with no destination in mind.

Then in Rome during an afternoon at the Etruscan Museum in Villa Giulia, I lost myself in a never-ending succession of wonderful rooms. One dedicated to “Gifts” attracted my attention because that was just what I was thinking of. Many of the gifts were ceramic pots. The earliest epigraphic testimony dates back to the 7th century BCE and describes the rituals underlying gift-giving that consolidated relations of kinship, politics, and economics apparently codified even then.

At a certain point, the object speaks for itself. “I come from ... by...” “I am from Avile, the small pitcher.” “I am the urn of Scuria, a beauty of a beauty.” And so on.

The container is not silent. The container is not even empty. It is full of emptiness.

**EM: Three pieces from your series ‘Sisters’ are part of the Middlesbrough Collection. All made in clay, they occupy different spaces and forms and communicate very different moods. Who are these characters and what do their forms convey?**

CC:

One sister  
twister.

Two sisters  
with weird whiskers.

Three Furies sisters  
in the night resisters.

Four sisters  
with an S that whispers.

Five sisters, here refers,  
were good listeners.

Six sisters,  
were horse riders.

Seven sisters  
pink fighters.

Eight Sisters  
like spiders.

Nine Sisters are blowing  
whistles and throwing.

Ten Sister Candelabra  
Abracadabra.

I wrote this simple and funny doggerel when I was working on the sculptures: I used my bad



Chiara Camoni and Ines Bassanetti, Capolavori (Giotto, La predica agli uccelli) 2004, pencil on paper, cm 30 x 30. Courtesy the artist



Kabira, 2019, workshop at Museo Carlo Zauli, Faenza, Italy

English without any help, to make it clumsy and childish.

I think the Sisters come from far, in space and time; they are very mysterious also to me; they are our female relatives.

**EM: In 2002 you made a work with your grandmother where you asked her to become your artist assistant, and make drawings for you, as a way of countering her melancholy. How else have you worked with people and why is it important for you to work with others?**

CC: My grandmother's name was Ines and I'd always had a special relationship with her, an affection so deep it was almost a secret between us. One day she mentioned this "melancholy" that she felt in the afternoons. Melancholy, she said, not boredom. She asked me for something to do. Maybe she was thinking she could cook or sew for me. But the word melancholy suggested to me a different possibility: Dürer himself had suffered melancholy! So I told her I needed an assistant, someone to help me in my work as an artist, someone who could draw for me.

She looked puzzled. She'd never drawn in her life. The closest thing she'd ever done to drawing were the small dashes and rods for the

letters of the alphabet they'd made her draw the first days of school. That was where we started.

And then she drew until her final day...

I often work with other people. In recent years the process has even intensified. There's always a lot that occurs between me and me of course, but when it's time to start kneading, the group appears, the party begins. And thus, as always, Elisa, Camilla, Paola, Caterina. Luca and Matteo. Davide with Anna. Maria and Pietro, the Various Authors, the groups of the workshops...

One year I read all summer long with Cecilia. We read next to each other, then spoke, went for walks. We told each other that words mingle with gestures, gestures give shape to things, that create space.

When I work, I search for a *meaning*, for my life, for my being in the world, in this story. When this *meaning* is shared, it's a small miracle. It's our way of resisting the fear, the passage of time, the news of the day. I make a Vase and I remake the World. We all need grace, a bit of beauty. Perfect Worlds. They last for an instant, then everything dissolves, the flow of daily life returns, and we are swept away. But I go back to work – resume searching – another moment of grace, another Perfect World.





*Sisters, Installation view at MIMA. Photograph by Hynes Photography*



**EM: How do you imagine communal experiences and group making for the future?**

CC: I will continue working with workshops and seminars. I strongly believe that there is a special way to learn by being together. We can learn with the body, noticing the blink of an eye, feeling the temperature of words.

On October 17th 2019 at 4 in the morning, in a very spontaneous way “Il Centro di Sperimentazione” – the Experimentation Centre – was born in Faenza, during a workshop. It’s a kind of formalization that can allow groups of various origins.

The Centre is a floating organism, without any specific place; it moves following its actions. Experimentation is not intended as innovation. The Centre simply acts where there is no certainty. The Centre appears when there is something that nobody has done before, when a group of people would like to be exposed to the risk of the unknown.

The experimentation is expressed in unknown areas, it is not predictable and above all it is never repeatable. What we get will never appear again...

## A STORY

Working with your hands, at a table,  
is like sitting on a bed of moss.  
On the top alight moist thoughts.  
Not completely dry.

Things emerge.

I keep thinking.  
Enough of this sublimation!  
Get right to the point. Cheat, if you must.  
No more big mommies.

But instead it's a tiny goddess,  
for the hundredth time.  
Female.  
A sculpture.  
In my own home.

Good and bad.  
Mother can also be bad.  
The bad mother. My bad mother.

But it might not be possible.  
It's not possible to stay in the shadows.  
To stay in the dark too long.

Excerpts:

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I took a walk this morning. With the neighborhood behind me, I headed into what for me is Rome's most beautiful park of all, the least domesticated. A stretch of countryside in the city, from which only faint echoes arrive that can be easily ignored and the sight of which is mostly hidden by its trees, hills and gullies, and sheer size.

Walking along the trails, it's easy to lose sense of time. The oaks' rough bark choked with ivy, the brambles, unruly reeds, and blocks of tuff, the water gurgling in the many streams that flow into the Almone River, the smell of shade, dampness, and woods, the ravines must not have changed much, and the landscape today is the same wandered by Goethe or even by a shepherd from the year 100 AD who brought his flock to graze here: potent spectacle of wilderness that can still be witnessed in these meadows.

The wide open space that suddenly breaks into view is dotted with ruins: a noble Roman lady's tomb, a medieval watchtower, a nymphaeum consumed by moss, lichen, and mold still inhabited by a sculpture of a nymph, some river deity, or dormant Ariadne, perhaps. Then there's a little chapel, and the remains of a grandiose construction with a central hall of which only a parallelepiped atop a bump in the ground remains today, some kind of portal you can step through nobody can remember what for. These are the ruins you find in this part of Italy: mere presences, without the pretention to be considered monuments but subtly, stubbornly, asserting their right to be there. They stand. There's monuments to spare anyway, so many that some—apparently—have decided to go back to being stone. I picked up a tiny fragment of marble: perfect, white, and square. Our local stone, travertine and tuff, is pervious to water.

The mountainside where Chiara Camoni's house stands is often in shadow; clouds thicken at the

summits. It's a daunting, severe landscape possessing a force that never ceases to enchant me. The first time I drove up from Versilia's beaches, steering around all the bends, glancing at the steep walls left in the rock after the marble had been scraped I thought that Chiara couldn't live anywhere else, because here sculpture was everywhere. In time, I learned to see its influence on her work, then to know the place better, hiking with her the trail where she sometime finds materials that become sculptures, like the pieces of marble composed as large horizontal landscapes, *Senza titolo, mosaico*,<sup>■</sup> sculptures that do not owe much to Carl Andre, despite the use of the grid as compositional tool, and perhaps a bit more to Robert Smithson; or the tree trunk lugged downhill with Silvia and Paola, in which the former carved a face, the latter wove a woolen shawl, making it a Great Mother but also only pure form: *Tronco e Trapezio*.<sup>■</sup> Seeds and plants to be carefully drawn in ink. Bones to carve.

I walked this landscape searching with Chiara for a modest altar hidden amongst the stickers, worthy of hosting her clay divinity figures, never very reassuring, but never entirely frightening either, bending down to drink from a spring where wild mint freshened the air, where someone had carefully cut a circle into the rock where a cup for a future passer-by glass would fit perfectly. It's an archaic landscape, as is the imagery that Chiara draws from and gives form to, where Nature's things and Man's things are not at odds but even appear to wish they could trade places (an archaic vestige that approaches the language of children, and is indeed a part of Chiara's research).

These mountains were already home to Chiara's partner, Luca Bertolo, a painter, and coming to see the two of them is one of the forms that happiness can take for me. Other friends often turn up in summer, and the moments of the studio branch into those of daily life. Silvia with her black dog in the garden,



fig. 69, pp. 68–69



fig. 20, p. 28



fig. 2, p. 12



fig. 17, p. 24



fig. 37, p. 42

shaping a figure from a lump of clay while chatting.<sup>■</sup> Paola, stepping through the door. Visits from Antonio, Ilaria M., other artists and curators, some of whom have made their own contributions to this catalogue. Davide and I—together, always. Kids at play. Bettina Buck—whose *antigrazioso* approach to sculpture resonates with Chiara's work—came last summer, and together they shaped a whistle. I watched them work side by side at that table in the garden evoked by others in previous pages, seemingly providing a physical form to their meeting. The show that Ilaria G. and I curated together presented the genesis of Chiara's work starting right from that site of sharing of everyday activities, like eating and drinking, but also concentration and study.<sup>■</sup>

I've yet to have the chance to walk with Chiara in the park near my house, but I know she would like its dilapidated grandiosity, untamed—my city's one true *genius loci*. She visited another garden here—the one depicted in the fragments of Roman frescoes from Villa di Livia laid out in Palazzo Massimo—and the Etruscan Museum where she saw the clay sculptures that Arabella and Stefano recall—things that resonate with one another because they share a similar inner necessity, and beauty. And, I think, also because they belong to the same cultural horizon: you live in a landscape as you live in a language, and we owe lots to both.

This morning, in need of the words to use in this text, I started walking, as if in this way I could partially evoke Chiara's approach to her work, which always involves a process, and is always a kneading of space and time. This catalog shows a very old work of which we found various photographs: it is a sculpture almost too similar to those of Henry Moore that Chiara made with the bone of human body in mind: a coccyx,<sup>■</sup> to be precise, which she scaled into a chair, almost a throne. The photo also shows a group of people working together in a meadow. In going



into the woods there's another aspect that sometimes comes out very clearly in Chiara's work: to be a body. A body is a thing of beauty when it works, as when a clay cup is filled with water and quenches our thirst.

Sculpture is an investigation into things, their form, weight, function, and the (reversible) suspension of an object's value of use. Sculpture is investigated as void and form; as a gesture, through the shaping of clay, the carving of bone or wood; as a dimension of relationship, through moments of work shared while sitting around a table working clay, or through the force of attraction between two magnets; as a need, because the first sculptures were tools, then talismans, then ornaments. Even the small-sized *Tempere* belong to sculpture: cut from a larger portion of paper painted with egg tempera in which the pigment has been mixed with yolk and alcohol, in a polychrome version of the mixture of earth and water that is known as clay, which is Chiara's preferred material; and videos like *Mefite*, where the camera captures the hissing of mud thick with sulfur, and a prelude to her series of deities—Venuses without serpents, earth mothers, spirits and *Ninnesse*. Sculptures can also be epiphanies, like the structure queried in *Dal mare* that seems to have been made from the wind and flotsam brought to shore by waves, or the video *Unbewusst* or the series of photos taken in Naples that seem to portray relationships between objects and space, possible forms of spontaneous sculpture. Naples, the most mysterious, ancient and magic of Italian cities, is another one of the landscapes that have influenced Chiara's work. Here, she worked at the Archaeological Museum and did research on the mythological creatures known as *femminielli* that embody the myth of Hermaphroditus. Sculpture is also found in detail: a scribble in light blue clay,

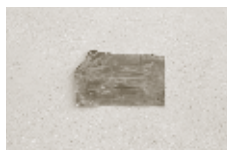


fig. 50, p. 53



fig. 24, p. 32



fig. 31, p. 38

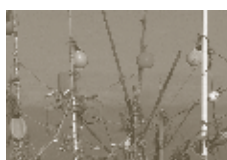


fig. 79, p. 78



fig. 84, p. 82



fig. 51, p. 55



fig. 11, p. 17

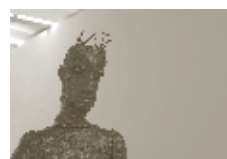


fig. 41, p. 46

and each and every element of the long and only apparently fragile strings of *Stabkarte* stick charts, which are its infinitesimal measure.

Sculpture can also be translated and restituted in the form of drawing: *Recipiente per libagioni* resembles a note from an archaeologist or a sketch by a traveler from another era attempting to preserve a memory on a journey to a distant land. If you really think about it, the practice of drawing as the first form of cognitive investigation was adopted by geographers, artists, experts, archeologists, and botanists: it's a gentle form of appropriation. In her latest show, this drawing accompanied the rows of sculptures made in the form of a whistle: whistling and drinking both require intimate contact with sculpture, a grazing of the lips.

Figuration, the relation to the sacred, to handicraft and amateurism, the abandonment without appeal of the codes of art, all disorient. The large figure created in sections, in order for it to be fired in separate pieces that stands on its feet, thanks to a rod inserted from head to toe, does not offer a foothold. It's in front of us, older than us, and silent. It was made by coiling, a simple technique used to create hollow shapes. Her *Bidestro* is a vase, and as Pandora with her box, bespeaks the relationship of reciprocity that exists between figuration and sculpture.

A work created a few years ago (not illustrated here) substantiated Arturo Martini's claim that the problem of sculpture is that it cannot escape the fate of being considered an object. This work was a *Natura morta*, a still life composed of a string of pearls, a bottle, and a cube of clay. Ambiguity is intrinsic in Chiara's work, hers are sculptures that trigger uneasiness, because they refuse classification unequivocally and entirely to just one label: to be considered works of art only, and no longer objects, works of art, but not sacred objects, works of art, not jumbles. They dialogue more willingly with a very

distant past than with a modernity that constantly quotes time past, but does not understand it. If we were to imagine a family for her work, Arturo Martini would certainly be a member, especially the large clay sculptures that look like they were inflated by human breath, or *Il bevitore* (The Thirsty Man) at the Galleria Nazionale in Rome, a stretched figure, roughly cut in stone, that seems to be one with the spring that quenches his thirst; Cambellotti's *bucchero* vases; the totem figures and abstracts of Mirko Basaldella; Brancusi, undoubtedly, and among her contemporaries, Andrea Büttner.

Chiara and I have exchanged words and books over the years. While preparing the show with Ilaria G., I found between the pages of *Cassandra: A Novel and Four Essays* by Christa Wolf a passage that to me seemed to indicate a path through the work of Chiara. The *Forth Lesson* began with a description of Wolf's studio in Brandenburg and continued with a penetrating and impassioned analysis of a poem by Ingeborg Bachmann. But the part that Chiara read with the joy of an encounter was the previous one, in which the author recounted her trip to Crete, which was in every way—Chiara told me with a thrill—similar to her own journey. They'd noticed the same things. The same images. And the disarming observation that: "The plurality of sense that is specific of Minoan culture, is part of its spell," said Wolf, for whom the search for the traces of Cassandra was like seeking a link to her own century, re-stitching her century. For me, together with this sisterhood with a culture so old that it has been largely forgotten and yet continues to return as repressed memory, resonates with the Austrian poet's voice. To her the poetic word has the task of leaving a form behind: a thing, mind you, not a thought. A human creation capable of re-aligning our time with times past, our life with lives



fig. 109, pp. 102–103



fig. 112, p. 105



fig. 30, p. 37

passed or lives to come. A creation that travels through time and talks about people, and of the bonds between people. This category embraces also apparently different things, such as Chiara's participation in Vladivostok, an artists' collective for the rights of artists, and the commitment to the commissioning of two works every year for the humble roadside shrine in the ecological village of Granara on the Apennine tableland, renamed Museo di Arte Contemporanea, a museum attended by a select public in the summer, and in winter hosts works more consonant to repose, given that the village is mostly deserted. Again in Granara—another recurring landscape—Chiara built a kiln with artist and common friend Alessandro Sarra for the firing of just one single vase.

Imagining the structure this book would take Chiara described my two texts as two hands holding it, one on the right, one on the left. Curating, I believe, is delicately holding in one's two hands an artistic practice, and then waking with it for a while. Here, together with Chiara's works and words, are also the voices of people she has heard as part of her path, some of which are also part of mine. I only hope to have not intruded too much on their words, much less Chiara's works, with mine.

We met **Chiara Camoni** on the occasion of her participation in the *Io Dico Io – I Say I* exhibition at the Galleria Nazionale in Rome; from 25 June 2021, the artist will reflect on the last fifteen years of his artistic career in a personal exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Bordeaux.

**Sara Buoso:** Dear Chiara, congratulations on your presence at the *Io Dico Io – I Say I* exhibition at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Rome. In your research, mainly related to sculpture and drawing, you touch on fundamental aspects of artistic research through a feminine positioning. At first, one can perceive the familiar and intimate dimension of your work from the point of view of a woman artist who wants to overlook the ethical, political and social values of art and by quoting a feminist motto, I could say your practice responds to 'the personal is political'. Secondly, I observe how your works become enriched by all those values that derive from the relationships you always intertwine in your work. Thirdly, your works suggest a backward movement that goes beyond the idea of the art-object specifically your sculptures, and this sounds like an invitation to re-read the creative process of the art-making. Would you like to tell us how you convey all these aspects in your practice?

**Chiara Camoni:** All three observations are relevant. In fact, starting from the latter, although I am interested in the artistic process per se, I defend the self-sufficiency of the work of art; to the extreme, a work of art should not need any caption, but lives in its complete form. Sculpture adapts well to my practice as drawing does because in both languages, I find my personal opportunity to unroll time, to incorporate the process that occurs before and after, and the use that will be made of it. My sculptures are in this world, I can pick them up and use them. As an example, I always refer to a vase. What am I doing when I model a vase? Am I making a vase or a sculpture in the form of a vase? If I use it to put water and flowers in it, for example, I charge its ambiguity even more. And it is precisely in this never resolved indeterminacy that I also perceive the



Chiara Camoni, *rosa (della liberazione)*, 2020, pencil on paper from the series *FROM THE GARDEN. RESISTANCE PROOFS*. Courtesy SpazioA



process by which this object / sculpture was formed. Whether it is a sculptural technical process, or a natural, geological, sedimentation, a waiting process, or even more a collective and shared process, this is where you feel the relationship with other people, where you feel the workshop and the craftsmanship dimension. But there is also an “after” dimension where the work of art remains open to many possible interpretations. In fact, the work of art is never closed; it is not merely what I want as an artist, but the work of art continues to exist independently for possible uses or fruitions. I am passionate about Etruscan statuary not so much for its aesthetic values, but more than anything because I feel that those figures have accompanied dead people to the afterlife. Going back to your “personal is political” quote: I agree, that’s right. In this historical moment, I felt even more the value of relationships. Every day I have been collaborating with a small community of people that has developed around me and my work. In this sense, everything stems from a personal fact – the choice to live in a village in the Apuan Alps – this has become a political choice to some extent because I decided to contribute to the construction of spontaneous communities by sharing of non-linear paths, especially in this historical moment of separation and homologation. In a broader discussion on the role of the female artist, I often wondered who were my older sisters in artistic terms, where they were and if I had ever been in dialogue with them. Perhaps there was no such dialogue in my lived experience, more than anything else it happened through study; today, however, I feel the responsibility of establishing a dialogue between people, which takes place in real life, particularly with women of different generations, even younger ones.

**S.B. Another innovative breach that you are launching is the idea of not being afraid to face the limit that traditionally divides the noble arts and the minor or applied arts.**

Materials can tell us many things, they are very eloquent. A lot could be said about an artist starting from the materials he/she uses. If an artist works by following a project that is already defined from the beginning, I am sure he/she would find him/herself by led by the process. Computer design is very different from putting your hands in a piece of damp clay for example. Myself, I need to be guided and surprised by the matter I use. While I work, I don’t know what clay can become. Maybe it becomes something I don’t like, but then I crush it down and the same very shape I’m destroying can suggest me another direction to follow. In this sense, to position myself within a specific technique and knowledge is also a way to be closed to their materials, having a physical approach to them that design does not allow you to follow.

**S.B. You define your works as ‘active sculptures’. This leads me to think about your new series of works *Vasi Farfalle/Butterflies Vases*, 2020, where I perceive the evolution of your material approach. Would you like to talk about this series?**

C.C. When I was talking about the surprise that usually accompanies my approach to materials, I was also thinking about vases, because for me, the vase – as I said before – is the place of ambiguity par excellence and is precisely positioned between the dimensions of both craftmanship and sculpture. Every time I pull up a vase, I re-make the world and this is truly a creative act that goes back to the beginnings. A vase in fact, is simultaneously full and empty, inside and out. I imagine that the first sculptural gesture in the history of mankind was to model a bowl. I cyclically make pots, and last summer I went around them for several months. In the series *Vasi-Farfalla/ Butterflies Vases*, it happened that the shape of the vase merged with the shape of the butterfly by analogies. Butterflies are very beautiful insects but they can also be disturbing ones if you think carefully: they have many, too many, eyes even on the wings, hairy antennae, very long trunks, and then they are continuously dedicated to transformation. And I have found that their process of transformation met very well with the very process of modeling vases. For these works, I have prepared the enamel that covers these sculptures by mixing minerals, sands, soil and above all ash by burning the dried flowers of my garden. By cooking the material at high temperatures, all these materials melt and vitrify. In 2020 I also made a series of flower drawings during the lockdown. Not being able to move in space, I believe that many of us have sought a different type of movement: no longer on a horizontal dimension, but on a vertical one. In this sense, I believe, our gaze has become sharper on everyday things. We have looked at our



Chiara Camoni, *Sister #01*, 2020, polychromed terracotta, iron, wood, dried flowers  
125 x 70 x 60 approx. Photo Camilla Maria Santini, Courtesy SpazioA, Pisa



Chiara Camoni with Silvia Perotti, Paola Aringes, Lucia Leuci, *Il Tronco e il T*  
*Corso Buenos Aires*, 2013 – 2020, wood, bones, wool, teeth, fabric, rubber, iron,  
cm 200 x 200 x 200 (dimensions variable), detail. Photo by Roberto Apa, Courtesy  
SpazioA, Pistoia



windowsill's flowers with a new attention and with a different depth. Instead of going far, the gaze has remained there, penetrating everyday things. Myself, every day I have picked a flower and held it in front of me, I have drawn it without looking at the paper, concentrating only on the flower and addressing questioning to it with many of those unanswered questions that characterized those months. These cut flowers, slowly leaving, acted as mute interlocutors to me as if participants in a mystery. Another example, at the end of winter when I usually go out for a walk, I find that paths are full of crocuses because crocuses really want to be born on the paths: they have all the woods around them, but no, they want to be born on the paths and there are so many at same point that I can't help but step on them. I think it is absurd that something so delicate and beautiful, really want to be right there where the passage is. But in this disproportion – between an alleged fragility and the strong impact to which they can be subjected to – it seems to me that the key to beauty lies in.

**S.B. This is a poetic thought. What I find interesting is that yours is not an imposed graphic nor an analytical study of botany. Instead, it is a way of accompanying the sign through a voice that nowadays is as strong as it is necessary.**

C.C. I found in flowers something ephemeral and fragile but also disturbing and brazen, like a topos for representation that is, at the same time, something new, such as a personal form of resistance. This is a resistance to the violence of communication, images and words of the contemporary world: in this sense, I give support to my thoughts through cut flowers which are destined to last only a day. And yet in such a contrast, in this unresolved imbalance, I continue asking myself what role the artist is...

Info:

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Chiara Camoni, *Vasi-Farfalle*, 2020, installation view, dimensions variable.  
Camilla Maria Santini, Courtesy SpazioA, Pistoia



Chiara Camoni and workshop's participants at Museo Carlo Zauli, Faenza *Kab* video, 10' 04". Courtesy SpazioA, Pistoia and Museo Carlo Zauli, Faenza



Sara Buoso (<https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/en/author/sara-buoso/>)

She is interested in the visual, verbal and textual aspects of the Modern Contemporary Arts. From historical-artistic studies at the Cà Foscari University of Venice, she has specialized in teaching and curatorial practice at the IED, Rome, and Christie's London. The field of her research activity focuses on the theme of Light from the 1950s to current times, ontologically considering artistic, phenomenological and visual innovation aspects.

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# JULIET

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## Chiara Camoni introduces the works “Kabira” and “Untitled (Una Tenda)” exhibited at the Rome Quadriennale

by SARA BUOSO ([HTTPS://WWW.JULIET-ARTMAGAZINE.COM/EN/AUTHOR/SARA-BUOSO/](https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/en/author/sara-buoso/)) 30 DECEMBER 2020 ([HTTPS://WWW.JULIET-ARTMAGAZINE.COM/EN/CHIARA-CAMONI-INTRODUCES-THE-WORKS-KABIRA-AND-UNTITLED-UNA-TENDA-EXHIBITED-AT-THE-ROME-QUADRIENNALE/](https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/en/chiara-camoni-introduces-the-works-kabira-and-untitled-una-tenda-exhibited-at-the-rome-quadriennale/)) FOCUS ([HTTPS://WWW.JULIET-ARTMAGAZINE.COM/EN/CATEGORY/FOCUS/](https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/en/category/focus/)) EN/)

The *Fuori (Outside)* exhibition at the Rome Quadriennale was only open for a few days at Palazzo delle Esposizioni due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. While waiting to be able to access the museum spaces again, we met **Chiara Camoni**, one of the 43 artists invited by the curators Sarah Cosulich and Stefano Collicelli Cagol, and we asked her to tell us about her project.

“We have chosen to exhibit two representative works, *Kabira* (2019) and *Untitled (A tent)*, 2019, which are both recent works although not specifically created for the Quadrennial in Rome. *Untitled (2019)* is a brass structure, a curtain that hosts a group of silks impressed with a vegetable technique. For me, these silks are like shrouds because the leaves, the flowers and the herbs I use do not leave an imprint through the addition of color but they deposit their own juices into the fabric, resulting as a direct imprint of vegetable elements. Through this process, anthropomorphic figures emerge. They are like strange characters or sprites as I define them such as emanations of a specific place. For the work conceived for the Quadrennial, the vegetables I used were collected in my garden and in the surrounding woods. Therefore, they are emanations of a landscape as if looking for the presence of a specific place. This methodology has been re-elaborated and re-proposed in workshops I conducted in specific places. In the last case for example, I hold a collective workshop at the GAM in Turin. We participants went to the confluence of the Po and the Doria Riparia rivers, looking for the figures hidden in that place. For me, it's all very magical, it is related to wonder. It all begins with the collection of the materials and then, we found flowers that were not found the previous year. In this sense, this is a space that is already known and connotated. It is not a neutral place, but a familiar one. It all continues by arranging the flower leaves only on one half of the fabric. In fact, as you can see from the work, the figures are vaguely specular, and I mean vaguely because the leaves do not exactly leave the same imprint



Chiara Camoni, 17a Quadriennale, 2020. Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Roma C SpazioA, Pistoia



on both sides of the silk. The eye knows symmetry but this is not an exact symmetry – in fact, symmetry reminds to the image of the body. On the contrary, from this process, bizarre forms emerge and they are tendentially abstract. Once a shape is given to the eye, we look for another, perhaps one has arms, others have protuberances. It all relates to the ancient tradition of natural plant dyeing although the way I work is more casual. For me, everything has a value event what it does not work because in that space there is a void and shapes are determined by what appears, leaving a negative imprint. For me, when the fabrics are opened, this is when the wonder happens, even for myself who made them and I think this is the engine of my practice. Then, these figures are positioned and organized in a circle and become a sculpture, a place and a space that can be seen from the outside but that also can be entered. The figures make a playful ring like a sabbath wherein one can find him/herself. This is a practice that has been consolidated over the years and is enriched by the presence and relationship with the people I encounter in my work. In this stage, the work becomes signed by me and by the participants, testifying that specific place and situation.

*Kabira* is also a piece conceived as a choral work, the result of a workshop carried out at the Carlo Zauli Museum in Faenza over a summer in 2009. In this specific case, there was no precise idea but I have proposed some elements related to the idea of difficulty. The horse was a pretext. In particular, I referred to an existing horse, one of my horses called Kabira, an animal that I made me in the position of confronting myself with the idea of difficulty because of the relationship I was aiming to establish with him, something that I could not completely control. In contemporary art, the image of the horse is also understood as a taboo because it can make us think of the kitsch or an idea of a monument that perhaps is outdated. Starting from this unconventional subject, we opened a discussion on the idea of a monument today, something that this work aimed to achieve to some extent. For me, this work has something monumental in its dimensions. Another element is related to the fact that we used a Belgium black soil that Carlo Zauli used in the 1980s which was located in the museum's basement. We went down into these dungeons that had no light and each one of us extracted a piece of clay. In this sense, it was like a descent into a chthonic world to look for a material still formless. Another element I addressed was some readings as I often propose in my workshops. In this case, I introduced *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987) by Jacques Ranciere which narrates the case of a teacher who teaches a language he does not know and it happens that students learn from him. In fact, when I propose a workshop, I always ask myself what can be taught or if there are any concepts or methods that can shape an idea. Therefore, on the one hand, it arose a prolific debate with the participants whilst on the other hand, we had the practice, the work that started from life drawing, literally we went out to draw horses and then we started modeling shapes in very simple forms that allowed the hands to work while thinking. For me, there is a reasoning plan that occurs when the brain is engaged in something as if you can think more freely and that is when it is possible to reach a level of intimacy. I would like to add another element by quoting the philosopher Chiara Zamboni who teaches at the University of Verona and whose work has been object of our readings recently. There is a space that is created between people which is a third thing, an unconscious space like a third element. This way of thinking in the presence of the other is something special, a specific thing which is different from when you are thinking in solitude. *Kabira* managed to keep all these different levels of difficulty and beauty together. The horse took shape in this figure which is also a place because inside it has an empty space which is like a tent and a hiding place.

*Untitled* and *Kabira* are two works that have undergone an important process. They have reached a form which is in itself a resolved and self-sufficient form. A good premise is not enough to do an artwork because sometimes the artwork also demands for something else that is given by its self-sufficiency which lends to an idea of the post, something that occurs later. You can enter the tent, you can use it as well as the horse goes for a ride and get embellished by new necklaces and flowers every time it is presented, a bit like in certain religious situations there is a progressive accumulation. In this case, at the Quadriennial, the horse on display is dressed in dried flowers like certain ancient walls of the Roman ruins that one can encounters in that city from time



Chiara Camoni, *Kabira*, 2019, black terracotta, verdigris patinated wood, metal  
250 x 90 cm (variable dimensions) Courtesy SpazioA, Pistoia Ph Angela Gri



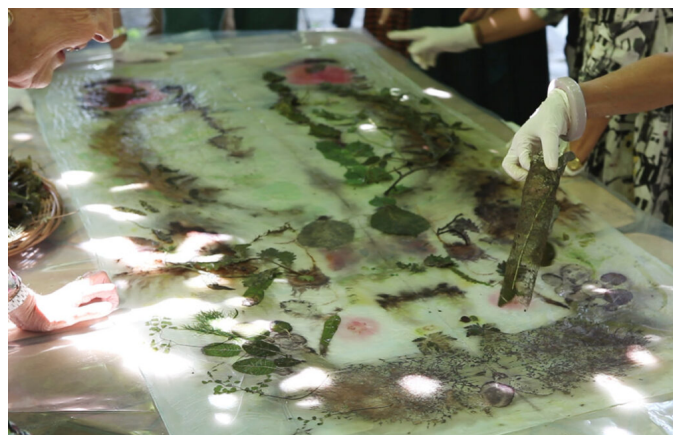
Chiara Camoni, *Senza Titolo (una Tenda)*, 2019, brass, vegetable print on silk,  
cm Ø 211, detail. Silvia Fiorucci-Roman collection, Principato di Monaco Ph  
Maria Santini

to time. In these two works, the curators have identified two lines of my work that deal with a female approach and presence and with that something that recall is the incommensurable, something of the work that is not easily circumscribable, but is linked to a gender tradition. These two works speak of an ambiguity, a dimension that can be partly controlled and partly not and therefore the work, at some point, manifests itself by its own will, I would say.”

Info:

[www.chiaracamoni.net](http://www.chiaracamoni.net) (<http://www.chiaracamoni.net>)

<https://quadriennale2020.com> (<https://quadriennale2020.com>)



Chiara Camoni with Camilla Maria Santini, *La Meraviglia*, 2020, videoframe, 4'  
Courtesy SpazioA, Pistoia



> > <https://contemporaryartsociety.org/news/friday-dispatch-news/casathome-olivia-heron-assistant-curator-mima/>

For this last Friday film of the #CASatHome series, we speak to a museum curator about a particularly significant work in their collection. Olivia Heron, Assistant Curator at MIMA, has chosen a set of three works by the artist Chiara Camoni entitled Sisters, 2017.

It was donated by the Contemporary Art Society to MIMA in 2018 through the Jackson Tang Ceramic Award and was first exhibited at the museum in January 2019.

Chiara Camoni was born in Piacenza, Italy, in 1974. She lives in a village in the Tuscan hills, creating work within her home and garden. Her practice, encompassing drawing, sculpture, and installation, is about kinship. It considers the meanings we find, and create, through our relationships with each other and with the natural world. It draws on the symbols and rituals that shape human culture.

The materials Camoni chooses are elemental: clay, shells, bone, iron, and stone. Her works come to life with plant cuttings, water, human breath, lit candles. She evokes life cycles and transformations of matter in the physical world.

Her making practice centres on conversation and collaboration. Friends, family, neighbours and visitors join her at her kitchen table to work together: rolling, shaping, building, coiling clay. The process is habitual and meditative, like preparing food or tending a garden. Meanings and significances emerge through modest, repeated gestures conducted in company.

The works acquired for MIMA, Sister I, Sister III, and Sister IV are sculptures made of iron, clay, glazed clay and multi-coloured, lighted candles. As the candles burn, wax melts and drips down over the works and onto the floor. Each piece changes shape over time, and begins to merge with its environment, transforming the ground beneath with a residue of mingled colour. With each showing, new layers of wax drizzle down and accumulate, marking the passage of time.

Camoni's practice is about meeting points between people, and between people and the physical world. Her works conjure a sense of continuum, blurring boundaries between making processes, 'finished' objects, and their ongoing life

Sisters, poised in formation, speak to each other and to the living bodies that move around them in the gallery. They assume human-like postures. One stands on spindly limbs. Another rests on the floor. Another, on a small pedestal, seems to raise its arms. They are imprinted with finger marks and hung with garlands, like prayer beads, evoking touch. The candles draw in oxygen, exude warmth and

drip wax. Clay exists here in different states. Fired and anointed with glaze, fixed for now; or left raw, moisture leached out, but holding the potential to return to mud.

The rich associations held within these works connect to the Middlesbrough Collection, MIMA's ethos, and to the town's history in fascinating ways. The Middlesbrough Collection includes an incredible body of British studio pottery, largely inherited from the Cleveland Craft Centre (1982-2003). The Craft Centre built on the legacy of the Linthorpe Art Pottery in Middlesbrough (1879-1890), established by design pioneer Christopher Dresser and local brickworks owner John Harrison. They sought to combine industrial and design innovation, and boost employment by producing decorative ceramics from local clay.

Building on these layers of history, since opening in 2007, MIMA has explored connections between ceramics and contemporary art, with new acquisitions mapping out expanded practices in clay.

Sisters spoke to us for its materiality, but also its methodology. Camoni's practice centres process, collaboration, and connection. Creating with clay is democratic. It is tactile, messy, and intuitive. Ceramics are part of our everyday social rituals; in the gallery, they connect art and life.

In recent years, MIMA has foregrounding social making as a means to build relationships and community. Through many public sessions and workshops, we have opened conversations and grown friendships with those around us.

Practically, before the works entered the collection we had to plan how we could display them safely. MIMA's technical team conducted various tests to make sure we could show the works without compromising the gallery's temperature and humidity controls or setting off the fire alarms. They also planned how we could safely invite publics to interact with the sculpture. This is where the magic began!

Sisters were on display at MIMA for a month, in the first weeks of 2019. The team invited different people from our community to light the candles each day. It was an opportunity to consider and recognise the many people who, in many ways, constitute who we are as an institution. It felt like a real occasion each time gatherings of people entered the low-lit space to encounter the works, then get up close to activate them.

Members of Creative Age, MIMA's Dementia Friendly group, were one of the first groups to activate Sisters. Community partners, MIMA constituents, friends, groups, volunteers, and collaborators also carried the flame. This ritual was a way for us to show appreciation, trust and commitment to our publics, the owners of the collection. I hope it also invested Sisters with a plethora of personal meanings and associations.

When we showed Sisters in 2019, we wanted to celebrate social connections, and offer a shared moment of brightness in the winter dark, a hopeful motif that connects across cultures and traditions.

Today the work takes on new pertinence. We are travelling through a period of crisis. We are separated, but people are finding ways to come together, building new connections. Inequalities are exposed, but activists are fighting back with new strength. Lighting a candle has many meanings. Camoni's evocative works conjure a range of possible associations and emotions, crossing from grief to vigil, memorial, ardour, and into hope and celebration. They are watchful and bright. They are about relationships, generosity, reciprocity, and transformation. Each time we show these works, I hope we can mark new and positive transformations in society.

Olivia Heron, June 2020

<https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/en/the-kabira-horse-and-other-stories-at-the-carlo-zauli-museum-in-faenza/>

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## The Kabira Horse and other stories at the Carlo Zauli Museum in Faenza (<https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/en/the-kabira-horse-and-other-stories-at-the-carlo-zauli-museum-in-faenza/>)

by FEDERICA FIUMELLI (<https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/en/author/federica-fiumelli/>) 12 SEPTEMBER 2019 (<https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/en/the-horse-and-other-stories-at-the-carlo-zauli-museum-in-faenza/>) INTERVIEWS (<https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/en/category/interviews/>)

We interviewed **Cristina Casadei** from the Carlo Zauli museum to fully understand the collective work behind the great ceramic sculpture: the Kabira horse designed by the artist **Chiara Camoni** and built through a participatory action.

**How did the idea of the big black ceramic horse Kabira come about and how did the collective and participatory action take place?**

Kabira stems from Chiara Camoni's idea of confronting the issue of difficulty, which she identified and summarized in the figure of the horse, with which she had a personal relationship that was both intense and complex.

*"Kabira was a white horse.*

*But it was also my relationship with the unconscious that surfaced.*

*Kabira was down in the field and up in my dreams.*

*It was my incapacity.*

*My determination.*

*Frustration.*

*It was a dragon.*

*It was fear and enchantment.*

*It was the reversal of beliefs. "*

The idea also starts from the invitation to compete with the size of the workshop, a moment of sharing of theoretical and manual knowledge, which Chiara has put into practice in 3 days in which to produce, read and discuss together:

*"During the workshop practical moments and theoretical moments will alternate. We will be accompanied by some texts that will constitute the coordinates within which the action of the hands will develop. After the reciprocal presentations, we will address the topic of taboo in art. We will talk about the subject in sculpture, collective practices and shared knowledge. Full and empty, dark areas. We will read excerpts from *The Ignorant Master* by Jacques Rancière, *The Sculpture Dead Language* by Arturo Martini, *Reincanting the World* by Silvia*





*Federici and other books again. We will work with the black clay from Belgium made available by the Zauli Museum, preserved in the underground rooms. Individual work will flow into a collective project. We will perhaps make a great black horse."*

The work is therefore born from a personal project, the result of an intense memory shared since the first moments of the workshop with the participants: the testimonies and the resulting comparison immediately made it a multi-headed project, and of course with several hands.

Ceramists, artists, female students, passing friends, the staff, we have all interpreted Chiara's technical indications, in a series of simple and repetitive actions to be performed by listening to the readings. Kneading the earth, shaping it in small, free and repeated forms, piercing the shapes, putting the dried forms into long necklaces, dressing the wooden structure with these necklaces ... we found ourselves on several occasions in real collective rituals. It was an experience that exceeded all expectations of production, training and sharing.

**The artist Chiara Camoni described the "Kabira operation" as follows: "We will build the wooden supporting structure and insert all the small pieces that will form the covering of the body into long necklaces. Born from the dark clay of the underground, I now imagine the presence of this horse in the oven room, which looks towards the entrance. I would like this sculpture to be a place that could be entered below, a kind of hut."** How did the relationship between the museum and the artist come about?

Matteo Zauli had already worked with Chiara Camoni two years ago on a cycle of residences in Montelupo Fiorentino. On that occasion she had created multi-hand vases, involving students and artisans, at the same time competing with the production dynamics of the large workshop, with which she made interesting experiments on enamels. Her research, always focused on relational contexts and group dynamics, fascinated us particularly, identifying it as an ideal figure for the training project that we have been carrying out for two years with AiCC, the Italian Association of Ceramics Cities, for ceramists. After Francesco Simeti, she was the second artist invited as a lecturer in one of our workshops, all permeated by a vision of ceramics that keeps thinking together, overcoming the divisions between art, craftsmanship and design.

**What relationship does the museum have with the city of Faenza, how do citizens welcome participatory activities like this?**

The museum was born from the laboratory of Carlo Zauli, an artist who brought ceramics, and his city, into international settings. He has traveled all over the world with his works while remaining closely connected to the land of origin, in which he has always lived and worked. With this same dualism the museum stands out as a small provincial institution, with the main mission of bringing the stimuli of international contemporary art to the city. And the people of Faenza perceive the museum as a unique place in the territory where unique, unmissable things happen. Like this.

**What role does the communication of the museum play in a project like this? And how much does communication of art and your activities during normal annual planning count for you in general?**

Communication was fundamental for the participation of the workshop participants, who were 16, the maximum expected, coming from all over Italy, using our different channels. Then we sought the support of the local press to involve the city in the final assembly, which in fact became almost a happening, as we had imagined it. For those who could not participate, we told all the steps through social networks, in particular with Instagram stories.



For us too communication is fundamental, as well as a great work commitment. At this moment we are looking for a compromise between the need to inform about all the museum events and the need not to overload with news those who follow us!

Finding ourselves decentralized with respect to the trajectories of the contemporary Italian, the thing that fascinates us most is the feedback from the public that follows us from afar, even without ever having been here: contemporary communication plays a powerful role on the diffusion (even) of art. And with satisfaction, and also a bit of wonder, we must say that the most appreciated contents are always those dedicated to Carlo Zauli!

#### Can you anticipate some future project?

An autumn full of events awaits us: the second workshop with the most pop ceramist in Italy, or **Giorgio di Palma**, who invites the participants to make *ceramics that were not needed*. We will have new young artists in residence from Tel Aviv, our festival of contemporary music, *Ossessioni*, this year focused on **Morton Feldman**, a conference on **Guido Gambone** and the final exhibition of the 2019 residences. On October 17, in fact, inaugurates the exhibition presenting the results of the work of the guest artists of this summer: Giulia Bonora, Arianna Carossa, as well as of course Chiara. **Giulia Bonora** has created sculptures with the ancient technique of wicking, which she constantly used in a contemporary key, in a project related to containers and water collection. For her, the residence was also a moment of in-depth study of the infinite shades of blue, her precise chromatic code, in ceramic glazes. **Arianna Carossa** also in Faenza worked on her poetic journey with which she links nature and culture, combining organic remains of animals in new sculptural assemblages. Honeycombs, horns and shells have therefore entered the sculptures modeled with the black earth of Belgium that Carlo Zauli himself used for his monumental stems.

Info:

[www.museocarlozauli.it](http://www.museocarlozauli.it) (<http://www.museozauli.it/>)



For all the images: Chiara Camoni, *Cavallo Kabira*, workshop, Museo Carlo Faenza, 2019 – Ph. Angela Grigolato Courtesy Museo Carlo Zauli



<https://www.anniversary-magazine.com/all/2019/3/26/zenzic-in-conversation-with-anna-barham-chiara-camoni-and-caterina-avataneo>

## anniversary



### Zenzic — In Conversation with Anna Barham, Chiara Camoni and Caterina Avataneo

Elda Oreto (/all?author=5c9a3a27597f9200012e757c)

At the foundation of any artistic collaboration, trade or union, either if it is a long term relationship or an accidental affair, there is the idea that exchange is a form of power.

The **Italian** independent curator **Caterina Avataneo**, who is also working at **Arcade Gallery** and as Assistant Curator for the **Lithuanian Pavilion of the 58th Venice Biennale**, invited artists **Chiara Camoni** and **Anna Barham** to work together and to conflate their own practices. The invitation resulted in **Zenzic**, an exhibition that was recently presented at **Arcade** in **London**.

The duo-show consists of an installation made by Anna, a spiked structure in the shape of a Z built with different material that works as a display for Chiara's drawings. On the walls are hanging two long necklaces made of interlaced terracotta and dried flowers made by Chiara.

As Caterina tells me: "Zenzic is an old mathematical expression used to define the power of number two, that, however, doesn't develop in multiple but far beyond its own double. The exhibition starts with the two different practices of Chiara and Anna to find a strong element in common that is the relation between people".

I asked a few questions to Caterina, Chiara and Anna to know how this exhibition found its way of being.



“Zenzic is an old mathematical expression used to define the power of number two, that, however, doesn’t develop in multiple but far beyond its own double. The exhibition starts with the two different practices of Chiara and Anna to find a strong element in common that is the relation between people”.

— Caterina Avataneo

**EO:** It seems to me that at the foundation of Anna and Chiara’s research there is a core, that they share in common, that evolves in different forms and ways. Like in a star there is a fulcrum and there are many spikes that branch off of it. They are different ways of describing the Relation. Also, the ‘difference’ in itself is a central topic of the exhibition. Caterina told me about the explicit reference to Gilles Deleuze Difference and Repetition. For you, at the beginning is the encounter with each other. Can you tell me about how you combine the many different aspects of your artistic practices in general and in the context of the show?

**AB:** The star is a good image: the center of gravity around which things orbit. Perhaps for my practice this core could be described as an interest in the permeability of boundaries which I explore in various ways: through language, thinking of words as boundaries for concepts - definitions - or of the language we use to articulate and define ourselves or our ideas, and then looking and playing with the ways this breaks down and language takes on a life of its own. Or the ways that we are not coherent individuals but are constantly renegotiating our subjectivities and identities through complex relationships with human and non-human others. And of course, especially in this show, the permeability of boundaries that occurs in collaboration.



**CC:** We worked in an organic way, adding an element or a thought one after another and in consequence. So the aesthetic differences weren't a problem. We were mainly involved in the process and in the beauty of doing things in this way. I feel this show is done by three people: me, Anna and Caterina.

**EO:** Anna's and Chiara's research uses different media. I would like to ask you in which way the two distinct approaches meet each other?

**CA:** Anna's practice involves mainly video, text and live events that set up shifting relationships that include their audiences as further agents in their production and transformation of 'sense'. She observes structures of language and production of 'meaning', questioning subjectivity and authorship. Chiara employs more traditional medium in her practice: drawing, terracotta, vegetal print, etc. Often the surrounding becomes material for her work, from the natural elements of the landscape to the people themselves that participate with Chiara in the act of creating an art-work. Chiara explores togetherness and the act of sharing by doing and I think that it is here that the two practices meet, with their different aesthetic outcome. There is in both Anna and Chiara a need and interest to test the collaborative nature of producing meaning.

**AB:** The piece that I have in this exhibition acts as a container for Chiara's work, and a way for the viewer to experience it. Many of the decisions I made about its size and height, about which panels would be reflective or opaque or transparent etc were determined through my conversations with Chiara about her grandmother's drawings and the necklaces, but they were also informed by the architecture of the gallery and the way it is used by both the people that work there and also the visitors. It acts as a mediator for the encounter between the work and the viewer.

**CC:** I think the two distinct approaches meet in the way we see, in our way of feeling. It's about the encounter of people... and only subsequently about their works.



**EO:** Chiara's form of expression incorporate aspects connected to handicraft while Anna focuses on the inner structure that connects things manifested through computer technology. Formally how do you decided to build together the exhibition?

**AB:** My work is not specific to computers - I'm interested in them as a contemporary technology through which we communicate with each other and manipulate the world, but I'm also interested in much older technologies that do this like language or printing. I think this underlying interest in how we manipulate the world through tools and how we have extended our consciousness through objects and materials is a common thread between Chiara's work and mine, even if hers maintains the hand literally while mine uses the idea of manipulation in its more figurative sense.

**CA:** Zenzic started from the fascination I had for two existing works by Anna and Chiara. Anna was recently commissioned a new work for the show Liquid Crystal Display at Site Gallery, Sheffield (currently touring to MIMA, Middlesbrough) where she created the Crystal Fabric Field Bracket (1016) as a way of building that mimics how crystals form. The modular form adapted to the space and shaped a display structure hosting the other works of the show and thus determining how the visitor would encounter the exhibited works. Chiara's work is an older one, a series of 250 drawings of stars made by her Grandmother during the course of 2006. Both works involve somehow elements such as repetition, the other, commitment in time; and with their approach generate poetic tracks. The delicacy and strength of the two works gave me the idea to propose Anna to produce a work that would host Chiara's grandmother drawings and to propose Chiara to produce a work responding to Anna's structure, that's how the second work by Chiara in the show became part of the project.

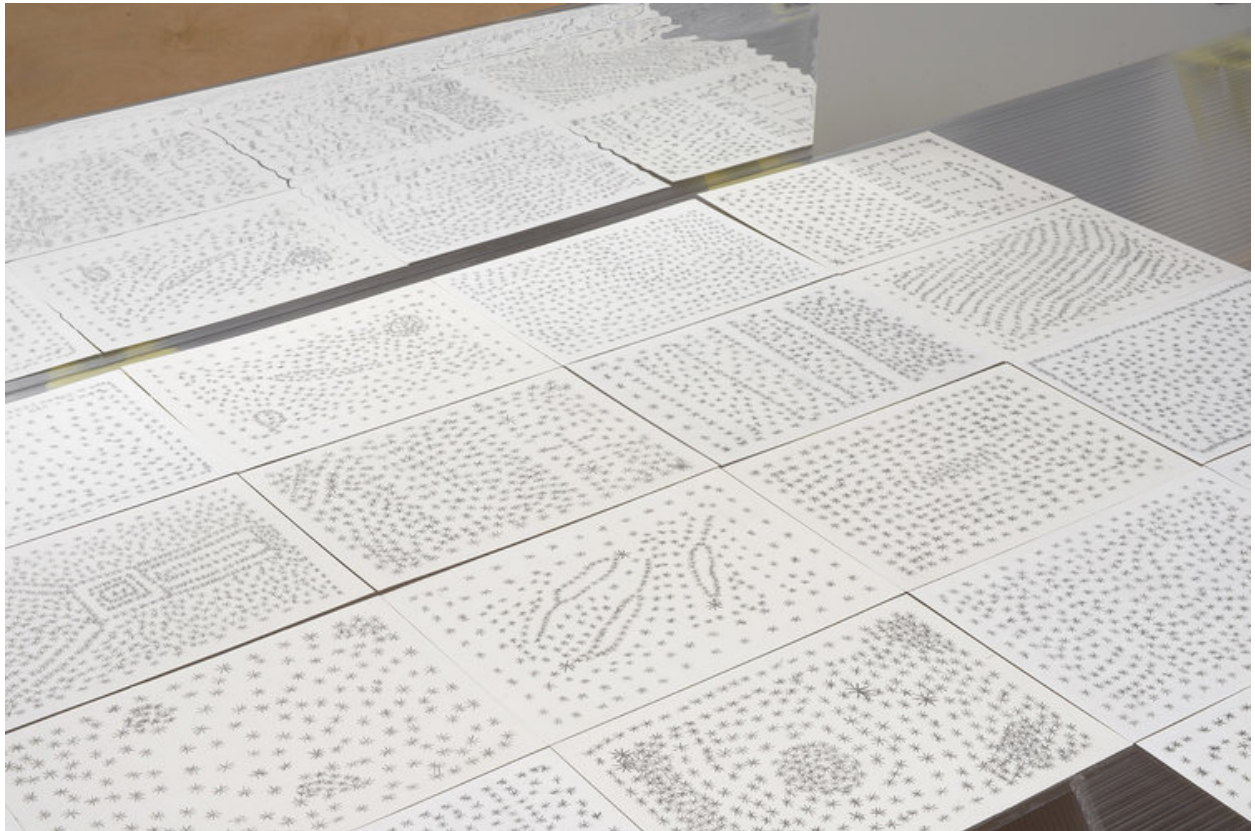


**EO:** In both your artistic practice there is a strong element that is the intervention or participation of the other through different performative aspects. Can you tell me more about that? In particular, I am interested in knowing how do you relate to unpredictability in your work?

**CC:** When I start working with someone else I do not know exactly where we are going. The result is always unpredictable. Sometimes artists can delegate the realization, having a clear idea of the result. For me it's the opposite: I like to enter places that I do not know yet and let myself be transported. It is a kind of dance. So, in the end, the work also surprises me.

**AB:** It is the same for me. The intervention or participation of the other is for two reasons - one is to explore the boundaries between the work and the viewer (I am also a viewer). The second is precisely to create unpredictability, to open the work up to something unforeseen, that creates space for me to breathe.

**CA:** I would like to add that I feel that both Anna and Chiara “extend” the idea of participation and look at contamination, by human and non-human agents, as generative.



**EO:** Both Anna's and Chiara's work interacts with the environment; Chiara explores the private dimension of her relationship with her grandmother in a piece she started in 2006; while Anne's work belongs to connecting with others, sometimes being complete strangers, as through the internet. Do you think that there are differences in this way of interlacing the other's life?

**AB:** I'm not sure they are so different. Of course, Chiara's working relationship with her grandmother is very personal, specific and sustained but she also makes work through interactions with groups of people that she knows less well or not at all. In the works that I make

that involve other people, like the live production reading groups, the connection is very human - it is not the computer process that makes the connection, that is just the material, like the clay that Chiara uses - the real connection comes through speaking and listening in a group.

**CC:** I think the relationship is not in difference or in similarity, but in connections. We have worked on the cure. I took care of my grandmother's work, giving to the word "curator" an affectionate meaning. Then with Caterina and Anna, we probably continued this way of taking care of ourselves.

**CA:** Building relationships can be dangerous; you can't predict what the result will be and how the personal and the collective will balance. Zenzic for me was a new way to approach my curatorial practice and gave me a deeper insight into the creative process.



**EO:** The relation has something to do with memory but also with oblivion. What is the memory for you? Relationships can become dead ends, how important is it to cut?

**CC:** My grandmother's stars are all statements; every sign says: I am here. It was a way to record time. Obviously everything is destined to end, but we are authorized to create our own version. The drawings are not only memory, but they are also still saying things.

**CA:** I don't think memory is something so present in the show. But on memory I can say that believe it to be the most private and personal that we own... together with death (according to Jacques Derrida).

**AB:** I suppose if you think of memory in terms of repetition and that it's not an exact copy each time, that is something interesting, but I agree I don't find it so present in the show either.





**EO:** Is it possible to include the other in one's work without engulfing or being swallowed?

**AB:** It's a delicate and subtle negotiation, but I think it's possible - you have to be alive to the other.

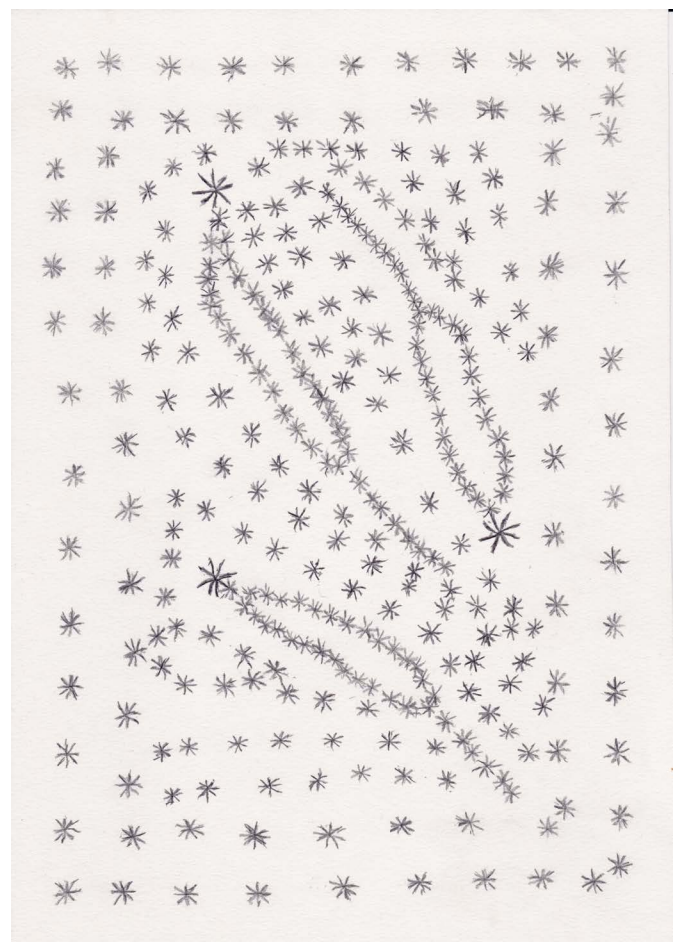
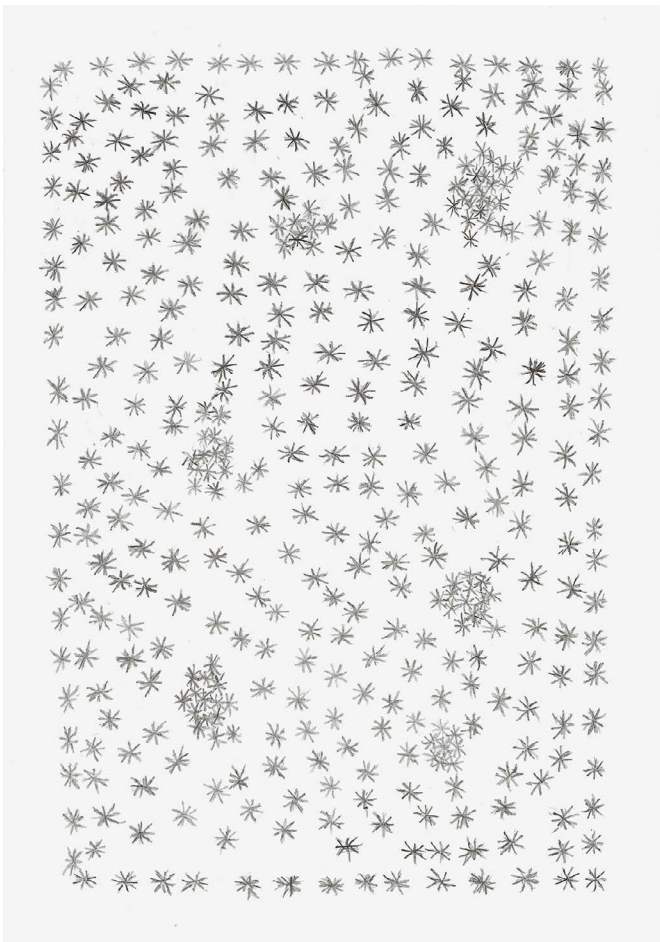
**CC:** Yes I hope it is possible, and I hope to be able in my work, by allowing the means and the results to be open.

**EO:** As we are constantly moving, changing, leaving and sometimes not even coming back, relationships seem to have become more and more fluid. Please do not mistake my words; I think it is a good thing to have the possibility to reinvent our own life continually. However, this often leads to a one -dimension relationship. How do you think your work reflect this aspect of our time?

**CC:** Giving weight, substance, soil to human relationships.

**AB:** I'm very excited by the recognition and discussion of fluidity in our time. For me, it comes out of feminist discourse and brings nuance, connectedness and possibility.

**CA:** I think fluidity allows to understand better reality. I am interested in the idea of metamorphosis and perpetual change (not necessarily in linear forms of time). I think I will try to explore this in future projects.



**EO:** Zenzic is an exhibition about relationships, differences between people and repetition in the sense of social and human belonging; Is Zenzic a social experiment? And in which way it can affect the reality that we live in?

**CC:** It isn't an experiment; it is a small adventure, a small story. As an artist, I do what I do looking for a Sense. For my life, for being in the world, in this history. And when it happens that the Sense is shared by other people, it seems to me to be like a small miracle. I believe that we can change things by contact, one by one. Of course, I also believe in significant change. But my way to resist - to war, to pain, to every day news - and the way I can do it best is by rebuilding the world every time: making a vase, creating a whistle, doing a Sister.

**CA:** Can't add anything, Chiara spoke for everyone here.

**AB:** I have to agree! I hope that Zenzic brings a sense of aliveness and connectedness, to be aware of how we all touch each other.

Caterina Avataneo ([/all?tag=Caterina+Avataneo](#)), Arcade Gallery ([/all?tag=Arcade+Gallery](#)), London ([/all?tag=London](#)), Chiara Camoni ([/all?tag=Chiara+Camoni](#)), Anna Barham ([/all?tag=Anna+Barham](#)), Zenzic ([/all?tag=Zenzic](#)), Exhibition ([/all?tag=Exhibition](#)), Artists ([/all?tag=Artists](#)), Featured ([/all?tag=Featured](#))

# boundary ( h t t p : / / b o u n d a r y - o n l i n e . c o m / )

## ANNA BARHAM AND CHIARA CAMONI: ZENZIC

Curated by Caterina Avataneo, *Zenzic* is the latest collaboration between artists Anna Barham and Chiara Camoni, at east London gallery Arcade.

A name of mathematical nature, *Zenzic* is a German translation of the Italian, medieval 'censo,' a word used to describe the squaring of a number. A term coined from a period when numerical characters were a relatively new concept, prompts the notion of numeracy as a code to help us understand the biological formulas and patterns present in the physical world.

In an impressive display of the power in numbers, Arcade gallery presents a collaborative project from contemporary artists Anna Barham and Chiara Camoni, in a show curated by Caterina Avataneo.



*Installation view, Anna Barham and Chiara Camoni: Zenzic, 2019, at Arcade, London. Images courtesy of the artist and Arcade.*

Counting galleries including White Crypt and Zabłudowicz Collection amongst her previous curatorial projects, the London-based curator Caterina Avataneo, earned herself the NEON Curatorial Award in 2017 and is currently assistant curator at the Lithuanian Pavilion of the 58th Venice Biennale.

Bringing together the contrast of Anna Barham's structured installation *Crystal Fabric Field, Zenzic* with Chiara Camoni's pencil-and-paper based drawings, the blend is a beautiful pairing of simplicity and strength.

The origins of Barham's architectural piece stems from the natural arrangements found in crystal formations. Following suit of the same repetitive construct, *Crystal Fabric Field, Zenzic* uses steel, MDF, polycarbonate and mirrored vinyl as the framework for material composition.

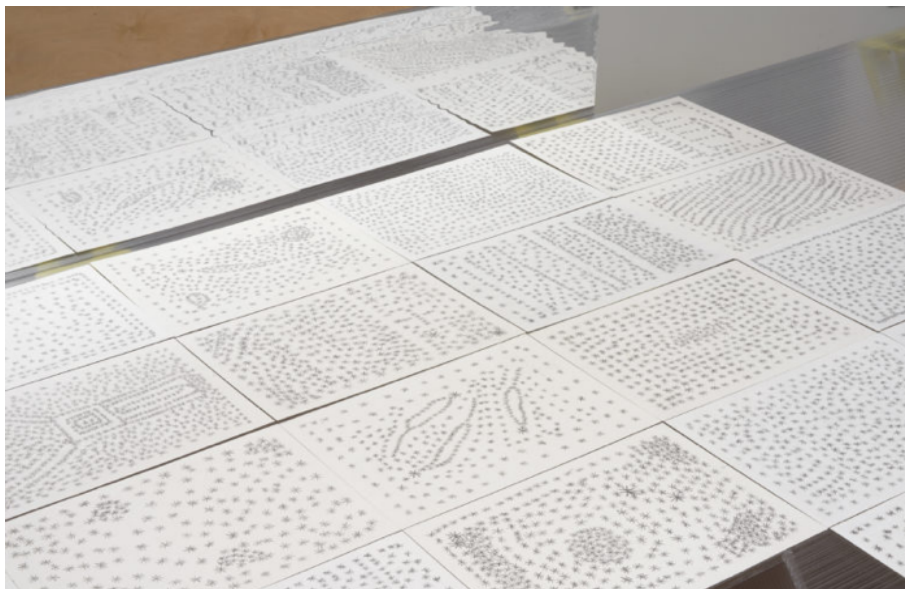
An educational background in maths, art and philosophy is ever present in the artist's body of video, writing, sculpture and performance work, revealing itself in geometric and computative styles. In this instance Barham's angled, translucent structure lends itself to the hundreds of pencilled sheets covering its surface, acting in response to the blanketed format they have resumed.



*Installation view, Anna Barham and Chiara Camoni: Zenzic, 2019, at Arcade, London. Images courtesy of the artist and Arcade.*

Conceived initially as a task to keep sadness at bay, the exercise of depicting stars soon became a recurring activity for the Grandmother of Italian artist Chiara Camoni, as she joined the artist daily at her studio. Flashes of yellow from the brackets of Barham's sculpture restrain the pieces of white paper into a constricted form, ending neatly in a stacked pile.

Starting in 2006, the collective works between Camoni and her Grandmother feature the same starred character, repeated over and over again. Simplicity of the single unit takes on a new life, multiplying and expanding over reams of pages into sets of unique ordered sequences. The result is of optical admiration, an example of mediative mark-making posing higher levels of intricate complexity.



*Installation view, Anna Barham and Chiara Camoni: Zenzic, 2019, at Arcade, London. Images courtesy of the artist and Arcade.*

The first recipient of the Jackson Tang Ceramics Award in 2018, Camoni also displays *Necklace for Giantesses* alongside *Zenzic*, a set of two large-scale necklaces. Created using individual clay components including hand-made beads and animal figures, combined with dried plants found in the natural surroundings of the artist's home in Tuscany's Versilia Hills, the organic arrangements act as a humanistic taming of the wilderness outside.

Camoni and Barham's artistic mediums are unlike in approach and yet the juxtaposition works perfectly in sync, encompassing the understated impact of repetition in its truest form. A modest and honorary exploration of replication, both artists encourage the viewer to seek out the endless outcomes of the seemingly ordinary.

*Zenzic* is showing at Arcade (<http://thisisarcade.art/exhibition/zenzic>) until 23rd March.



# JULIET

contemporary art magazine since 1980

## Chiara Camoni – SISTERS

On the occasion of her first solo show in the United Kingdom organized by Arcade, *Sisters*, we met Chiara Camoni (Piacenza 1974).

**Sara Buoso:** Dear Chiara, having seen the solo-exhibition 'Sisters' at Arcade, the first words that came into my mind were Material and Feminine. Christian Mooney, the director of the gallery, also mentioned how your practice can find references to the historical work of Italian women artists, such as Marisa Merz. Can you tell us a little bit more about this artistic approach?

**Chiara Camoni:** In the exhibition, I wanted to talk about an Identity and a Belonging to the idea of Being Female. I have been recently involved in a discussion about the network of women artists in Italy, as I had proposed during my recent intervention at the Women's Library in Milan. While we can find many 'sisters' in contemporary arts, including artists to whom I am personally or collaboratively related, it's more complicated to find 'mothers', both because they were less and because it is more difficult to reconstruct the different traces of history. Thus, it becomes important to reconstruct a small history of art, of different generations, not only of artists, but also of women intellectuals and philosophers, to think of this meaningful passage, so that the idea of female identity can continue in an active way. As a female artist, my personal identity arises in an archaeological way, related to an arcane place, a territory where I always come back, researching a kind of ambiguity, a duality. The *Sisters* on show at Arcade, some of them are friendly figures, others are sinister, some smile with irony, others are black and in the dark. They are presence before sculpting. From the causality of the matter they appear to me, like sculptures in a grave: they accompany us, they appear to us. They have an artistic, an aesthetic value and a function. Sculpture is giving shape. It is the act of giving shape to a sculpture that characterizes it, through a practical function and by being tuned to it. I am obsessed with the relation between Sculpture and reality, as Arturo Martini said in *Pittura Lingua Morta*: "An apple



Chiara Camoni, *Sisters*, 2017. Installation view (nocturnal), Arcade

modelled by Fidia remains an object, but a painted apple is an expression of art, even when it is painted badly.” For example, a Vase is a sculpture and an object, placing the equivocal limit of the matter. Other objects that I’ve been interested me for their ambiguity are toys founded in tombs, everyday objects, or the sculpture-whistles, 2016, which I staged as if they were thought for an improvised but powerful concert. In the exhibition, the sculptures carry candles. They are like in a small grotto, a cave. Hence, the decision not to put anything else.

**S.B. What can you tell me about the title of the show?**

**C.C.** It’s a text that I conceived, such as a rhyming, an archaic jingle. It seemed to me the most suitable thing, without the need to include additional words in the exhibition’s press release. Such as an archaic and infantile sound, playing with the word *Sisters*, who whispers obsessively in and out of the text. The *Sisters* are figures close us, such as imaginations from the unconscious. Some of them are made of clay, working with the eyes closed, a practice in which I am particularly interested in. There are the ‘naughty sister’ – *Sister # 3* – and the ‘tearful one’ – *Sister # 2* – who cries wax while holding two twisted candles: in this process, the wax spreads everywhere, and the sculptures grow, change. The ‘aunt figure’, the oldest one, sees her hair growing – *Sister # 4* – which is the closest sculpture to earth. In the end, there is the one holding three candles – *Sister # 1*, the closest to us, which more classically carries the shape of a candlestick with two arms and two vessels.

**S.B. Could you talk about the relation between Matter and Abstraction, which I have noticed in other works such as *Vuoti di pieni/Pieni di vuoti* (Voids of Solids/Solids of Voids), 2016, *Untitled (Mosaic) # 2*, 2012, *Untitled (Terracotta Army)*, 2012, as very well illustrated in the catalogue for the exhibition ‘Certain Things’ at the Nomas Foundation in December 2015.**

**C.C.** It is an operation of unrolling / rolling the matter, in relation to the works you refer to. The creative process is what confirms the organicity of matter, but it merges with biographical aspect as well. In *Sisters*, it’s a process of becoming, a revealing of the cosmos, where the figures illuminate on display.

**S.B. Would you tell me a bit more about your practice?**

**C.C.** My is a practice in autonomous, but also of working with other people, such as an affective proximity. For example, I made some drawings with my grandmother, causal projects – *La Grande Madre*, *Capolavori* and *Amanuense*, as described in the text *Racconterò una storia* – where there is something unique that I would never have achieved by myself, a proximity and an inside. But I also work with children, with friends, and with people from my city. Working primarily at home, I came to realize how home is also lived by other people. In the collective sessions, truth and free-play emerge. By working with children, I leave the process open to interferences and unpredictability. With children, you can transgress the rules in the artistic work. In other occasions, I was interested in participation, such as for workshops designed for Nomas Foundation: a series of spontaneous activities both for children and for adults, which continued throughout the period of the exhibition, around the idea of a vase grid. Another example is work, *Il Grande Baccano* (*The great uproar*), 2016, where I worked with 750 children. In this case, I could not use the initially proposed recycled materials, so I decided to use a percussion instrument to establish a synergy between the parts such as a unique vision.



Chiara Camoni, *Sister 3* (detail), 2017. Iron, glazed clay, candles, fire, 155 x 35 x 35 cm



Chiara Camoni, *Sister 1* (detail), 2017. Iron, glazed clay, candles, fire, 180 x 134 x 110 cm.

**S.B. What strikes me in your work is the freshness of the images that, although tied to an archaeological dimension, present themselves as active presences, invoking a public participation. In this aspect, I find affinities with paintings by your husband, Luca Bertolo.**

**C.C.** My work starts with an archetype to project the arcane. My sculptures are active. Their strength lies in the context of art, so they make sense and my practice tries to let the sense of sculpture emerge. The sculptures are present as if they are talking, they ask for the time to be listened. They are in an active present, like a perceiving whisper. In the case of *Sisters'* exhibition, Christian Mooney has now, for example, the custody of the sculptural grotto that I have realized on at the moment, and I asked him to update me on its course during the time of the show. He will establish a familiarity with the figures during the path of making and becoming of the works. Similar works are, for example, the sculptures with flowers – *Ninessa # 2*, *Ninessa # 3*, 2015, that, when in the collector's hands, they ask him to take care of them, by watering the plants.

**S.B. Referring to the title of the catalogue and of the exhibition 'Certain Things' exhibition at the Nomas Foundation, what do exactly you mean by this definition? Does it come from the use of everyday objects or is it more wide understanding of your artistic practice and the artistic matter?**

**C.C.** These words are positions, affirmations, like working with sculpture. It is a public statement from the classic idea of monument, but it is also a challenge over time. It is a process of working with transience, a process of becoming that will be informed by the practice itself, such as for the example of the *Goddess with snakes*, a Cretan statuette representing a female figure capable of giving life and death, a very strong image. In my attempt to reproduce that image, such as in the opera *La Venere senza serpenti* (*The Venus without Snakes*), 2015, the snakes are no longer there, because it is no longer the time. Working with the archaic, in my case, does not want to be a stylistic citation, but it is a love for that space, such as for the drawing with my grandmother, and as if there was a common thread between times and places. This thread loosens like extensions. An example of this, it is the video which documents the project of a statue inserted in a grotto, an archaic and pagan female figure depicted by Luca, to whom I worked last summer in religious and pagan places, such as a hermitage in Abruzzo – *Una storia* (*A story*), 2016. In the production time, it happened that I turn on the camera, where I recorded the image, the sound and the production process held in Pistoia. In the video, I resumed the project's research: a catalyst, a movement, a synthesis, an opening, moving from my talking with friends to the making of the work. Of course, I'm tied to the classical idea of the art-work, but I'm trying to move towards the real. It happened that the last day of the project, the police contacted me to tell me that the statuette had been stolen. At that point, I had just finished the video of the sequence, and the statue seems to be still present in that record of the process. It is the artist's gesture today: a moment of life.

**S.B. What remains of the other 7 Sisters?**

**C.C.** I have not thought about it deliberately, well ... it may be that they are about to appear ...



Chiara Camoni, *Sister 2* (detail), 2017. Iron, glazed clay, candles, fire, 168 x 60 x 80 cm.



Chiara Camoni, *Sister 2* (detail – clay), 2017. Iron, glazed clay, candles, fire

<https://www.artforum.com/picks/chiara-camoni-57733>

## ARTFORUM

### Chiara Camoni

NOMAS FOUNDATION

Viale Somalia 33

November 24, 2015–February 26, 2016

Chiara Camoni's solo exhibition, curated by Cecilia Canziani and Ilaria Gianni, offers a space of meditation. Creating a sort of extended self-portrait, the show gathers together works from different times in the artist's life, as well as newer installations, ranging from video to sculpture to painting and drawing. Like a paleontologist, the artist excavates the origins and nature of creativity and of her many media.

*La neve gialla* (Yellow Snow), (all works cited 2015), a performance staged at the show's opening for a limited audience, told a story inspired by the artist's childhood. A magic lantern containing a candle, projecting colorful figures as well as texts, offered a reexamination of the Platonic cave and referenced the direct antecedents of cinema. In the first room, terra-cotta sculptures arranged on an L-shaped table appear to be articles from a distant civilization that play a role in rituals and beliefs tied to the cycles of nature. The artist calls these primordial creatures "Ninesse," and they seem to have been inspired by the Great Mother, a universal fertility symbol that many have posited has been present in mythologies since Neolithic times.

Nearby, two paintings are almost invisible on the walls, executed in pure tempera, prepared by hand using eggs and pigment and applied to paper. In the second room are two more works, *Il Tronco e il Trapezio* (The Trunk and Keystone), and *Vasi* (Pots), made by the artist with others. Another example of collaboration—a frequent aspect of her practice—was a project she executed with her grandmother, who was entrusted to create a series of drawings. That work, *La chanteuse au gant* (The singer with glove), appears at the entrance of the show. Culling from her own daily life, Camoni creates work that describes people and their values; her art, by virtue of its sincerity and intrinsic poetry, immediately becomes universal.

*Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.*



View of "Chiara Camoni," 2015–16

— Marta Silvi