

Giulia Cenci

Secondary Growth

20.02.2024
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MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique is a specific exhibition space: behind a window, visible 24/24, without any possibility to escape the public eye. Here artworks are on full display, but creating mystery is possible as shown skilfully by Giulia Cenci. For her site-specific project, the artist has imagined plants becoming animal or human creatures: sculpted in aluminium, twisted and 'neurotic' (according to her) vine branches are transformed into human faces, a wolf's head or mechanical elements. The main work, *big flower (gynoecium)*, suggests ribs as much as an insect, a monster or an abstraction. It evokes references both from the history of cinema (Tim Burton's creatures) and art (Giacometti's *Woman with Her Throat Cut*). We come face to face with a strange being whose wide-open limbs seem to be waiting to embrace us, or to imprison us. This anatomical work is as appealing as it is repulsive. Its growth seems to have frozen in time, reminding these giant plants flowering only every ten years (*Amorphophallus titanum*) or even only once in their whole existence (*Saxifraga florulenta*, *Cardiocrinum giganteum*).

Botany is one of the main themes running through the exhibition, whose title "secondary growth" borrows from this field: secondary plant growth consists of an increase in the diameter of roots, stems and branches. According to the artist, with this new series "the works have this tendency to create a space including and involving a second body, which can be the viewer, or myself while making it." This series is thus related to the idea of creating space for something or someone else. Giulia Cenci often intertwines things and beings, inanimate and animate. She questions one's own nature, creating inter-species humus. Chaotic networks are formed, in a kind of anadiplosis. This is quite clear with the three other works presented, *small flower (gynoecium) #1*, #2 and #3: disappearance and disintegration of the body limits, hybridisation and mutation – limits between vegetal, animal, human and machine are blurred. These carnal and uncanny works are fascinating, showing the fragility of both living beings and technologies.

Gesture is the primordial act in Giulia Cenci's sculptural practice. A process that is both intuitive and technical, solitary and collaborative (the artist is

accompanied by a whole team in her large studio, an old shed in the Tuscan countryside). She plays on an aesthetic of seriality and mechanised production, while revealing the handmade and the accidental. The title of her works is an illusion, because no flowers are visible. But the gynoecium (the female parts of flowers) present in the titles gives hope of a renewal, a regeneration. Made from plants casts and leftovers of aluminium car parts, these 'flowers' are growing and creating new entities, generating a new, free life. We live in an age of disasters and Giulia Cenci's work shows us what's next, mapping the anxieties of contemporary life while leaving space for hope. Beyond production and destruction, the artist offers another route, that of repair.

- Daria de Beauvais

Giulia Cenci (b.1988) lives and works in Cortona, Italy.

She graduated at the Academy of Fine Arts, Bologna, IT, received a Master of Fine Arts at St.Joost Academy, Den Bosch-Breda, NL, and she took part in de Ateliers residency, Amsterdam, NL. Cenci participated in the 59th Venice Biennale 2022, *The Milk of Dreams*, curated by Cecilia Alemani. In 2020, she was one of the shortlisted artist for the MAXXI BVLGARI PRIZE 2020, and she won the Baloise Art Prize at Art Basel 2019.

Selected solo shows include: *être rares*, CAP Centre d'art de Saint- Fons, Lyon, FR; *Dry salvages*, P///// AKT, Amsterdam, NL; *Hijia del aire*, Museo Blanes, Montevideo, UY; *Giulia Cenci*, curated by M.N. Farcy, MUDAM Luxemburg; *TALLONE DI FERRO*, curated by S. Risaliti & E. Francioli, Museo del Novecento, Firenze, IT; *Da lontano era un'isola*, curated by C. Rekade, Kunst Merano Arte, Merano, IT; *Ground ground*, SpazioA, Pistoia, IT; *A través*, Carreras Mugica (Hall), Bilbao, ES; *Offspring 2017 - DEEP STATE*, curated by L. Almarcegui and M. Hendriks, De Ateliers, Amsterdam; *NL and Mai*, Tile Project Space, Milano, IT. Selected group shows include: *Reaching for the Stars*, *Da Maurizio Cattelan a Lynette Yiadom-Boakye*, Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Collection, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, IT; *Strange*, *Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Collection*, Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Siviglia, SP; *Shapeshifters*, curated by Anna Johansson, Malmö Konstmuseum, Malmö, SE; *Metallo Urlante*, Campoli-Presti, Parigi, FR; *15th Lyon Biennale / Jeune création internationale*, curated by Palais de Tokyo curatorial team, Institute of Contemporary Art, Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes, FR; *Comrades of time*, curated by Whatspace, Hardspace, Basel, CH; *FutuRuins*, curated by D. Ferretti, D. Ozerkov, con D. Dalla Lana, Palazzo Fortuny, Venezia, IT; *That's IT!*, curated by L. Balbi, MAMBO, Bologna, IT.

Daria de Beauvais

Paris-based, Daria de Beauvais is Senior Curator at the Palais de Tokyo, course lecturer at the Panthéon-Sorbonne University and co-head of a research seminar at the École normale supérieure. She also works as a freelance art historian, curator and writer. She has an ongoing dialogue with Giulia Cenci: invitation to the Institut d'art contemporain – Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes for "Young International Artists" as part of the the 15th Biennale of contemporary art in Lyon (France, 2019), publications in CURA Magazine (Italy, 2019 and 2022), conversation at the MUDAM (Luxembourg, 2020).

Artwork details

Giulia Cenci
small flower (gynoecium), 2024
 Aluminium, vinewood
 156 × 43 × 72 cm

Giulia Cenci
small flower (gynoecium) #2, 2024
 Aluminium
 125 × 81 × 127.5 cm

Giulia Cenci
smaller flower (gynoecium) #3, 2024
 Aluminium
 116 × 87 × 30 cm

Giulia Cenci
big flower (gynoecium), 2024
 Aluminium, car elements
 273 × 156 × 162 cm