



## **GAIA FUGAZZA**

### **A FOOL WITH A TOOL**

Case Chiuse # 13 by Paola Clerico  
Framed by Francesco Urbano Ragazzi

**CASE CHIUSE**  
by Paola Clerico

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“Who walks on two, three and four legs?” asked the Sphinx at the entrance to Thebes. The question remains open.

Should we answer “a chair” or “a table,” the beast would certainly be at our throat in no time. We might then venture to attribute the three qualities to her, the Sphinx herself, emphasising a certain versatility with regard to her use of limbs: versatility being common to certain animal and vegetable beings, as well as to the divine. However, this kind of association would risk incurring the wrath of the Sphinx with equally lethal consequences.

Let us avoid calling other species into question. Oedipus’s solution proves to be the most obvious and convincing: the only possible solution, the only one contemplated by the enigma. A human enigma for humans to which there is no other answer but humankind.

Perhaps the real mystery lies here. How can we look at the world from a non-human perspective? How can we understand it from outside our own condition and position?

The words, these words, suggest we remain perpetually trapped in our Anthropocene. That we continue to apply human categories to everything around us, also and even more so when we try to listen to the voice of plants and the thoughts of animals, or when we become attached to a necklace, a cross or a painting. Moved by affection, exoticism, curiosity, mystique, possession and territoriality, or simply out of laziness, we inevitably act within the confines of our language, of our human domain.

*A Fool with a Tool*, the solo exhibition by Gaia Fugazza in Milan for Case Chiuse HQ, sidesteps the riddle of the Sphinx and sinks into another level of language: that of the body. A body materialised through painting, finding images to fill out once more amid lines and pigments.

Never was a critical text more useless!

The attempt will be made to expand on some of the images in the exhibition through words, more out of a need for narration than for explanation. There is no logical or chronological order: the works belong to different periods in the artist’s production, from 2010 to the present day, shifting between various media and supports: from painting to drawing and engraving; from paper to wood and aluminium.

We begin with a meeting or group therapy session. Five subjects – four women and one man – are gathered, naked, around a void: *The Necklace*, 2019. The eight breasts of the women in a circle burst into the composition only to duplicate and deform into a kind of halo surrounding the man’s face. The artist brings the symbolic plane of the ongoing discourse to the surface, and at the same time visualises in the sitting position the constriction of a posture that literally bends physical and mental space. The positioning of the bodies and the unconscious images that such sitting produces reconnect in a single indivisible psychosomatic state, a perceptive alteration that seems to coincide with the very nature of perception.

In another circle, two carnivorous animals sniff at a small crouching ruminant, while two small birds wait on the edge of the scene. In all likelihood, the first stage of carnage is about to take place – that of the wolves on the lamb – and the second stage – that of the birds that will arrive once the deed is done – will take place in a circle from which the human being remains excluded.

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That of *Quattro animali* ('Four Animals', 2010) is not a hunting story nor a bullfight, but the contemplation of impenetrable relationships and balances. We are faced with another puzzle of the exhibition: the insuperable enigma of human beings before the natures and cultures that have preceded them and that, in all likelihood, will continue to be perpetuated in their absence.

On a panel painted and engraved for the occasion, Gaia Fugazza draws *Un'altra stagione* ('Another Season', 2021): a man with prehensile feet, hanging upside down from a tree branch while being bitten by large mosquitoes. The carved body of this figure, immersed against a golden background, is crossed by thick black clouds that hide his face like a sort of dark foliage. This hanging figure is certainly not the Hanged Man of the Major Arcana: his is more of an archaic body that adopts new functions and vital positions, recombining its nature as both biped and quadruped.

On the other hand, a very contemporary gesture is represented in *Lots of Choice* (2015): a multi-touch painting where the index finger of two hands, those of an adult and a child, let themselves be guided by a series of windows opened simultaneously. The fingers seem to be reaching out to press them all in search of the ever-better, or they are busily exerting parental control with firm denial, or perhaps they are just paralysed by being spoilt for choice.

A sense of solicitation and the dispersion of will is transmitted to the visitors, who find themselves pushing the two saloon doors that separate the rooms of the gallery, continuously moving back and forth, opening and closing. The doors are at the same time practical objects and pictorial works. They are wooden boards painted soft blue on which a series of arrows are engraved, pointing in various directions. Like lethal darts in a wild hunt, pointers along dividing paths, cursors on overpopulated screens, the arrows are the vectors of a being cyclically split between will and intellect: *A Fool With A Tool*, as the title of the exhibition itself suggests. We will have to descend into the gallery basement (or google it) to complete the sentence and view this other enigma. The Enigma of the Mirror: *Self-Portrait in Computer Light* (2015).

**Francesco Urbano Ragazzi**

**Gaia Fugazza** (Milan 1985) lives and works in London. Her practice includes paintings and performance, exploring the troubled relationship of humans and the natural environment, plant knowledge, reproduction and transcendental practices. Solo and duo exhibitions of Fugazza's work have been held at Richard Saltoun, London; Häusler Contemporary, Zurich; Zabudowicz Collection, London; Galleriapiù, Bologna. Recent performances include *Transcendence*, Royal Academy of Arts, London; *Super Nature in two Parts*, Lisson Gallery, London; *Baltic Triennial 13*, South London Gallery, London; *Star Messenger*, LUX, London; *Water from the Waist Down*, Kunsthall Oslo. Her work has been featured in several Biennales and institutional shows such as the *13 Baltic Triennial*, Glasstress, Venice; *Mediterranea*, Milan; *The London Open*, Whitechapel Gallery; Hrm 199 Ltd, Tinguely Museum, Basel. Fugazza collaborates with other artists and curators to create alternative ways to present works such as the furniture line with Assemble, the web-site *Post from the first Lockdown*, the party *My Night of Unlimited Favour* and *Grandine* the exhibition program that she hosts in her studio.