

Lara Dâmaso & Raffaella Naldi Rossano

Undomesticated Voices

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Location

Milano

Istituto Svizzero

Category

Art, Exhibition

Undomesticated Voices:

Lara Dâmaso & Raffaella Naldi Rossano

For me, the artistic works of Lara Dâmaso and Raffaella Naldi Rossano are connected to the sea. From Raffaella's living room in the Bay of Naples, the sea seems so close (and Mount Vesuvius looms behind it—snow-capped on my last visit in February) and when I think of Lara's work, not only does her voice ring in my ears, so do the waves of the Portuguese Atlantic.

So, we have the sea, and the water. Let us begin here and approach these undomesticated voices coming from the sea. In Lara's video work *Saudade*, we see the sea from time to time, and we occasionally hear the rush and roar of the water hitting the rocks of the coast. Raffaella has captured the movement of the waves in her drawings presented in mirror frames, while the voices, themes and stories of her research are strongly informed by a journey the artist made across the water: from Napoli, over various stops, to the Castalian Spring near Delphi—by sailboat. Now we are suddenly surrounded by figures and voices from mythology. I am thinking of the earth goddess Gaia, once worshipped by the cult in Delphi, and of Pythia, the priestess and oracle of Delphi, who is put into a trance-like state by the gases escaping from a fissure in the earth. I think of the sirens (often depicted as hybrid creatures, a combination of human and bird or human and fish) who, as ancient myths would have it, dwell on cliffs and become rocks after their death. Lara presses herself against the dark, slippery, from the water marked stone in *Saudade*. Where the sea meets the mainland, where the movements of the water shape the landscape, we sometimes find ourselves on uncertain ground, in ambiguous terrain. The siren Parthenope (in Homer's *Odyssey*, the sirens were still nameless) is said to have washed ashore in the Bay of Napoli. It is she who gave the city its first name. Raffaella tells me a beach on the Sorrento coast is associated with this (mythological) event and is now a cruising zone. It is an ambiguous space for characters (sirens, gay men, unruly women with loud voices?) who are often marginalized in Western, male, white narratives. An ambiguous space between land and water, an ambiguous space where things can be rethought. Cultural theorist Astrida Neimanis reminds us not only that we once came from water but also of the watery constitution of our bodies and all living things: "We are all bodies of water. [...] As watery, we experience ourselves less

as isolated entities, and more as oceanic eddies." Permeable membranes, friendly parasitic coexistence of living beings, with and in each other. And the flowing together of occidental notions of identities and relations.

With *Undomesticated Voices*, Lara Dâmaso and Raffaella Naldi Rossano create a fluid space where stories are retold, where voices overlap in polyphony, and where ancient and archaic rituals are reimagined and subverted in a feminist way. Different threads interweave their works, spinning strands of reference to water, bodies and voices. Female voices, as the poet and philologist Anne Carson describes in her essay *The Gender of Sound*, usually have negative connotations in Greek and Roman mythology: women were supposed to be silent, their mouths closed; meanwhile, screaming, crying, wailing, or shrieking was something only women did. The two artists trace these female voices, these undomesticated, unruly voices, in mythology and the present. In the performative sound work *A score for various paths to a polyphony* developed especially for this exhibition, Lara Dâmaso explores the connections between voice, body and movements and the possibilities determined by the body to shape one's voice. Her knowledge of the cultural connotation of voices resonates as much as her training in classical ballet, where trained postures and breathing techniques virtually paralyze the voice and where the image of the silent, graceful dancer is dominant. At the same time, the work also feeds on her biography and the experience of always being a bit too noisy as a child of Portuguese immigrants in quiet Switzerland. With a poetic score—"I open my mouth and engage with the stream"—the artist gives open instructions for a performance that takes place six times during the exhibition. The voices of the six different performers accumulate into a polyphonic choir. Raffaella Naldi Rossano's installation of ceramic and marble objects, a record player and a dubplate, marzipan coins and other objects is informed by a journey across the water, as mentioned above. Together with two accomplices, Raffaella travelled in 2020 from Naples to the Temple of Hera (Hera was both sister and wife of Zeus) in Capo Colonna in Calabria; to Finibus Terrae in Apulia, where a temple to Minerva once stood; to Dodona in north-western Greece, considered one of the oldest Hellenistic oracle sites and was probably once dedicated to the goddess Dione; to Lefkada in the Ionian Sea, where, according to legend, the Greek poetess Sappho leaned from the white rocks

into the sea; to Delphi; and (unexpectedly) to Tinos and the temple of Amphitrite, the queen of the seas. The journey, according to Raffaella, was a kind of initiation rite, a temporary collective echoing that of the three sirens, Parthenope, Ligeia and Leukosia. A journey in search of forgotten, hidden or silenced voices. Traces and voices of this journey were preserved by the artist on a dubplate—a kind of one-off record in which the audio material is cut in real time into the disc and therefore has a relatively short life span. The soundtrack is based on a text improvisation with two voices mirroring each other, written by Raffaella in English and Italian and performed by her and her travel companion, the performer and singer Chiara Orefice.

According to the artist, the piece is a hymn to friendship and sisterhood, to relationships of friendship, love and care. We can hear the dubplate on the record player that once belonged to her grandmother (who rebelled against the German occupation as a young girl and later confidently went her own way, Raffaella says). Sunlight reflects in the frames of the drawings, while the coloured light reflections on the exhibition walls. As hybrid creatures, a cross between owls (isn't it Minerva who is always accompanied by an owl?) and cats, the ceramic sculptures refer to two animal figures that were often companions of female figures and goddesses in the Archaic and Classical periods. At the same time, they remind me of the urgency of all species living together, and they invoke a highly personal experience for Raffaella, who, during the months of the lockdown, lived alone with her cat Hydra (from whom she learned a lot about existence), her iPhone (some of the omissions in the ceramic sculptures are exactly phone size) and the sea.

In the second exhibition space, Lara Dâmaso's video *Saudade* plays in a loop. The voice draws me in. It is the singing, plaintive and also screaming voice of the artist. *Saudade* is a word that is almost untranslatable—we might call it melancholy or longing—describing a kind of Portuguese nostalgia, sung especially in fado and often by female singers. Originating in the poor neighbourhoods of Lisbon, fado took on nationalist undertones and was politically instrumentalized under Salazar's dictatorship. In *Saudade*, Lara combines body and movements in an attempt to find a wild, untamed voice, a voice that breaks with notions of how a woman should speak. With Lara's loud, beautiful, unsettling voice in my ear, I think of the sirens, the sound of the sea, my watery

body, and the fact that it is up to me, up to us, to decide which voices we want to give space to, which voices we want to remember, to lose ourselves in the polyphonic chorus of these undomesticated voices.

Gioia Dal Molin, April 2022

Quotes and references:

Anne Carson. *The Gender of Sound*. In: *Glass, Irony and God*. New York 1995.

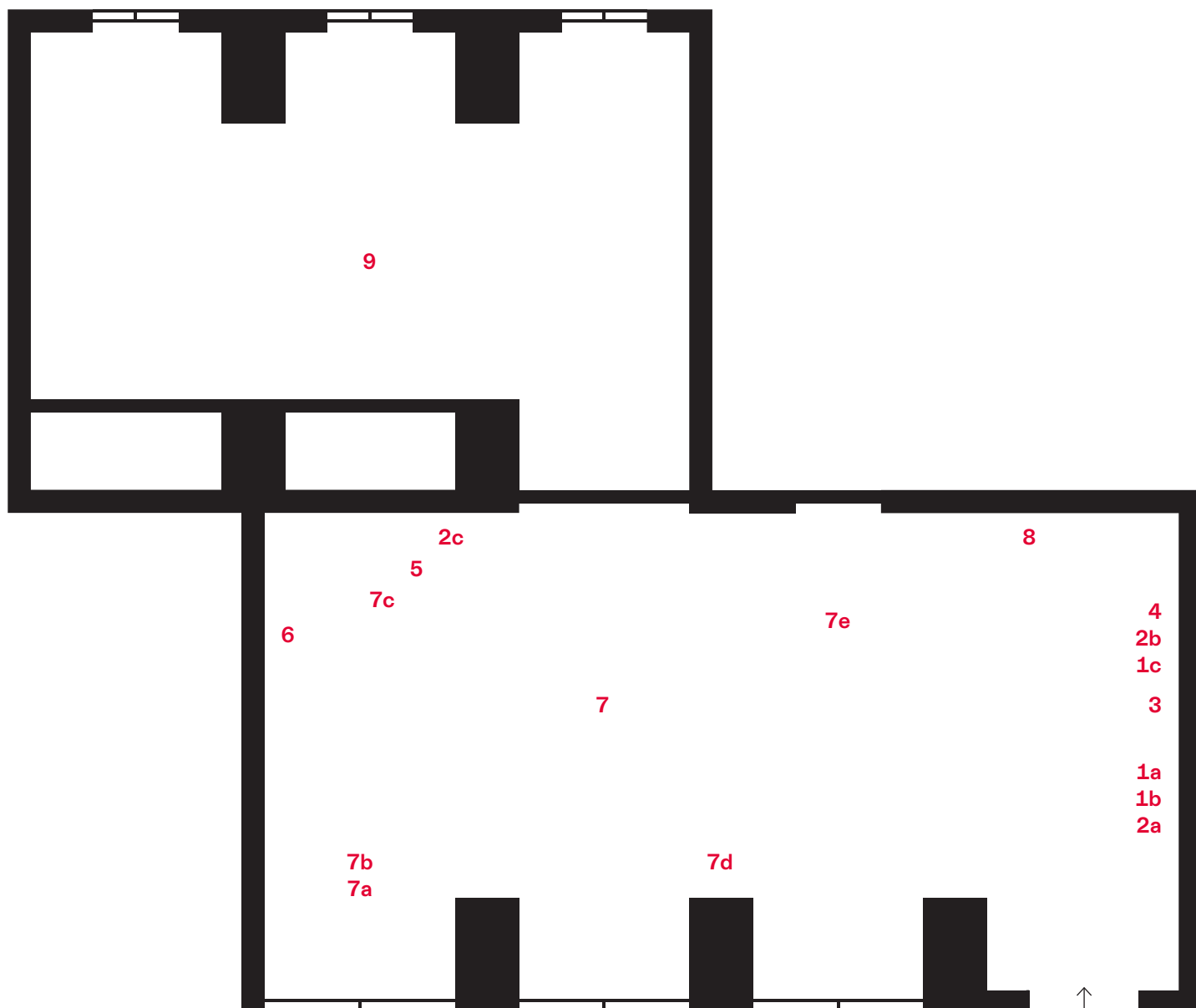
Astrida Neimanis, *Hydrofeminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water*. In: *Undutiful Daughters: Mobilizing Future Concepts, Bodies and Subjectivities in Feminist Thought and Practice*. Eds. Henriette Gunkel, Chrysanthi Nigianni and Fanny Söderbäck. New York 2012.

Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*. London 2016.

The performance 'A score for various paths to a polyphony' by **Lara Dâmaso** will be presented on the following dates:
 14.04.2022 H16:00 – performer Giulia Termino
 23.04.2022 H16:00 – performer Francesca Mariano
 30.04.2022 H16:00 – performer Margherita D'Adamo
 07.05.2022 H16:00 – performer Martina Nuzzi
 14.05.2022 H16:00 – performer Niyayesh Nahavandy
 21.05.2022 H16:00 – performer Justyna Chaberek

Lara Dâmaso (b. 1996) is an artist and performer living in Zurich. Lara Dâmaso's central medium is the body. She explores the expressive, therapeutic and political potential of the voice. More than an enunciation tool of the intellect, its setting in motion is closely linked to that of the body; it establishes a vibratory link that is more a matter of sensitive experience than of reason. In doing so, the artist bypasses the structures of power embodied in the disciplined use of the voice. Her work exists in the form of live performances, videos, or audio works. Her work has been presented in various institutions, off-spaces and festivals, including les Urbaines, MASI Lugano, Zürich Moves, Kunsthau Langenthal, Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Kunsthalle Zürich, Theater Neumarkt, Cabaret Voltaire, Plymouth Rock, Kunsthalle Bern, Centre Pasqu'Art. She was nominated for the Kiefer-Hablitzel Göhner Art Prize in 2020, for Plattform21 and the Swiss Performance Award in 2021 and for the Swiss Emerging Artist Prize in 2022. As a performer she has worked with and for Monster Chetwynd, Jade Kuriki Olivo (Puppies Puppies), Tarren Johnson, Isabel Lewis, Nile Koetting, Nikima Jagudajev, Dora Garcia, Cally Spooner/Offshore, Debora Delmar corp. and Alicia Frankovich. Lara is associated artist at Theater Gessnerallee in Zurich.

Raffaella Naldi Rossano (b. 1990) lives and works in Naples. Through the activation of transformative processes, she engages in the investigation of new possible relationships and forms of intimacy, care and revelation, both psychological and socio-economical, between spaces, bodies and objects. Her installations, integrating sculptures, moving image, sound, group experiences and poetry, are conceived as spaces of transition where meaning around hidden and suppressed histories, individual or collective, is re-created and exposed. Through them, she aims to pursue a breakdown of the architectural environment and a feminist re-appropriation of space and landscape, in a poetic articulation of the territory. Raffaella Naldi Rossano is currently working on an on-going research and film project which revolves around the myth of the Siren Parthenope—the founding myth of the city of Naples. Raffaella Naldi Rossano was one of the participating artists in the 2020 edition of Quadriennale D'Arte, Rome, curated by Sarah Cosulich and Stefano Collicelli Cagol. Among her recent exhibitions: *Utopia Distopia: il mito del progresso partendo dal Sud*, curated by Kathryn Weir, Madre, Naples (2021); *There is no Time to Enjoy the Sun*, Fondazione Morra Greco, Naples (2021); *Waves between Us*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Guarene; *I Confess*, curated by Chus Martinez, der TANK, Basel (2019); *Doing Deculturalization*, Museion, Bolzano (2019); *Parthenope*, Aetopoulos, Athens (2019); *May the Bridges I Burn*, Manifesta, Palermo (2018).



Lara Dâmaso's audio installation is activated every 90 minutes:

WED – FRI: H11:00, H12:30, H14:00, H15:30, H16:30

THU: H11:00, H12:30, H14:00, H15:30, H17:00, H18:30, H19:30

SAT: H14:30

Raffaella Naldi Rossano's multimedia installation is activated:

WED: H14:45

THU: H16:00/H18:00

FRI: H13:00

SAT: H17:00

In addition, the public is invited to activate Raffaella Naldi Rossano's installation if they wish.

Instruction from Raffaella:

And so – how deep is your need of exploring another world?

Is desire still the drive for actions – for moving towards the others?

The unknown?

How do we enter a new realm of significance without touching – eating – listen to it?!

Are you going to activate the vinyl player? – are you going to listen to the hidden voices? – find a message through light – Make a gesture – giving meaning to what is chaos nothing than chaos is more than everything.

Try to eat a marzipan coin – read the words of a journey –

Enter the light and shadows – maybe just for a bit – Speak Sing Scream and then move. Make a prayer. Again probably play the song. Something should happen.

Activate the vinyl player: moves the lever to the outer, right side. The record will begin to spin. Place the needle on the disc. Listen for 11 minutes until the track ends. Return the needle to the initial position.

No more clarity is needed you just have to BE

1a

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *21. Birth Of Partenope*, 2020, triptych, three sculptural drawings with cotton paper from Amalfi, mirror, glass, sea water, organic elements, metal, cotton, black ink, 83 x 60 x 3,5 cm

1b

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *12. Birth Of Partenope*, 2020, triptych, three sculptural drawings with cotton paper from Amalfi, mirror, glass, sea water, organic elements, metal, cotton, black ink, 83 x 60 x 3,5 cm

1c

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *20. Birth Of Partenope*, 2020, triptych, three sculptural drawings with cotton paper from Amalfi, mirror, glass, sea water, organic elements, metal, cotton, black ink, 83 x 60 x 3,5 cm

2a

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *29. Drakospita*, 2021, triptych, three sculptural drawings with cotton paper from Amalfi, mirror, glass, sea water, organic elements, metal, cotton, black ink, 83 x 60 x 3,5 cm

2b

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *06. Drakospita*, 2021, triptych, three sculptural drawings with cotton paper from Amalfi, mirror, glass, sea water, organic elements, metal, cotton, black ink, 83 x 60 x 3,5 cm

2c

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *21. Drakospita*, 2021, triptych, three sculptural drawings with cotton paper from Amalfi, mirror, glass, sea water, organic elements, metal, cotton, black ink, 83 x 60 x 3,5 cm

3

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *Ask the Linden*, 2021, cotton paper from Amalfi, mirror, glass, sea water, organic elements, black ink 40 x 60 x 3,5 cm

4

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *Tinian υπέρθυρα*, 2021, marble, pencil marks, engraving, 39 x 50 x 5 cm

5

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *Fragments for a Delphic tripod*, 2022 – on going, bronze, marzipan, ceramic

6

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *Mirror of an Initiation*, 2020 – ongoing, framed mirror, text on acetate, stones, bronze, 72 x 59 x 3,5 cm

7

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *Invocation to Sing*, 2022, furniture vinyl player, bronze, marble stones, dab plate 33', mirror, glazed ceramic & light sculptures, marzipan coins, full spectrum light.
Audio title on Dabplate: CET 39°01'31"N 17°12'08"E, 11 min., 2020-2022
Audio credits: Audio recording & production in collaboration with Chiara Orefice at Sito Archeologico di Capo Colonna, Tempio di Era, Calabria.
Mixing: Fabrizio Piccolo. Sound extract from *Kindness will save us* by Raffaella Naldi Rossano in collaboration with Renato Grieco; *Bridge over trouble water* by Simon and Garfunkel

7a

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *Light Transformation I*, 2022, glazed ceramic, full spectrum light, 75 x 45 cm

7b

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *Partenope's υπέρθυρα*, 2021, engraved marble, 29 x 55 x 3 cm

7c

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *Light Transformation II*, 2022, glazed ceramic, full spectrum light, 75 x 35 cm

7d

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *Light Transformation III*, 2022, glazed ceramic, full spectrum light, 75 x 35 cm

7e

Raffaella Naldi Rossano, *Light Transformation IV*, 2022, glazed ceramic, full spectrum light, 90 x 35 cm

8

Lara Dâmaso, *A score for various paths to a polyphony*, 2022, installation: music stand, tracing paper, six speakers, performance: wireless headset microphone. Acknowledgements: Vitelli Maglieria Italiana, Londry Samuel.

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9

Lara Dâmaso, *Saudade*, 2021, video, 13'11", loop
Artistic direction, performance: Lara Dâmaso. Artistic co-direction, costumes: Marcelo Alcaide. Camera, editing: Pedro Antunes. Sound mixing: Ludwig Abraham. Acknowledgements: Constança Entrudo

Acknowledgements

Lara Dâmaso

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Raffaella Naldi Rossano

Nilufer Caglar & Under the Linden Tree, Chiara Orefice, Teresa Nuvoletto, Zarina Rossehaert, Georgia Stellin, Lisa Rossano and Hydra