
Elisa Giardina Papa

“U Scantu”: A Disorderly Tale, 2022

1 Mar – 19 May 2024

4k video installation (12 mins), ceramic sculptures, text

In *“U Scantu”: A Disorderly Tale* Sicilian artist Elisa Giardina Papa brings together ceramic sculptures and a large-scale video installation to explore the Sicilian myth of the ‘donne di fora’ - ‘women from the outside and beside themselves’.

Considered to be at once heretical and magical healers, the ‘donne di fora’ defied simple categorization, believed to embody a range of opposing qualities – feminine and masculine; human and animal; benevolent and vengeful.

Giardina Papa reimagines the ‘donne di fora’ as teenage ‘tuners’, young women who ride through the seemingly abandoned utopian urban landscape of Gibellina Nuova in the west of Sicily, on their bikes customised with powerful sound systems.

Drawing on songs and stories told by the artist’s grandmother, as well as 16th and 17th century archival material from the Spanish Inquisition, *U Scantu* intersperses scenes of the modern-day ‘tuners’ with poetic text and visual motifs from a 19th century collection of Sicilian fairy tales.

Ducks feet and thick ceramic braids growing out of the walls and speakers reference the magical powers of the ‘donne di fora’. Running around the walls of the gallery, a text work quotes from the New York poet, Megan Fernandes, who together with composer and performer duendita, has collaborated with the artist on the lyrical and sound composition.

First exhibited at the 2022 Venice Biennale, the work finds new resonance in the architecture of the City Dome Gallery and Collective’s home on Calton Hill. Robert Louis Stevenson references ‘witch’ burnings taking place on the north side of Calton Hill ‘in former days’.

In more recent centuries, the hill has become a welcoming landscape for the magical and unruly, occasional haunt for joy riders, and host to Beltane, the contemporary reimagining of the ancient Celtic May Day fire festival which celebrates the return of summer.

“U Scantu”: A Disorderly Tale is the first solo presentation in the UK of Sicilian artist Elisa Giardina Papa, whose work has recently been presented at the Venice Biennale, MoMA and the Whitney Museum. Giardina Papa’s research-based art practice explores knowledge and desires that have been lost or forgotten, disqualified, and rendered nonsensical.

To accompany the exhibition, a selection of books and texts chosen by the artist is available to read in our Library.

Further information about the exhibition is available to read in the gallery and online, including an interview with the artist by writer and curator Barbara Casavecchia.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a series of special events, culminating in our special May Play weekend, taking place 11-12 May, and led by our resident Play Artist, Frieda Ford.

This exhibition is presented with support from Creative Scotland and the Italian Cultural Institute, Edinburgh.

COLLECTIVE

Elisa Giardina Papa
“U Scantu”: A Disorderly Tale, 2022
1 Mar – 21 May 2024

About the artist

Elisa Giardina Papa’s work has been exhibited and screened at the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (The Milk of Dreams), the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA’s Modern Mondays), the Whitney Museum (Sunrise/Sunset Commission), Seoul Mediacity Biennale 2018, 6th Buenos Aires Bienal de la Imagen en Movimiento, XVI Quadriennale di Roma, Rhizome (Download Commission), Flaherty NYC, UnionDocs, ICA Milano, BFI London Film Festival, Center for Contemporary Art Tashkent, Uzbekistan, M+ Hong Kong, among others.

Giardina Papa is also a founding member of the artist collective Radha May. Together with Indian artist Nupur Mathur and Ugandan artist Bathsheba Okwenje, they develop performances and art installations that reveal hidden histories and peripheral sites, exploring their relation to gender, sexuality, and colonialism.

Giardina Papa lives and works in New York and Sant’Ignazio, Sicily; and is represented by Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin.

With thanks to Elisa Giardina Papa and everyone who has supported the presentation of the exhibition at Collective:

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