

NOVO

Sfiurare Fantasmi **Bea Bonafini**

Curatorial Essay by
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I first discovered the work of Bea Bonafini (1990 Bonn) in London, in 2018. A child was playing carefree, lying on *Slick Submissions*, a huge carpet / tapestry exhibited in a group show at the Italian Cultural Institute of London. Bea doesn't create works of art. She creates emotions, moments, environments.

Over the years, Bonafini's practice has followed an evolution as unpredictable as it is fascinating. The works presented in "Sfiurare Fantasmi" (Brush against Ghosts), take us by the hand, accompanying us in the various stages of the artist's creative process.

In *Face of the Deep I*, the last carpet made by the artist to be exhibited in the show, Bonafini uses the clippings of fabrics as if they were strokes of color, ready to create shapes that are now abstract, now figurative, familiar images whose meaning it escapes us when we think we have caught it. Mystical and mythological stories, whose nuances are accentuated by light shades of pastels, applied on the lighter sections of fabric, cut and sewn by hand. Only by approaching it, and carrying out the forbidden but required act of caressing it, we deepen another aspect of these hybrid works that lie between tapestries and carpets: each color corresponds to a unique texture. With this tapestry, Bonafini tries to literally give a face to the deepest depth of the Oceans: the skeleton of a prehistoric fish crushed by the infinite pressure of the ocean floor.

In *Diver I*, the carpet, which Bonafini already tears from its original two-dimensionality with the embossed textures, takes on a fourth dimension, as abstract as memories are. It is difficult for me not to see in this work, which is projected into space and into an imaginary pool, the most famous diver in history, depicted on the cover slab of the famous tomb in Paestum. It is precisely the archaeological museum, and in particular funerary objects and artifacts, that provide inspiration to the artist. Just as archaeologists can only suggest the meaning of a fragmented past, in the same way Bonafini does not impose its own vision, but allows us to understand the complexity of who we are today, telling stories without a determined beginning or end.

Sealed and When we come together we multiply are carved paintings made with gouache on cork panels, revealing Bonafini's skills in mastering such an unusual material in artistic practices. As in tapestries, the desire to create by breaking down, uniting by cutting returns. The reference to the carved marble floors is immediate, and the cork matches those attributes appreciated by the artist: soft, structured and with almost magical properties.

Mutation, Caran d'Ache on paper, is enclosed in a wooden frame made by an artisan based on Bonafini's drawing, and painted by the artist with shades of soft colors, which recall the palette of the same design. The composition refers to Melusine, a double presence on display thanks to the multicolored ceramic installed on the wall, the mythological two-tailed water creature, which belongs to the fantastic imagination of southern Italy, a symbol dear to sailors. The figure is two-faced and superimposed on a fish skeleton whose spine merges with that of Melusine.

Finally we find *Bathing Melusine*, which belongs to a large body of works made with porcelain and black clay, with the addition in this case of sea glass and salt water. The sculpture seems to come from an archaeological site, as old as the technique needed to make it: the porcelain is colored, layered, cut out. The material, which is fired without protective glaze, creates anthropomorphic forms, inspiring tales between the fantastic and the mythological.

We just have to wait for the result of the next phase of Bonafini, whose personal and ancient narratives overlap within a dream vision, whose intimacy revolves around soft, tactile, vulnerable, fantastic worlds. In the meantime, let us allow ourselves to be lulled and carried along by these works, rifts at the meeting point between the earth and the Other world. It almost seems to brush against ghosts.