



**Gabriella Ciancimino**

*La Stanza dello Scirocco*  
(*The Room of Sirocco*)

Curated by Daniela Bigi

Inaugurazione 16 Marzo 2016, ore 19.00  
Opening March 16, 2016 7pm  
17 Marzo - 12 Maggio, 2016 / March 17 - May 12, 2016  
Via Ventura, 3 Milan 20134 Italy

Prometeogallery di Ida Pisani is pleased to present the first solo exhibition by Gabriella Ciancimino, entitled LA STANZA DELLO SCIROCCO (THE ROOM OF SIROCCO).

"I wish I could've been a bird, so I could have flown back and forth between here and there to be with everyone"\*. This was written around 1920 by a woman from the South of Italy who frequented the most radical political environments of New York. Gabriella Ciancimino, Sicilian, borrows these anonymous lines to introduce us into her Room of Sirocco.

Aristocratic eighteenth-century country houses in Sicily featured comfortable underground living environments, often decorated, that in summertime constituted the best refuge from the torrid heat brought in by the south-east winds. They were called "camere delle scirocco" – rooms of sirocco – and the temperature there was lower thanks to the fresh air currents generated by the flow of water, rendered possible by the Arab hydraulic system of the *qanat*. These rooms offered cooling relief and Ciancimino re-proposes them today as a metaphor of a condition of freedom.

For some time, the artist has been investigating the dynamics of adaptation, interaction and self-organization of the migratory flows of human beings and of plants that she interprets as phenomena of modification of the landscape in virtue of their crossing territorial borders. The landscape she envisions is essentially a place for reflection, but also a place for safeguarding the historical memory and collective action.

Her work has taken place in different landscapes: Morocco, Sicily, Turkey and she tells about "those who come from far away" and arrive in the port cities that throughout the centuries have maintained their role of entrance gates for migratory flows. What fascinates her is the libertarian attitude of men, women and plants whose micro-stories, yesterday just like today, can be reconnected to the great history of resistance – historical for the ones, biological for the others.

Two inputs in particular guide this new project: the concept of "social ecology" formulated by Murray Bookchin at the beginning of the 1970s and perfected in later decades through progressive developments, and the specific concept of "frenzy" that Giordano Bruno theorizes in his *Heroic Frenzies*. It is in these pages that Ciancimino meets the explanation of the concept of "heroic" love, of man's love for nature, that more closely approaches her idea of "frenzied love", the one that allows the *liberty flowers* to resist. Resistant flowers, the Liberty Flowers have for years been at the center of her artwork, both in terms of figurative concentration and symbolic reference. It is the flowers of the indigenous plants, the blossoms of *weeds*, that migrate, take root and thrive in foreign lands, far from their homeland, in conditions that are often inhospitable. They are the same flowers of the *third landscape*, harbingers of the need for freedom and of resistance.

A silk banner bearing the phrase "The Liberty Flowers love to resist, the Resistant Flowers resist for love" greets the audience at the entrance of the exhibition and supplies the key to interpreting the wall drawings, the canvasses, the drawings, the projection and the sculptures of *La Stanza dello Scirocco*. The artist conceived it as a synthesis of ecological, anthropological and libertarian thought and created it through a language that moves simultaneously on

several levels, fruit, in turn, of the contamination between drawing, graffiti, graphic design, video and the architectural and decorative motifs that have soaked Sicilian visual culture from the Arab-Norman tradition up to Liberty – a style, the latter, that in its drawing inspiration from nature and from its interwoven structural elements, is embodied with almost the same valence as the slogan, it is chosen as the preferred angle from which to observe man.

The contaminations, the stratifications, the co-existences are found above all in the drawings *The Flow of Flowers*, where the overlapping of different graphic levels – obtained with pencils, watercolors, with textures deriving from ink on metal buttons as if they were seals on a sheet of paper – yield the wealth of signs and imagery of the many cultures that have more or less peacefully settled on Sicilian ground but also, and on other levels, in the artist's biographical baggage. But *The Flow of Flowers* cannot be retained a mere ensemble of drawings; we must read it as a *historic landscape*, built by putting together some of the most famous posters of the protests taking place between 1968 and the uprising in Egypt. The artist modifies the iconography of the closed fist present in most of the posters by rotating it in a gesture of offering of the *adonis annua l.*, a red flower original of the Mediterranean area commonly known as "Red Morocco", a dissident weed that man has fought for years, bringing it almost to extinction.

In the maps that we find drawn on the canvasses and on the wall drawings, the overlapping continues: they are maps of the Mediterranean populated with illustrations of synanthropic plants, the ones that live in close association with man, the same ones that Clément defines "vagabond" because they move with the wind, with the passage of humans and of animals, crossing geographical borders, growing in frontier lands, overtaking residual spaces. And the same thing takes place in the small sculptures of the *Liberty Flowers*, where the game of interlocks between the materials and the shapes connects yesterday's rural landscape with today's urban setting.

*La Stanza dello Scirocco* stems from a reflection on the feeling of nomadism and on the subsequent sense of nostalgia deriving from being inside and outside national boundary lines. A reflection on the meaning of frontier, that non-place adjacent to a limit that becomes an area of universal transition, fertile ground for new ecological relationships.

*La Stanza dello Scirocco* is an invitation to reflect on how the frontier can become a free-zone for an ecologically modified landscape, whose border lines are not divisions but rather segments of comparison.

The title of the exhibition underscores the desire to find a cool refuge in an environment inflamed by conflicts.

A Journal featuring texts by Daniela Bigi, Bartomeu Marí, Francesca Napoli and by botanists Mizio Ferraris and Tina Lino accompanies the project.

**Gabriella Ciancimino** (b. 1978, lives and works in Palermo) studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Palermo. Ciancimino focalizes on the concept of relationships that transform artworks in moments of meeting/confrontation among individuals. Strongly believing in the role of art as a catalyst for social change, the ideal testing ground becomes public space.

She showed in exhibitions at American Academy, Rome (Rome, Italy 2009), at RISO - Museo d'Arte Contemporanea della Sicilia (Palermo, Italy, 2010), at L'appartement 22 (Rabat, Morocco 2010/2012), at Cardi Black Box Gallery (Milan, Italy, 2011), at Kunsthalle Mulhouse (Mulhouse, France, 2013), at PAV (Turin, Italy, 2013), at Museo Villa Croce, (Genova, Italy 2013), MACBA (Barcelona, Spain, 2014); as well as, she participated at the Volume 1 project of "Sentences on the banks and other activities" exhibition project at Darat al Funun (Amman, Jordan 2010), at Working For Change. Project for A Moroccan Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale (Venice, Italy, 2011) and the Biennale Benin (2012).