

Press release

Francesca Grilli

NaOH

Opening: Thursday 7 June 2018 from 7pm to 10pm

Duration: until 22 September 2018

Exhibition space: Galleria Umberto Di Marino - Via Alabardieri 1, 80121, Napoli

Opening hours: Monday - Saturday 3 pm / 8 pm – by appointment in the morning

Galleria Umberto Di Marino is pleased to present the new solo show of the work of Francesca Grilli entitled *NaOH* on Thursday 7 June 2018.

Expressing identity through the experience on the body and of bodies, in relationships interwoven with each other and in space, has always been a crucial part of the artist's work. In particular when you look at her experimental performances, another fundamental aspect of her work is the transformation of the body, in other words the transition from one state to another, whether it be physical, social or cultural. Like her previous exhibition in 2015, the works of Francesca Grilli occupy the ephemeral and ambiguous space of the threshold, exploring it in all the potential temporal dimensions, from the abandonment of the original condition to the attainment of a new form.

Her show *NaOH* (which stands for sodium hydroxide or caustic soda which is the main ingredient of most household detergents) contains the results of research carried out at Brussels over the last year in conjunction with several social workers who are concerned with shelter for people with housing problems. On the one hand, she came into contact with people who live in our cities in difficult conditions due to addiction or extreme poverty, while on the other she observed the first aid operations carried out on behalf of migrants after their arrival at a reception centre. She defines it as an initiation rite aimed at welcoming individuals into civic society. The first condition for acquiring citizenship seems to involve adopting a rigid cleansing regime, even a kind of dress code, albeit a temporary one.

The exhibition space is pervaded by an intense smell of Marseille soap which immediately calls to mind a familiar, intimate but essentially western smell linked to washing. The first room contains a series of zinc plates which are treated like a skin in need of washing, recording, through subsequent immersions in the soap and then in acid, the rubbing and attempts at corrosion of the surface of the material, in an attempt to bring the physical and social body back to a state of docility. Once again, engraving becomes her chosen tool for leaving a trace of the repetition of the automatic gesture and the accumulation of time in the performative act.

After being exalted by the choice of metal, the body expresses itself through its absence in subsequent operations where the object has the upper hand. What is usually consumed or worn out through use is fixed forever in bronze sculptures: a bar of soap, a toothbrush, underwear, the bottoms of the typical tracksuits found in all the initial reception kits have the power to educate the body to be disciplined and to accompany it in the transition from the previous identity to the acceptance of a new social code.

Nevertheless, the exhibition concludes with an opening towards an identity, restrained by the rhythm of our gestures, (with a transition from the body to the soul), which always differ from each other, symbolised in the video by the performance of a body drummer who interprets several actions linked to personal hygiene in a completely free manner. It as though the artist is saying that however much control is exerted, the body can always retain a space for freedom, finding a primordial melody which breaks up the relationship between control, body and society.

Francesca Grilli was born in Bologna in 1978. Lives and works in Bruxelles.

She took part in many international residencies such as Rijksakademie Van beeldende Kunsten (2007/2008), American Academy in Rome (2014/2015), ISCP - International Studio & Curatorial Program residency program, New York, US (2016). In 2016, she received the New York Prize.

Among her important personal exhibition are *The forgetting of air*, Serralves Museum, Porto, P, Palais de Tokyo, Parigi, F, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, (2017) and Maxxi Museum, Rome (2016), *Family* at Van Abbemuseum, NL, (2015-2017) *Anger* at Galleria Umberto Di Marino, Naples, I, (2015) MACRO of Rome (2012), *The Conversation* at MAMbo, Bologna (2010).

Her work has been exhibited in many venues in Italy and abroad such as, *viceversa*, Padiglione Italia at 55. Biennale di Venezia, MADRE, Naples (2012), Galleria d'Arte Contemporanea, Monfalcone (2012), Serpentine Gallery, London (2010) and Manifesta7 in Bolzano (2008).

In 2016 she realized the permanent installation *Borders* for the project "*Un'Opera per Mantova*" promoted by Mibact for Mantua Italian Capital of Culture

She has also participated in numerous performance festivals including: Drodesea Festival at the Centrale Fies in Trento, Homo Novus/LT – Buda/BE - Roma Europa, UOVO Performing Arts/IT, Tuppi Festival/SW, Rencontres Choregraphiques/FR and Santarcangelo at the Teatri in Rimini.

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