



The fascinating bond among bread-making, female world and artistic creation is already present in the early Sardinian modern sculpture, when **FRANCESCO CIUSA** (Nuoro 1883 - Cagliari 1949), after the great success at the Venice Art Biennale with the work entitled *La madre dell'ucciso* (*The mother of the killed*), gave birth to a second masterpiece: *Il pane* (*Bread* - 1907). A masterpiece in which every single part represents the art of bread-making as a real ceremonial: the steady posture, the concentrated face, the skilful hands confidently working on the mixture, the austerity and the humble elegance of the woman, who looks like a "priestess". The sculpture's plaster, irreparably lost, dates back to 1907, whereas the melted bronze, ordered by the Corporations' Provincial Council of Cagliari, now Chamber of Commerce, dates back to 1927. Throughout the 1920s Ciusa dealt with this subject again in his pottery's creations, produced at Spica's factory in Cagliari, in the street that now bears his name. The little and precious pottery models strike for the attention and delicacy of every single element, especially the arrangement of the dress' pleats.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, bread is firmly related to the idea of maternity in the poetics of another great sculptor, **COSTANTINO NIVOLA** (Orani 1911 - Long Island 1988), who left Sardinia still very young and established himself in USA where he lived until his death. Nivola dedicates to bread a chapter of his autobiographical *Memorie di Orani* (*Orani memoirs*); he thinks about bread while shaping his terracotta's reliefs; he thinks about bread, jealously kept in the hollow walls of his country's houses, during his childhood, while he carves the comfortable belly of the mothers, that keep inside *the hope of the gorgeous son*. Mothers, sometimes widows, modern Mediterranean archetypes: the forms tending towards abstraction are artistic choices but they also probably represent the desire to elevate, through art, the difficult relationship with his own mother, a relationship mostly lived as a refusal.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, **MARIA LAI** (Ulassai 1919 - Cardedu 2013) conceives bread as a metaphor of a generating force, of life and art itself. The works here displayed are an example, starting from *Ex voto* (1977), one of the first bread sculptures of the artist, original and of remarkable expressive power. In an unpublished article, written for the occasion of this exhibition, the young scholar CHIARA MANCA reads in this work a religious iconography:

«Although Maria identifies herself as laic, many her creations refer to episodes, themes and characters of Christian literature from the Virgin Mary to the Nativity scenes, to the multiplication of bread and fishes, to the slaughter of the Innocents. This nailed child is a clear reference to Baby Jesus. He lies on a warm straw bed, but the child with open arms, the pierced heart and the red that surrounds him, in which we look ourselves in the mirror, represents both a sacrifice and a love embrace. Death and life at the same time.

Death and life always accompany us through our human path and our personal happening; Maria used to say that growing up, a day after another, we

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unconsciously kill the child inside us, we deny childhood's look, plays, wonder and innocence in order to integrate ourselves in the adults' world. Childhood keeps in itself a deep bond with afterlife, threads of a time without time, which were part of the Infinite».

To follow, the two great works *Cuore mio* (*My hearth*) and *La pietra della felicità* (*Happiness stone*), both of 2002, illustrate the metaphor's origins, linking to the story of Maria Pietra. Maria Pietra – main character of the tale *Cuore mio*, inside the book entitled *Miele amaro* by Salvatore Cambosu, a writer in very close relationship with the artist – has extraordinary and secret powers, she is a mother, she is a bread artisan: after her son's death, in a painful delirium, kneading the flour with her tears and making lots of children bread, she brings back her child to life, to play with the wood's animals. Like Maria Pietra, Maria Lai becomes a bread artisan as well, in order to fascinate, with her imaginative talent's powers, all the creatures.

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In the masterpieces of Francesco Ciusa, Costantino Nivola and Maria Lai there is no trace of rhetoric. Rhetoric is absent in this exhibition: there are no stereotypes, nor sugar-coated depictions of maternity. There are the unconventional maternities by **PRIMO PANTOLI**, born in Cesena but Sardinian by adoption, when in 1957 he moved to the island, promoting an original and unconventional avant-garde, deeply engaged in the attempt of the renewal of art and society. In the early 60s, he created innovative representations of Maternity, involving different techniques: in particular, the *Maternità* of 1962, has on the painting's surface different ferrous materials – memory of his London's stay, and of his impressions about the different grey's variations on Thames and the dark colours of the Docks' industrial district; all the three works relates to a material conception of colour, a painting felt also in its corporeality.

The production of **ANGELO LIBERATI** is characterised by the representation of sexuality. He was born in Frascati, artistically grown up in Rome, and finally in Cagliari in 1970. His poetics is marked by the interaction between visual art and poetry, music and cinema; he draws inspiration from Renzo Vespignani, Bob Dylan, Luchino Visconti in the same way. His three works displayed stand out seductive and erotic women, perhaps mothers, undoubtedly lovers. But, in these three works, there is another mother always present: she appears from the bottom, in the mixture of graphics, painting, collage and *décollage* *La madre dell'ucciso*, that mother who Ciusa turned into a symbol of absolute pain. Love and death, Eros and Thanatos, the everlasting mystery.

The work *Semi (Seeds)* by **PINUCCIO SCIOLA**, displayed outside the Sala delle Volte, in the EXMA's forecourt, presents a level of eroticism as well. Together with the *Pietre sonore (Sound stones)*, *Semi* are the most famous works of the sculptor of San Sperate, well-known protagonist of contemporary art in the international context. As *Pietre sonore*, also *Semi* - sculpted on rough basalt, apparently hard, that instead opens to become smooth and intimately soft – realises the union between nature and culture, fecundation par excellence. Indeed, Sciola explains «Art is not a mere intellectual fact. It is necessary to continue hoeing, ploughing and sowing stones, to make them sprout up so as they can fecundate the ground again». His words seem like an echo of those of Maria Lai, she loved to mention the master Arturo Martini, stating: «Stones are the real images of the world. The sculptor should make them breathe as the leavening bread».

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Seductive, erotic and provocative are also the women represented by **ROBERTO RUGGIU**, who, inspired by Japanese manga, and with the will to link different cultures, has cut them into the fabric, inserted and tied into two baskets, traditionally used in Sardinia for baking, enhancing the round shapes, also them unexpectedly sensual. To entitle this first work on display, the artist has chosen the Sardinian name of one of these two baskets, inflecting it into female: *Kanisteddas*. The second installation, also conceived from the baskets formerly used for the production and storage of bread, but with a more conceptual inclination, is entitled *Eclipses*. Since over thirty years Ruggiu lives between Sardinia and Holland, where he attended the Academy of Fine Arts and where he works mainly as sculptor, often making artistic works in public spaces for the local administration. His sculptural inclination is evident on this exhibition, with bread finely smoothed on Trani's stone.

In **ROBERTA CIUSA's** artistic work, young habitat and product designer from Nuoro, the knowledge of the past, the awareness of present, the attention for the future are intertwined along the original line of creativity: #Pinbread and #Pintexture are both works inspired by the "pintadere" that in the Nuragic civilisation were used to decorate bread and not only. They are also part of a recent project, of 2015, *Cibo per il Corpo e per la Mente* (*Food for body and mind*), focused on food as pivotal element, from a social and cultural point of view. Roberta Ciusa wants to create innovation combining inventiveness and planning, new technologies and artisan know-how, asking about the future of communication, about political and economic changes, about influences determined by urban, geographical, artistic and anthropological changes.

**ANTONELLO CARBONI**, film-maker and photographer from Oristano, combines in his works the interest for art and history of art with the desire of telling places, folks and traditions of the world. Over the years he has realised documentaries and photo features in Africa and Middle East, creating a wonderful mix of cultures only apparently far distant from each other, being awarded in national and international sphere. The images of *Sisters* (2004) guide us beyond the Mediterranean, to the discovery of traditional bread-making in a remote spot on Kurdistan mountains. Also up there the bread miracle is carried out by the simple and expert hands of the local women, in this case two young sisters, guardians of this ancient knowledge.

All over the world, the mother earth is the origin of everything. **FRANCESCO CUBEDDU**, who lives and works in Oristano, gives us an uncommon depiction of this universal mother, through his "quadrografie", namely photos interrelated and mixed with the painting. Cubeddu takes pictures from above, while moving in the air with his paramotor: he observes all the details from this special point of view, often on the Sinis peninsula, and he immortalizes the unsuspected beauty of fields, like the wheat field, main characters in these works. Seen from above, the furrows left from the plough, the signs made by the water and the wind, become lines and shapes of an abstract landscape, real paintings indeed, able to whisper messages of enchanted astonishment.

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**FABIOLA LEDDA**, born in Sulcis, grown up in Westfalia, lives and works in Bologna. In the pictures of *Panes* (2009), which is on display a suggestive selection, body is the main instrument in the aesthetic research. The body is the glance that the artist directs to herself, connecting her with the rest of the world. In the poses, gestures, light but stable at the same time, stressed by hot and cold lights, there is no continuity between woman and bread: both seem to emerge from an interior dimension, from memories, from a warm atmosphere enhanced by the small size of the print. The respect for tradition, represented by the cross that marks the bread, corresponds to the absolute refusal of the roles and stereotypes still present in our society.

Refined and pondered are **GIANFRANCO PINTUS'** ceramic sculptures, painter and potter, born in Sassari, who, after have spent his childhood at his grandfather's workshop Giovanni Pulli, studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence and then decided to come back to Sardinia. He lives and works in Cagliari. In his bread, the simplicity of white, earth and black colours, the curved shapes – also in the artist's painting, the round shape is recurring, with symbolic and conceptual meanings – include poetic words. The words go ahead continuously on the surface, and it doesn't matter their source, what is important is to stress how, contaminating the codes, poetry becomes vision and vision becomes substance.

**MARCO PILI** lives and works in Nurachi, close to the Sinis peninsula. In his artistic production converge abstract art, naturalism and material painting; the "pane carasau" (a traditional flatbread from Sardinia) is, together with the fields, woods and waxes, the favourite material of his artistic works. In *Segni nuragici* (*Nuragic signs*) of 1996, beside and around the bread laid down on a black rag, white lines arise from a stylised mother goddess. The recent work *Pergamena di pane* (*Bread parchment*) shows, through the burnings and crevices, both the fragility and strength of bread; whereas *Ricami di terra* (*Earth embroideries*), work especially realised for this exhibition, recalls the textile art suggestions.

**LALLA LUSSU**, artist from Cagliari with a heterogeneous historic-artistic education, spent in Cagliari, Salisburgo and Urbino. After many encounters, discussions, experimentations, devotes her work to the watercolour painting on refined paper. A painting that investigates three-dimensional openings and depth: involving and building the space, the artist imagines grass and water, awakenings and rebirths, that suggest the flow of time and nature, the generating force, the life cycle and the duration of art. Maria Luisa Frongia has understood the symbolist tendency of Lalla Lussu and writes: « These germs spread out to create our garden: the germ of a personal garden, created by our hands, guided by the creative fantasy hidden in every human being ».

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**MARIA JOLE SERRELI**, born in Rome from Sardinian emigrants, lives in the province of Oristano and works in Italy and abroad, especially in London. She frequently collaborates with Emergency. For this exhibition, she has made an exciting backwards journey to her own origins, realising an installation that reminds moments of family life and sharing: the old basket is laid down a white and finely embroidered tablecloth; inside the basket there is a special bread, with the egg, that the mothers baked for their children at Easter. The white threads highlight the emotional bonds, while inside the second old basket, laid down on the floor, bread is in the colours of the celebration. These are the colours of the little flags, typical of the country events, but at the same time they also recall significant artistic experiences of the twentieth century.

**ANNA DEPLANO** comes from a baker family from Seui (near Nuoro), lives and works in Milan. Her coloured bread reconsiders and re-elaborates different types of Sardinian traditional bread, experimenting chromatic changes through the deep knowledge of dough techniques and the use of natural products: beetroot for red, for instance, spinach for green, saffron for yellow, this also used particularly in the past for Easter bread. In 1922 Anna Deplano published the volume *Il Pane: fior fiore dell'alimentazione dalle origini a oggi* (*Bread: the best of nutrition from the origins to these days*) that retraces the history of this food, underlining the new and unlimited expressive possibilities.

At the centre of **NIETTA CONDEMI DE FELICE's** artistic work, refined expert of the technical secrets of the loom, there is a modern and experimental vision of weaving. His works are never flat surfaces, but three-dimensional, in a combination of planning proficiency, executive firmness and inventive delight. In the colourful installation on exhibition, threads of different materials, used by the artist for the weaving, are laid down or stretched, on small parts of painted sky; and small birds lie on these threads, "Sos puzzoneddos de su Cossolu", the votive bread prepared for the "Madonna della Consolata" in Orune, her home country.

At the beginning of her creative production, **MARIA DIANA**, jewel architect and designer who lives and works in Rome, attended Maria Lai's studio, acquiring from her above all the artistic sensitivity. Her jewels, like bread, keep and almost protect an organic soul inside them. In the collection *Germogli* (*Germs*), created between 2013 and 2015, grès and porcelain are unusually combined, the first rough and coarse, the second fine, fragile, embellished with pure gold details. The recent collection *Semina* (*Sowing*), here on preview, literally displays the traces of grain of the world, common food among people: rice seeds, wheat, corn, hulled wheat, amaranth and quinoa are stylish motifs, also embellished with gold and platinum.

After her artistic studies **IGNAZIA TINTI** refined her techniques at the atelier of the sculptor Franco d'Aspro, specialised in bronze melting and Lost-wax casting. She has developed her own personal style in ceramic production: she transfers into ceramic the precision of the necessary actions in "embroidering"

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the ceremonial bread, reproducing and reinterpreting, with a personal attitude, the shapes and decorations. Tiny leaves and miniature of flowers chiselled with great care are applied on heart shapes, on those devoted to the Saints and to specific religious celebrations, or also on the *Gallinella di Pasqua* (Easter hen): rare pieces, created at the workshop in Assemini, without using moulds, because «the expression of a mood or of a feeling can never be the same».