

Dialogue between R and I

Isabella Morra: Reverie, we must talk about your relationship with Naples. When did it start? Tell us about the flight that brought you here.

Reverie: We are all fellow citizens of the same earth. I have never felt tied to just one place, be it Vinci, where my roots are, or Milan, or my home/studio where I work. I usually say that I live in a particular street, but it could be anywhere in the world. And Naples is undoubtedly one of the places I'm happiest to head for, crossing the street.

Over time, I have become bound to its energy: it beats forcefully through the veins of all who come into contact with Parthenopean soil: a perennial positive earthquake that draws one in, like a commanding siren song. Ever since my first trip to Naples, I have always visited Casa Morra, and I like to think that perhaps it was a mutual discovery.

One evening, we were on the terrace at the Fondazione, celebrating one of Nitsch's actions over dinner. I still remember Isabella Morra's eyes and Beppe Morra's words encouraging me to start thinking about doing a work for Naples.

As I made my way to a small room by the sea – I was leaving at dawn the next day – I looked out over the harbour, and that is where I met Icarus.

I saw them (I'm using a non-binary gender pronoun) walking confidently, and then, as I approached, I noticed that they had artificial arms.

At that moment, I felt life's pain weighing down on my back, and I realized that all of us might fly.

That night, even with my eyes closed, I dreamt of a work and performance representing this figure, all of us, and this project. At dawn, I wrote a letter to Casa Morra from the train...

I: Like the cycles of life, your artistic stamp, which ranges between performances, works, and books (*librosogni*, ed.), are meshes that knit one great creation together. Can you tell us about "Sogno 5: Icarus" and your previous experiences?

R: I started this cycle about dreams so that it would be an invaluable alphabet for reflection and a reading of our current situation.

For me, the dreamlike is the most concrete mirror for telling the story of today's women and men, showing their thoughts, fears, lives, and psychologies... with no chance of lying or hiding.

A dream is a truth. Performance is life. Work is collectivity.

These are the principles upon which I have woven the threads of my latest procedures. I want to underline this because dreams are concrete and tangible for me. In no way are they fable-like, illusory, meditative reflections...

Every work, performance and element of the cycle represents a piece of the same shared body. It is no coincidence that I gave the May 2020 exhibition in Milan the title *Il corpo dei sogni* (*The Body of Dreams*). *Sogno 1: Archetipo del sé* (*Dream 1: Archetype of the self*) at the Fondazione VOLUME! in Rome was an initial experiment, a journey for one person at a time, to rediscover the self, as if in a guided video projection

in the dreams of every one of us; while with *Sogno 2: The sleeping muse*, I sang everyone's dreams and nightmares and then collected them into an artist's record. With *Sogno 3: la camera degli specchi (Sogno 3: The chamber of mirrors)*, I guided each person in the audience in an individual and interactive reflection on the limit between reality and imagination, leading them to really look at themselves, beyond social masks, and some people were in tears as they stood up; with *Sogno 4: alba lunare (Sogno 4: Moonrise)*, I exorcised a common fear of destruction, rebuilding a new moon. *Icaro (Icarus)* is the grand finale: a collective flight beyond the horizon of the sea of Naples. It might seem to be no more than a representation of one of humanity's greatest dreams, but it has nothing to do with that at all: it is so much more.

As always in my performances, the body of the individual will be the vehicle for the collective body. In the precarious position in which I will find myself, my life will be in the hands of the spectators, just the same as in the course of ordinary existence, where it is impossible to control the progress of events and their repercussions. Even the duration of the action will depend on the decisions of others. In the waxwork of the same name, *Icaro contemporaneo (Contemporary Icarus)*, the fall had a positive side and therefore did not lead to the death of either Icarus' body or the collective one. It led to the acceptance and celebration of life with all its difficulties, burdens and sufferings, represented by the nails imprinted in the wax wings. Once again, the performance does not retrace the true story of the myth but captures its elements and principal actors, such as the sun, to bring a contemporary interpretation.

The last steps leading to *Sogno 5* are the most important pieces and tell the story of this figure's journey. Each of my performances starts with texts that are then transformed into works, both during the construction time of the action itself and in the further works of synthesis that follow the performance. I wrote Icarus' biography and embroidered the incipit of their life onto a rectangular sheet of satin that I sewed onto a World War II parachute. This work bears the same title as the sculptures in nails, metal, and wax, which, along with Icarus himself, represent all of us today. It is a human cast (of my back) in red wax, but it represents the backs of every one of us. There are two large wings made of the same material; onto these I have hot-embossed some old nails to represent the abuse, suffering, and disease – the darkness – that we face in our lives and which will always be a wound, the mark of which we will carry with us and whose mark will always be part of us, allowing us to look towards the horizon with our feet firmly planted on the ground.

I: In his *Air and Dreams*, Gaston Bachelard talks about how air is associated with the image of a vertical journey.

How much of Bachelard is there in your work, and how does this translate into the performance you conceived for Casa Morra specifically?

R: I have been stamped with the words of Bachelard and his *Poetics* ever since my father and mother chose to call me Reverie. There is always a reverie stage in my creative processes.

For this performance, the theoretical framework is based on the volume you mention, a fundamental philosophical-poetic milestone that everyone should be familiar with. Bachelard analyses flight in each of its sections, from Balzac's interest in flight to the "complex sublimation" in Shelley's poems, through Dante, Milton and the Lucifer figure, to Desoille's "moral imagination" and beyond.

The dreamer, who experiences flight in his day-to-day dreams, can thus experience not only a movement that possesses momentum, but also a path, a force that precedes any image. The human desire for flight is closely linked to a fear of falling into the void. And it is precisely through falling that upward movement is completed. Even the abyss serves to be able to "shoot one's arrows upwards". We move along vertical

threads where Wishing and Imagination are stretched. Anyone who can wish can imagine (R. Desoille). But it is essential to be aware that we are situated at the half-way point, because here too virtue lies in the middle, in a sense of measure. But, as life has taught me, it is challenging to keep a balance, and we may not always want to choose the good...

Bachelard taught me that the essence of the experience of flight is inherent in the dichotomy between height and depth; he led me by the hand in learning both what happens to a man's senses, from breathing to sight and hearing, and to investigate the dynamic root of the imagination. For this, and for all his writings, I will always be grateful to him.

But I prefer a dirty, human, life to the ideal of purity: the image that marks my work is the pearl, a disease of the shell. Unlike my philosophical-anthropological father, referring to his thoughts on Nietzsche, I do not believe that we should toss our weights, "our whole heavy being", into the sea to be free to fly. We, the women and men of today, can live our mortality on its vertical axis precisely because we are aware.