



Gaia Fugazza interviewed by curator Paul Luckraft, 29 Feb 2016

ZABLUDOWICZ COLLECTION
Invites
GAIA FUGAZZA
PRESENT AND DISTRACTED

Paul Luckraft: In the exhibition there is a mix of figuration and more abstract pieces. Can you talk a bit about the range of imagery in the show?

Gaia Fugazza: The imagery in the show has been defined little by little by the works. I didn't start by planning a unitary show. Rather I made work as punctuations, inspired by observation of daily life and stretched to some sort of archetypal patterns. I wanted to make a show about distraction, which then digressed into many other areas such as filters, choice, parenting, entertainment, contemporary history. Formally, yes, there is definitely figuration and some very organic abstraction. The two larger works are linked to the architecture of the gallery space with their size corresponding to the stained glass windows. The motif of the frame, which is present through the show, is definitely more linked to common screens than to museum display.

PL: Gestures, routines and objects we use every day regularly appear in the work.

GF: I'm interested in the dichotomy between a sedentary life and a more nomadic life, and a few years ago I was addressing it through architecture and enclosed space. Now I wonder if going outside with a mobile phone is equivalent to staying inside, or if being in your house with no internet feels much more 'outside' than actually going out. A lack of technological connection can make us feel uneasy, separated from things that feel familiar.

PL: The word 'familiarity' is interesting, because much of the imagery in your work has to do with your own circumstances. I wonder how directly you see these as portraits of your life, or whether they are gesturing towards something more universal?

GF: I am not so interested in recording my own life, but I like to speak about the things I know directly. There are many

experiences that are common for humans in general. So, for example, even if it is something I notice my child doing, there are probably millions of children doing the same thing.

PL: There is a timeless quality to the figures, in the sense that they cannot be placed easily in their setting.

GF: They are suspended in a way. There is an element of being critical of how things are now, but I am certainly not proposing things should go back to the past. I am just interested in an awareness of it.

PL: I think that's key to your work; it doesn't seem to be proposing a clear choice between embracing the new and turning back to the past.

GF: I don't think it's possible. And even if it was – going back to the state of the first human, in harmony with nature and the animals or whatever – well history went this way so there would be no assurance that it would then differ. Although there is a sense of sadness when things are not possible. I have often attempted to go foraging for weeds and stones for making my colours, but there is not much around in London! The results were quite poor – usually brown colours. The most interesting thing about it is performing the action. When I try to do things from scratch I realise how little knowledge I have of botany, biology, chemistry, and also how limiting it is to live in an urban environment which suits only a programmed set of actions.

PL: When you are in the process of making works do you feel it an act of discovery?

GF: Often in the work there is the subject presented and there is the technique. And they are always competing as to which is the focus. Sometimes they exchange or overlap positions. I may start out wanting to apply a certain process and usually don't know how to do it properly.

PL: So luck and chance play a big part? I think it's interesting when you say you are always holding content and form in unstable balance.

GF: Before you were talking about the idea of space, and that the subjects of the work do not seem to have a specific time. I agree with this. I am not really depicting things that are seen, it is more a representation of an action that exists. This poses the problem of defining what will be the space that this action inhabits. Perhaps the action I am representing could be the motion of a mum, who is taking a picture of child, but doesn't want the child to touch the phone. But that's such a small thing, and I don't have a setting for it. I don't want the background to be a park or the inside of a house. That action needs a context, and that context is often just the technique. Or even things that I delegate, like the backgrounds of some works that are made by my children.

PL: One of the key words you mentioned when developing the show is 'distraction'. Can you tell me a bit about your thinking here?

GF: Well, there are so many distractions. What I mean by this are the things that fill our time that distract us from change, or from taking care of people. Important things. One of these distractions could be wishing to leave open the possibility of being somewhere else. Because there are questions that people like my grandmother, who for 87 years didn't travel further than three hours by car from where she was born, never considered, such as 'is it better to live in Italy or in London, or the city or countryside?'. But of course when you travel around a lot, you then feel you are missing the people and life that are somewhere else. You want to keep in touch, and you have your phone, and social media. There is all this desire of the elsewhere, and always wanting to be living elsewhere, physically or mentally.

PL: That's very interesting, the idea that the more things we do, and the more people we interact with, multiplies this field of possibility.

GF: Just thinking about the work *Lots of Choice* (2015), the one with a black frame in the image and the windows, which came from noticing that my three-year-old did not want to see things on the iPad full screen any more. He wanted to keep the possibility open of going from the thing he was looking at to another thing. Maybe the other thing could be better! Of course the thought that there is something else is good. But if that thing is fed to you by an algorithm, I'm not so sure that's good.

PL: An illusion of choice.

GF: There is this text by Derrida called 'L'université sans condition' in which he uses this strong image: 'the freedom of capitalism is to let you choose between Coca-Cola or Pepsi.'

PL: The way things are sold to us links to the idea of the natural or authentic also being packaged in the same way. Is this what your work alludes to?

GF: For sure. There are changes to lifestyle that are easier for a certain demographic than others. People like us can be convinced to eat a no-gluten and no-dairy diet, things you could not convince your grandparents to do. In 2013 I made a work called *Birth in the river* in which a woman is giving birth in the forest, while a man is filming it on an iPad. People always ask me if it's autobiographical, while actually it's something I found on a blog online. This couple decided to have a water birth, alone, in nature, were brave enough to face all the risks involved, but felt the need to live the moment through documenting it. I'm still interested in how to develop a strong awareness of being present in a certain place, at a certain time.

PL: When making a piece of work how much do you try to communicate the full range of

the ideas you've mentioned? Do you wish your work to have some mystery?

GF: I like to leave the work open for interpretation. In fact I'm not even sure of what the work will end up being while making it, but at the same time I find it important for the work to be about something I honestly care about.

PL: Are you testing new processes each time?

GF: The material gives a lot of information on how to continue. I think every artist finds inputs into the works from different sources, and one of mine is the material of the object itself; also the experimentation with material is about freedom in a way. If you can only cook by warming things up, it limits your choices.

PL: So you are trying to avoid making microwave art?

GF: Maybe. And to return to the question of time, if today I want to make a work that is very complicated, I would probably have to speak with conservators. They are using old techniques that may become lost, and also are using new things available now to help fix things that didn't go so perfectly 300 years ago

PL: Can you imagine your objects being in museums hundreds of years in the future? Or are they somehow more fleeting?

GF: I've learned a lot from old artefacts, but I don't think it's healthy to produce objects that have embedded in them the idea of museum display and conservation. The needs of people in the future will determine what stays around.

Reverse: Gaia Fugazza, *Gathering Gift*, 2016
Vermillion red on paper and glass. 53 x 77.5 cm

Invites
ZABLUDOWICZ COLLECTION
GAIA FUGAZZA
24 MARCH – 1 MAY 2016

ZABLUDOWICZ COLLECTION

Upcoming invites

- James Ireland 5 May–12 June
- Victoria Adam 16 June–17 July
- Luke McCreadie 29 September–6 November
- Willem Weisman 10 November–18 December

Artist's presentation
Saturday 16 April, 2–5pm: A workshop suitable for adults and children of all ages, devised by Gaia Fugazza.
Gaia Fugazza (b. 1985, Milan, Italy) completed an MA Fine Art, Chelsea College of Arts, London, 2014. Recent solo exhibitions include *Studio #9*, Spazio Cabinet, Milan and *Shikhen Sengu*, Nuova Icona, Venice, both 2013. In 2015, her work was included in *Mediterranea*, Young Artists Biennale, Fabbbrica del Vapore, Milan, The London Open 2015, Whitechapel Gallery, London; *Susy Cullinsky & Friends*, Fanta Spazio, Milan, Primavera 4, *Dena Foundation*, Paris, Hrm199 Ltd, Museum Tinguely, Basel, and *Studio Voltaire Open 2015*, Studio Voltaire, London.
Zabludowicz Collection invites is dedicated to solo presentations by UK-based artists who do not currently have representation by a UK commercial gallery.

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Opening times
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