

COLLECTIVE ACTION

Once again, Joya opens its doors to a small selection of galleries and collectives. Lieta Marziali gives a short overview of what to expect and what she'll be looking out for.

Although not a “gallery” in the strictest sense, one of the organisations exhibiting under this umbrella will be the Italian competition and exhibition project Gioielli in Fermento, curated by Eliana Negroni, and the one with which I am the most familiar. It will present pieces developed by this year's winner Yasuko Kanno and its own Gallery project, where selected past participants and invited artists are also asked to create a further 2-3 pieces exploring the scope of their already-exhibited works. I look forward to see how Yasuko will expand, without diluting it, the horizon of her winning brooch “Shape of the Moment”, a piece irrefutably understated in its humble sculptural form, and projecting a palpable strength through its deceptively fragile and fragmented façade.

Turning my eyes to the Gallery project, if I can place my passion and reverence for the work of Lluís Comín in its decades-long evolution from that best tradition of studio and narrative jewellery of which I am already so deeply fond, I am still intrigued by the mystery that drives my fascination with Gigi Mariani's pieces. There is an alchemy at work there in his manipulation of silver, gold and niello, hidden as it is in plain sight in forms that are as simple to observe as they are challenging to decipher. Loving the known and the unknown precisely because of their intrinsic qualities of the comfort of filling one void and the thrill of opening up another are then perhaps both embedded for me in the work of Corrado De Meo. Here, what feels familiar and what feels novel can be but a trick of the mind, or indeed of the materials and forms he decides to use or to mimic.

The other gallery is Lalabeyou, based in Madrid, and the brainchild of Laura González Sanz. Lalabeyou worked around a theme of “BLANCO” (or white) in order to provide both a neutral and wide enough territory to explore while giving its applicants full control over their interpretation. Most works adopted the colour as a central component but, without artists' statements during my preview of images, it was difficult to place this in its individual conceptual framework. This, however, forced me to look at the pieces from a purely visual and material point of view, inviting me to feel them and find my own meanings.

Once again, it is that transitory and subtle boundary between the familiar and unfamiliar that ended up guiding me. A hint of narrative was bound to draw me to the work of Sandra Val, especially with its use of ceramic fragments which, following recent conversations, are increasingly occupying my own artist's mind. And yet, old familiar white materials like porcelain, plaster and paper engaged me more than less obvious new materials employed by some in the group because I couldn't always fully read their use beyond their (absence of) colour. I am therefore looking forward to further investigating the Moon-inspired pieces of Esther Ortiz-Villajos and the significance of relationships in the work of of Iraia Aizcorbe Marcos. On the other hand, I find myself intrigued by the assemblage of materials used by Cova Ríos: not unexpected due to the multidisciplinary nature of her practice spanning architecture, product design and installation, but whose monochromatic manipulation I suspect holds more secrets than the series title is happy to reveal.

In terms of collectives, there will be three represented at Joya. The first is Tresors, founded and curated by Sílvia Serra Albaladejo and based in Barcelona itself. Now in its fourth edition, and with an always fluid but always Catalan artist line-up, it will present objects as well as jewellery, from the likes of Jordi Aparicio, Jaime Díaz and Jèssica Bellí. As in previous editions, a wealth of narratives are intertwined with as many materials in a body of work that really wants to be appreciated as that of an organically-curated collective as well as the sum of its individual participants. Still, having already encountered then at the last Melting Point in Valencia, I shall enjoy revisiting – and this time discussing their significance – the slightly surreal mini sculptures of Mònica Fugarolas, and exploring the legacy of the Comín jewellery dynasty in the work of Lluís's daughter Elena, which I am yet to see in person.

The second collective is Assamblage from Romania, which acts as both contemporary jewellery school and association. Their theme of “BELONGING/S” – a play on words between the personal sense of attachment to a

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1.



2.



3.



- 1. YASUKO KANNO | Brooch
- 2. GENA TUDOR | Ring
- 3. ALBERTO BUSTOS | Object

place or integration in a community and the physical objects we possess and which help define our personal and cultural identity – is possibly the most fitting for this year's Joya's own theme of "Diplomacy and Jewellery", focusing on the political power of art. By asking participants to develop their thinking around the three objects they would hold on to if they had to abandon their homes forever, the theme wishes to highlight the individual as well as collective extreme plight of contemporary political, environmental, economical, social and religious refugees.

The work of the five participants all show strong personal emotional involvement. While Diana Tobosaru and Gena Tudor's approach is perhaps very literal or figurative in its use of objects connected with memories, it is also a proudly and intensely honest one. Andreia Popescu and Mihaela Cioaltea's contributions are also quite figurative and centred on memory but speak more of the energy of life cycles as shapers of personal and collective histories. What intrigued me the most, both on a visual and conceptual level, is the work of Silvia Cruceru,

"Un/Revealed", with its apparent duality in its title mimicking that of the theme itself, a combination of surfaces that sit on the precarious threshold between stability and decay, and an enigmatic statement unwilling to be read as either cynical or optimistic.

The last of the collectives exhibiting this year is, once again, Artesania Catalunya, the official organisation representing the Catalan craft sector at institutional as well as international level. Tasked with the pivotal role of adding contemporary craft to the Joya offering, in this second year of their participation they present ceramic sculpture by Alberto Bustos, glass objects by Ferran Collado and textile-based sculpture by Annie Michie, alongside the jewellery of Clara Niubò. I am particularly looking forward to seeing the ceramic work of Alberto Bustos in person, whose environmental concerns, through his tendrils trying to escape from and yet still managing to grow, thrive and stand out in a hostile environment, I feel become a poignant metaphor for the present human condition within the world we inhabit.