

*It is the urgent requirements of the present that drive us to review the events of the past not as a mere accumulation of erudite data, not as a dusty archive, but as the living and critical memory of human communities.*

Salvatore Settis, *Se Venezia muore*, Giulio Einaudi Editore, Turin, 2014

**Marzia Migliora**

***Velme***

**13 May – 26 November 2017**

**Venice, Ca' Rezzonico Dorsoduro 3136**

**curated by Beatrice Merz**

Inauguration: 12 May 2017, at 6.30 pm

Press open days: 10-11-12 May 2017, from 10 am to 6 pm

From 13 May to 26 November, the Fondazione Merz and MUVE, Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, present the *Velme* exhibition, a site-specific project by Marzia Migliora. The works are on display in some of the rooms of the Museo del Settecento Veneziano in the historic Palazzo Ca' Rezzonico.

The project is characterised by forms of expression that are recurrent in the artist's production: the desire to show that which is hidden and to bring out that which is submerged, the relationship with space and the history of places.

Marzia Migliora aims to bring out the contradictions and repeated exploitation – of natural resources, of human resources and labour, typical of the history of mankind – through the clues emerging from the history of the lagoon city and from the works conserved in Ca' Rezzonico, establishing a dialogue and contrasting them with those made by herself.

The artist accomplishes this here by extrapolating some elements from the collection, bringing them to life and showing them in a new light, shifting the point of view of the visitor, and by doing so returning them to us and to our times.

The title of the exhibition aptly summarises the considerations that underpin the project.

The word *velma* is the Venetian term for a shoal, indicating a shallow area in the lagoon that emerges during low tides. These shoals, just like the entire ecosystem of the Venetian lagoon, are at great risk because of the morphological degradation and erosion of the seabed, caused by a lack of awareness and the continued violations perpetrated by man.

The *velma*, the "meeting point" in the relationship between water and land, the symbol of something underwater that never stops emerging, thus becomes "an urgency of the present" and a bridge that connects us with the past.

The project comprises five installations carefully chosen by the artist and located in different rooms of the Palazzo.

In the *portego de mezo* – the typical feature of Venetian palaces that links the water gate to the door on the street – hosts a work called *La fabbrica illuminata* (literally the illuminated factory): 5 goldsmiths' workbenches illuminated by a row of neon lights and in which, on each upper shelf, a block of rock salt has been placed.

The installation and elements that go to make it up – salt, which was so vital in the trading history of Venice, also known as "white gold", and the goldsmiths' workbenches – refer to the exploitation of natural resources and labour needed to transform these into commercial goods and profit.

Pietro Longhi's famous work. *Il Rinoceronte (The Rhinoceros)* becomes a quotation and revelation for the *Taci, anzi parla*. (Be silent, no, speak) installation. The lady with the white robe depicted in the background of Longhi's painting wears a mask that at the time was exclusively for female use, called a *Moréta*: a black oval with two holes for the eyes. Women could fix the mask to the face just by clutching a gag bit between their teeth, which, of course, obliged them to silence.

The artist extrapolates the mask from the painting and places it at the centre of the boudoir, so that it is revealed to the public and can be seen in all its entirety, including the back.

The *quis contra nos*. (*Who against us*) installation bases itself on the crest of the Rezzonico family, present in different rooms of the building, and which in golden letters comprises the words *Si Deus pro nobis*.

Over the course of history, these words have been used on many occasions and manipulated to justify criminal acts, wars and mass murders by great dictators and men of power.

The phrase is taken from St. Paul (Romans, 8, 31) and in its original form reads: *si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos*. (If God be for us, who can be against us?). The omitted part of the motto is revealed by the action of Marzia Migliora, appearing on some mirrors in the palace collection.

The sculptural corpus of Ethiopians vase-holders by Andrea Brustolon and the fresco by Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo entitled *Mondo Novo* provide the basis for the eponymous installation by Marzia Migliora, located on the first floor.

The artist moves the statues of the Ethiopians forward and rotates them by 180 ° from their current position in the collection, marking this small displacement with the sort of metric rod used for the documentary photography of archaeological finds. Thanks to this move, the Ethiopians metaphorically take a step forward, marking a change in the direction of the "Mondo Novo" ("New world"): from enchained slaves and objects to human presences.

The installation located in the Longhi Room entitled *Remains*, consisting in a cast of a rhinoceros horn contained in a casket, again relates to Longhi's *The Rhinoceros*. The scene depicted in the painting – an animal become helpless prey, a sort of circus attraction, with the cut horn exhibited by a man like a trophy – is extremely topical: rhinos are increasingly threatened by poaching and illegal hunting because of their horns, today worth more than their weight in gold on the black market.

A catalogue will be published for the exhibition by the Fondazione Merz, with texts by Beatrice Merz and Alberto Salza.

[www.fondazionemerz.org](http://www.fondazionemerz.org)

[www.carezzonico.visitmuve.it](http://www.carezzonico.visitmuve.it)

Thanks to **Italkali** which supplied the natural Sicilian Salt rocks chosen by the artist in the Realmonte deposits

In partnership with **Lavazza**

#### EXHIBITION DETAILS

**Title:** Velme  
**Artist:** Marzia Migliora  
**Dates:** 13 May – 26 November 2017  
**Venue:** Ca' Rezzonico, Dorsoduro 3136, 30123 Venice  
**Curator:** Beatrice Merz  
**Inauguration:** 12 May at 6.30 pm  
**Press preview** 10-11-12 May 2017, from 10 am to 6 pm  
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