

GALERIE  
ALBERTA  
PANE

# Amami Alfredə

ROMINA DE NOVELLIS

CURATOR: MARTA PONSA

March 11, 2023

May 13, 2023

Opening: Saturday, March 11, from 4pm

**44 rue de Montmorency - 75003 Paris**

Opening times: Tue - Sat, 11am - 7pm and by appointment

The Alberta Pane Gallery is pleased to present in its new Parisian space the fourth solo show of Romina De Novellis.

Romina De Novellis is a performer, visual artist, and researcher, born in Naples, raised in Rome, and living in Paris since 2008. Trained as a dancer, she studies the body from an anthropological perspective through the prism of Mediterranean cultures. The artist uses ecofeminist theories as a parameter to analyze and denounce the oppressive realities of our societies and the dichotomies of nature-humanity, femininity-masculinity, north-south, scientific-intuitive, power-body, and establishment-counter-culture. She intends to highlight women's and men's reappropriation of feminine traits to challenge dominant models.

Curated by Marta Ponsa, this exhibition presents two projects: *Luna Park* (2018) and *Del maiale non si butta via niente* (2022). Through photography, video and installation, the works open a dialogue around the notions of control, surveillance and judgment that affect our perception of others, in particular females' bodies and the marginalized.

The title of the exhibition refers to that of Act II of *La Traviata* by Giuseppe Verdi, entitled *Amami Alfredo*. The first name Alfredo becomes Alfredə with the "schwa" (used in Italian non-binary inclusive writing) and encompasses women, men, and people with a non-binary identity. *Amami Alfredə* is a call for love on behalf of all living beings, an imploration to love and be loved despite non-normativity, and a prayer to embrace queer and be proud of it.

In the series of three performances entitled *Luna Park* produced in 2018, Romina De Novellis was invited by curator Léa Bismuth to think about "Vertiges" in the work of George Bataille in the exhibition *La Traversée des Inquiétudes*, presented at Labanque in Béthune. In response to this proposal, the artist focused her research on our relationship to the body and differences in our Western society by studying discordant or suffering bodies or those subjected to social pressure, such as those of women, those people with reduced mobility, those of the elderly, or all those who go beyond the classical representation schemes. She confronts the exclusion of different bodies with some religious rituals attached to the culture of Naples.

*Del maiale non si butta via niente* was first performed at the Jeu de Paume in Paris during the exhibition *Renverser ses yeux. Autour de l'arte povera* (October 2022) in response to Jannis Kounellis' *Untitled (Twelve Live Horses)* performance, which was realized in 1969. Dressed in a party dress and presented as a woman object surrounded by confetti, the artist locks herself up for a day in a pig breeding cage to denounce how our societies consume animals' bodies. The violent treatment reserved for them by the agri-food industry (mistreatment, harmful industrial food, excessive reproduction, and birth control) is not very different from what some women may experience. The body, and not only one of the females, is an object to be watched and maintained in a productivist goal. This action, close and far from Kounellis' performance, affirms a co-presence with the animal and, more generally, a new sensitivity towards the living.

The exhibition is accompanied by a text by Marta Ponsa. \*

\* Art historian Marta Ponsa oversees artistic projects and cultural activities at the Jeu de Paume in Paris, where she organizes cinema cycles, conferences, and performances. In addition, as an exhibition curator, she has carried out projects on European photography from the 1920s to the 1950s, on video and experimental and documentary cinema, and digital creations, notably in Jeu de Paume's online creative space. She regularly lectures at international institutions dedicated to image and contemporary creation, film festivals, and educational institutions such as the National Superior School of Photography of Arles, the Pompeu Fabra University of Barcelona, and the University of Geneva. Among the last exhibitions, she has organized 'Le Supermarché des images' with philosopher Peter Szendy, 'Travaux en cours: Noëlle Pujol, Ben Rivers et Ana Vaz,' and the solo exhibition of artist Marine Hugonnier. She is currently preparing a program by Mexican filmmaker Nicolas Pereda and an exhibition with the works of Chantal Akerman.



Romina De Novellis, *Luna Park*, 2018, color video, HD quality 1920×1080, two channels, mono sound, edition 1/3 + 2 AP, duration: 9m03s.

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In her artistic projects, Romina De Novellis confronts crucial issues of our current society, such as ecology and sensitivity towards living creatures, consumerism, emigration, inequalities, the pressure of social conventions, and the question of identity. Beginning her career as a dancer, activity that she had to abandon after an accident, she creates works with her own body in which she questions the dominant cultural and social role models.

Her photographs, performances, or installations are often inspired by religious and popular traditions that come from the Mediterranean folklore, particularly from Italy, where she is originally from. However, she transforms these customs and traditions to give them an emancipatory and subversive meaning.

Her artistic and anthropological research focuses on the exclusion and violence on Women and other minority groups (disabled people, transsexuals, non-binary identities, elderly people or migrants). In some of her works she bonds with these communities to engage them in collective public actions of rare and solemn power. In her solo performances, De Novellis tests the endurance of her body through stagings inspired by subjects from the history of Italian painting, where the artist challenges the audience with her incisive gaze.

This exhibition presents two projects that denounce with determination and provocation; the violence exerted on the body of women, and other minorities, as well as the control, surveillance, and judgment that permeate our gaze towards non-normative bodies.

In the first video of *Luna Park* (2018), members of the LGBTQ+ association of Naples and the group Alcigay (that incorporates migrants and people with disabilities) walk in procession through Edenlandia park. This solemn march brings together non-normative bodies that, guided by De Novellis, walk proudly through an abandoned park. The video ends with a carousel that makes them turn and disappear and fly away to a utopian Eden, where the typical carnival sound environment of the beginning becomes the musical introduction of *Amami Alfredo* from *La Traviata* by Giuseppe Verdi.

The second video presents a heterogeneous group of people (men, women, transsexuals, migrants, and people with disabilities) who turn in circles in the courtyard of Naples's old prison and a psychiatric hospital. The different bodies, accompanied by Romina naked, turn around at the sound of the children's song *Giro, giro, tondo* ("turn, turn, round"), that encourages to walk in a circle and then fall all together on the ground. This repetitive circular action becomes a metaphor for the discomfort of the confinement and the surveillance to which bodies in prison are subjected. The presence of a carousel reminds us of the counterpoint of the playful and entertaining purpose of the attraction park and the children's rhyme. This project was conceived

specifically for the exhibition *La Traversée des Inquiétudes*, presented at Labanque de Béthune under the curatorship of Léa Bismuth.

*Del maiale non si butta via niente* (2022) is in response to Jannis Kounellis's performance, *Untitled (Twelve Live Horses)* from 1969. Dressed in an evening dress, the artist locks herself up for a day in a sow breeding cage to show how society consumes women's bodies and those of animals. The birth control rate and mastery characterizes intensive breeding and its economic profitability, a significant stake in the food industry. The female body is an object to be monitored and maintained with an attention to productivity. In traditional cultures, the sacrifice of the pig is a popular festival that brings people together. De Novellis' action, both close and distant from Kounellis' performance, affirms closeness to the animal and, more generally, a new sensitivity towards living creatures. Dramatically, the artist blows in a serpentine whistle throughout the performance, symbolizing the animal's last breath of life, while a real pig's grunts concludes the piece. This performance was realized for the first time at the Jeu de Paume in Paris within the exhibition *Renverser ses yeux. Autour de l'Arte Povera* (October 2022).

These two projects by Romina De Novellis denounce the violence against women's bodies and people challenging established norms. Facing the vulnerability and discrimination of these bodies in public spaces, De Novellis offers proud and combative strategies for emancipation.

Marta Ponsa \*, March 2023