

# LETIA in short

selected works 2021-2024

# LETIA (Letizia Cariello)

*Copparo (FE) - 1963*

## «My works are quantum travels» (LETIA)

Letizia Cariello, who has gone by the stage name LETIA since 2021, has focused her research on the materialisation of time, using everyday objects to create a web of relationships that make time perceptible through her precious work.

Her education is extensive: she holds a degree in art history and is a professor of Artistic Anatomy at Brera University. She has a deep interest in music, which plays a key role in her poetics. In her language, sound and rhythm are closely linked to space and proportionality of environments, much like in classical Greek and Latin culture, and can be measured and made visible even in the floor plan of a house.

Her works have a meditative, existential character and take various forms: Calendari [Calendars], Gates, but also performances, installations, videos, embroidered photos, book-objects, Red Threads that cross a wide range of materials. The Calendari [Calendars] in which the dates, months, and days define the beginning and the end of the performance, consist of

a dense list of numbers and letters handwritten with a chisel on marble, stone or, in some cases, on fabric embellished with gold or bronze leaf inserts.

LETIA's contemplative predisposition has also led her to create Gates made up of wool weaves on a system of square-headed nails that are meant to evoke connections with the dimension of the self in close correlation with the concept of energy, as explored by quantum physics.

Born into a family of Neapolitan origin dedicated to sculpture since the seventeenth century, LETIA started drawing before the age of three under the guidance of her paternal grandfather and has never stopped.



# CALENDARS

1999-2024

On a disassembled canvas, the artist, without the aid of tools - squares, meters, pencils, tracing paper - traces two points, one indicating the center of an ideal circle and the other indicating the distance of a radius. Starting from the center, she begins to write the dates following the curvature of the circle: a letter for the day of the week and a number to indicate the day of the month, beginning with the day she writes. "Time is what is to come, not what has passed/lime is what must come, not what is passed.

*«(...)Detaching oneself from reality is not complicated, the difficult thing is to dive into time like an arrow; to pass the surface layer and enter into time. I use markers to write, you have to keep the tip very vertical, have a steady wrist and a careful arm. If I'm not focused on the name of the day I'm writing, I can make mistakes and then it is necessary to erase them. As in watercolors, one mistake can be fatal. You can't cheat no matter how clever you are, the calendar is a harsh truth.»*

*«The time of Calendari is sidereal, the planets are constantly spinning, above all and everyone, unite your life and that of the peasants, who know and follow the biological weather which is that of the seasons, of natural and spiritual life. Because the peasants are incredibly spiritual, not in the sense of spiritual thought, which is that of philosophers, but of spirituality which is the inner one and it is not translatable intuitive. Future time is a number, an abstract, conventional date, meanwhile, I am here, I can't imagine it. No one is sure of the future, and then, writing it down and putting it in time, I'm sure. I wrote it. I see it.*

*Calendari on marble are those of perennial time, the most ruthless, because, like it or not, it is so. in others, however, there is all our fragility, the possibility of skidding, of making mistakes.»*

(excerpt from the Catalogue of "Il Tuo Cielo è Verde", LETIA's Anthological exhibition at Filatoio Rosso di Caraglio curated by Olga Gambari)





**Calendario Stellato 2023**

Hand-engraved writing by chisel on Carrara marble  
and gold embroidery Ø cm 60, Unique Edition



**Calendario Pianeta** 2023

Hand-engraved writing by chisel gold interventions on pink marble of Portugal with brass pin Ø cm 70, Unique Edition



Calendario Neoplatonico 2022

Hand-engraved writing by chisel gold interventions on Carrara marble disc with hole in centre, velvet ground Ø cm 40, Unique Edition



**Calendario Suono del Tempo** 2023

Ink writing on bed linen, gold embroidery tree's branches  
painted in gold, Ø cm 180, Unique Edition

# la Lettura

// 558  
Settimanale  
7 settembre 2021  
Euro 1,00



7.

Letizia Cariello (Letia)  
per il Corriere della Sera

Calendario R-G 2022

Pen on paper and red stitching, Unique Edition



# GATES

2019-2024

Gates is a series of windows drawn freehand on sheets of tracing paper and then transposed onto walls by tapping farrier nails along the outlines. After recreating the shapes, strands of red wool are woven between the nails, which act as hooks to form a colorful mesh. The nails planted along the contours of the design are both loom and back and forth of a three-dimensional hatch: the crossing of the wool threads creates a pattern in space and, simultaneously, a design that can be touched with the eyes and hands.

Windows represent inner places that create passages between inner and outer space. By creating passages, they heal bonds and rebuild lost connections. Passages between opening and closing. What is strong is out of time, as when entering a Borromini building you have the feeling of a body inside the space. They are born from the love for design and architecture, for the border and the silence. They are possibilities of crossing in multiple directions with the body, or with the gaze. They define everything we need: to look outside, through the grate - which is not always a prison - formed by the weaving of wool.

*«The Gates are a raid and a presence of the East, there is all the Western culture of the Gothic, of the Romanesque, but then here is the plot decorated with a carpet, between curved lines and geometries, and it comes out in the East.*

*In the end, the West... East... there are no profound differences, the primary functions of people are the same, the doing and gestures of the peasants, for example.*

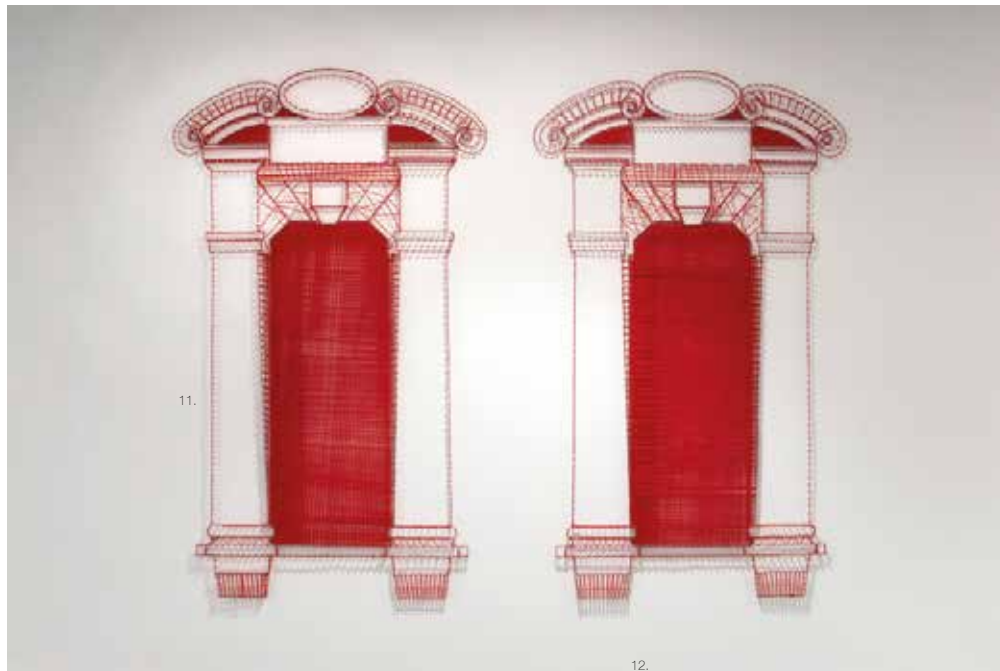
*Those who work according to natural cycles of the earth are the only ones to relate to the universal language of this planet. For this, it is a wise room, that should be listened to in its inescapable naturalness, of the order of things.»*

(excerpt from the Catalogue of "Il Tuo Cielo è Verde", LETIA's Anthological exhibition at Filatoio Rosso di Caraglio curated by Olga Gambari)





**Gate Lucca** 2020  
Nails with square head and weaving of red wool thread  
on poplar disk treated with lime, Ø cm 160



11.

13.

12.

Gate #0 Bocconi 2020-2021

Site-specific nails with square head and weaving of red wool thread on curved drywall cm 220 x 300 x 4

14.



**Gate Finestra Armena** 2021

Nails with square head and weaving of red wool thread on carpet mounted on wooden structure with gold profiles cm 160 x105 x 6

# IL TUO CIELO È VERDE

2021

*IL TUO CIELO È VERDE " (Your sky is green ) is the first anthological exhibition about LETIA's work Curated by Olga Gambari in the XVII sec wonderful museum location of Filatoio di Caraglio, Piedmont, the project aligns , displayed through five monumental rooms , the main chapters of Letizia Cariello's research until 2021. The exhibition has been hold from June to September 2021 and it is accompanied by a catalogue with texts of Olga Gambari, Andreina d'Agliano, Massimo Minini and Francesco Vetrò. A piano performance by the famous musician Gile Bae in LETIA's installation Thinkerbell marked the finissage of the show.*

*Writes Minini in the exhibition catalogue: «(...) But Letizia is an artist who knows what she does. Or rather, he does not know when he starts a job but then understands in the course of work, and the initially vague incipit takes shape, informs it, and gives body. (...) In the exhibition, there are the famous calendars of Letizia, tempus fugit, it seems to say. Still, the rotation of stones, mirrors, or canvases makes us turn our heads like in a roundabout or a chairplane.*

*We feel that sense of intoxication that the dervishes that turn on the spines to the rhythm of the Katakali anklets have.*

*E gira tutto intorno alla stanza mentre si danza, with Gile, who plays a chacony at full speed on a spinet at an increasingly frantic rhythm until the exhaustion and fall of the dancers. The first who gets up has an intuition: he rushes to the cage, grabs two vertical straight wires, spreads them apart as Gino de Dominicis would have done in his oblique prison, and thus creates a gap to give a path of salvation to the birds that chirped inside the cage and that now sing with full throat from happiness, in the seventh heaven. (..)»*



# THINKERBELL

2021-2023

## THINKERBELL

Installation. Golden aluminium Ø 3 m, h 3.80 m, carpets, building cord, crates, wireless sound speaker, J.S.Bach music, 2021-2023

Thinkerbell is a project on subtle matter and quantum leaps, a cage that reproduces in monumental size a 19th-century style bird cage, without a base and resting on outdoor mats, with a small door that allows access to the structure and a large ring on top, like those on top of travel cages. The cage is nearly four meters high and has a base diameter of just over three meters, calculated to accommodate a woman seated at the piano or four violinists playing pass each other a rewrite of Bach's music. The music comes out and spreads outside the gilded grates even after the musicians have left the cage.

It is a vision that evokes the cages where maidens and cocottes kept small birds, keeping them company by singing, often fulfilling the task of a simulated child, a small helpless being to care for.

It is unclear whether the weave of red that makes it necessary to make an effort of visual concentration to distinguish their silhouettes is there to protect them or to cage them better. That we will never know. Nor will we know whether into that golden cage, musicians and music went voluntarily, or whether it was someone who locked them there.

Acquired by Fondazione Brescia Musei coll in 2024





# BEAUCEANT E ARACNE

2023

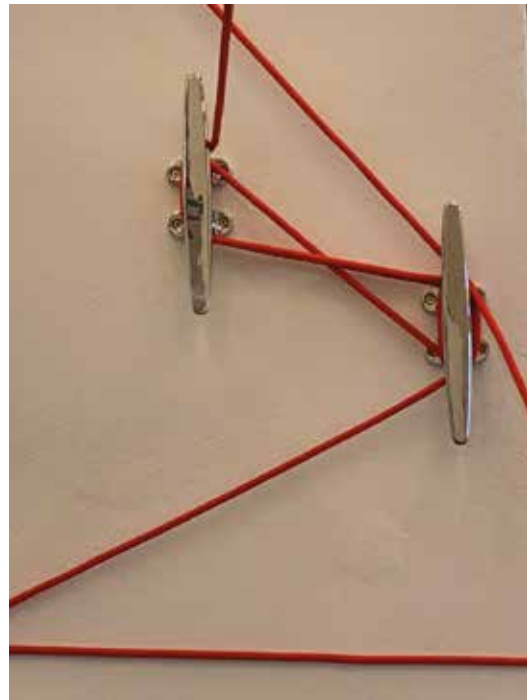
An installation project that transforms the space of the Great Mile into a great arsenal, an ideal space redesigned inwardly that is inspired by the Church of Santo Stefano dei Cavalieri in Pisa whose walls house banners and trophies from the Battle of Lepanto and that reproduces the intertwining shrouds and tops of the great sailing ships departing.

Beauceant, named after the banner of the Knights Templar who set out on a voyage with the goal of inner transformation, consists of carpets from the Zeleski Collection mounted on frames supported by pulleys, sea cleats and steel stirrups with the help of red sail ropes, in a play of weaves reminiscent of the latticework of sailing ship shrouds.

Arachne is a kind of labyrinth that accompanies the visitors' path and unwinds thanks to a sequence of handrails of mirror-polished steel designed by the artist, crossed by a single red elbow that guides people like the ancient myth of Ariadne's thread.

## Expositions

2023, I nodi dei giardini del paradiso Brescia (in collaboration with Fondazione Brescia Musei)







# ECHELLE

2023

*The Echelle exhibition project presents a collection of artworks that revolve around the theme of energy, emphasizing the importance of sharing and transformation. The Angelicum – a renowned Franciscan venue that is deeply ingrained in Milan's cultural scene – opens the fall 2023 season expanding its visual art offerings. Cariello's solo exhibition proposes a symbolic significance of dialogue, contact, and message linked to the concept of care and sharing: a journey to be made together both as a community and as individuals, a path that takes on the value of elevation.*

*"We are infinitely, extremely, and joyfully powerful, and this crossing, which is life, has the sole purpose of putting us in contact with that very universe world that we rarely keep in mind. In my works, I want the tones of a deep sensitivity through which we perceive the greatness within ourselves to be the protagonist. (LETIA).*

*The exhibition, in all its artworks, is an invitation, and at the same time a guide for traversing one life's journey. It is a staircase to climb, to rise from the material condition towards a higher*

*spirituality that is freedom, and knowledge. This is the intimate meaning of the title of the exhibition, Echelle (scala), and of the dialogue with the Franciscan place that hosts it. (Olga Gambari)*





# WIND OF CHANGE

2023

## WIND OF CHANGE

Performance, curated by Adriana Polveroni  
special project on the occasion of "Arte in Nuvola"  
Roma 2023

*A thread the color of blood and a needle moving between the fingers of the artist. Hours and hours stitching a sail as a metaphor for a deep suture. Never, as in these days, does a performance succeed in capturing the drama of the historical moment we are going through. Because the artist's gaze always goes beyond.*





# PER TE MYRIAM DI MIGDEL

2024

PER TE MYRIAM DI MIGDEL (to you Myriam of Migdel)

nails with square head and weaving of red wool thread, polished steel and hair on wooden structure treated with lime. Red strings and hooks

Site Specific installation, 2024

LETIA's work revolves around the subject of Mary Magdalene.

The polittico consists in two wooden pieces articulated in a single structure with hinges. The upper part is ogive shaped and it leans outwards. The piece is held back by red ropes fixed all around to the wall of the room as if an aureola. On the surface of the upper part the artist arranged one of her typical "Gates" where a pattern of shapes inspired to the "Sezione Aurea" lives together with the outlines of the faces and hands as they appear in the Bellini's cimasa. In the lower part of her work, Letizia Cariello presents a mirror polished steel panel from where a braid of her own hair leans out hang on a hook. the result is a short circuit between the identity of the Maddalena protagonist of Bellini's opera and the identity of the artist herself.

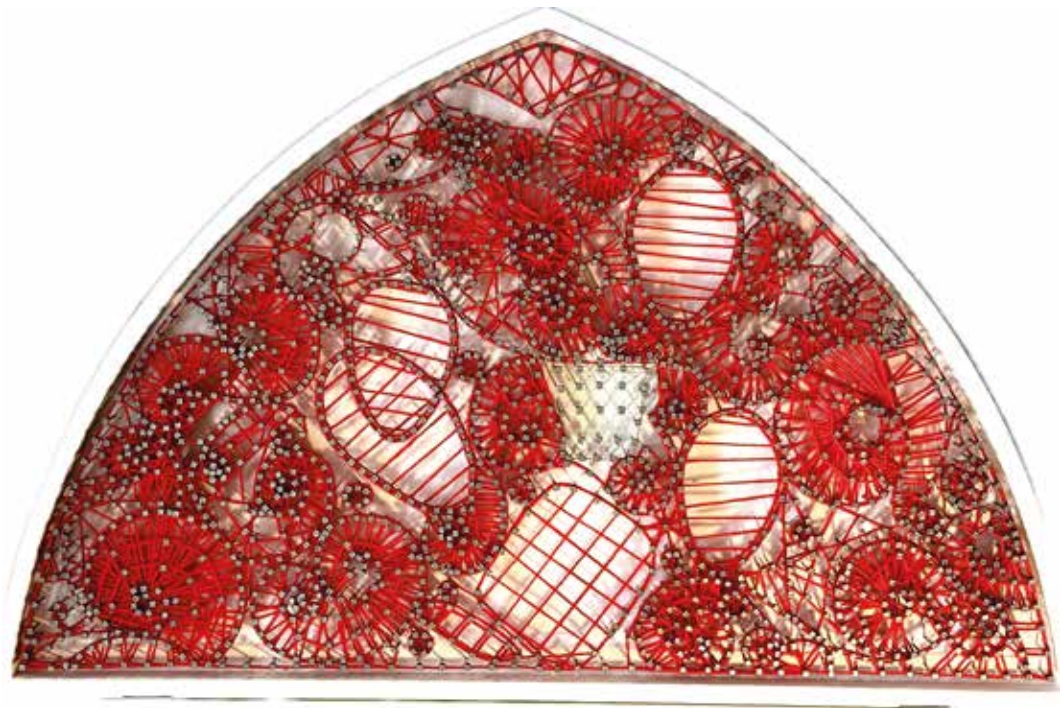
Exhibition

"Quattro artisti davanti a Bellini ", curated by Giuseppe Frangi  
Museo Diocesano, Milano Feb -May 2024

The exhibition projects shwocases four contemporary artist's works as the results of a dialogue with the famous "Compianto su Cristo Morto " By Giovanni Bellini, lent by the Vatican 's Museums of Rome to the Milanese istitution









# INTERWEAVINGS

2024

*Interweavings means 'entanglements'. Our lives unfold and rewind in a continuous bounce that plays out within the same web. The energy that drives us along a seemingly unpredictable and illogical trajectory acts within the same web. It is from this conscious conviction that all my research develops, in the knowledge that everything that affects another soul affects me. Every gesture I perform reverberates on every other creature. And vice versa. In other words, we are all connected. Not from a moralistic or charitable point of view, but really because it is a physical law that governs the universe. This awareness has become urgent in the historical moment we live in. My installation is played out in dialogue with the blind archway of the cloister, and is constructed using red rope and bollards screwed to the wall, which function like transformers and display an energy field. It is the same force that drives the decisions we think we can delegate to others, forgetting that it is our way of thinking and acting that produces and influences decisions along a chain at the ends of which stand the humans who seem delegated to take them. Instead, the destiny of humans is a higher level of*

*inner awareness and knowledge. We are all actors in a migration and our journeys can end in the abyss or at landings. Whichever way you look at it, you cannot get out of it: it is a law. Exactly.*

## INTERWEAVINGS

*steel bollards and red rope branches sticks painted in gold and dry flowers, 370 x 294 cm*

*Site specific installation, Fondazione Made in Cloister, 2024*





# Lea Vergine

Edizioni Charta

If you think you are watching a videorecording of the Pontresina municipal swimming pool, where a young woman - the author herself -, in a swimming costume designed by her, goes for a swim to the soundtrack of Renaissance music (after having been distressed by bandages, a hood, a video camera and a laryngophone), well, you are very much mistaken. Of course Cariello slices through the water, of course there is the dynamic discharge released in the rhythmic motion, in which the course is cadenced by the regular succession of opposing phases; but there is, and it takes over, a form of unreasonableness that constitutes another rule, a different and diverse perspective on the real world. It is useless to wonder about egotries, compensatory fantasies, forced needs, missed acts, forbidden actions, disturbing extravagances. Why, from what does it all originate? From the pursuit, I believe, of the idea of love. For this is what Art is: a shadow or an echo of love, an attempt to embody it, an attempt destined to often only provoke soul maceration, dragging the loss of the one true goal for us all.

Letizia Cariello is difficult. She seems not to address the audience, the viewer, by tracing, as she does in 'Hallenbad Project', discontinuous gestures in an arbitrary dimension. So, there is a small story (which is also a small story) of a female

swimmer who plunges into the water, almost submerges, re-emerges, descends back into the pool, and ascends again. Cariello glosses over this story: Bernard Berenson's granddaughter in a famous Kubric film; medieval madonnas in wood and stone; the Cholmondeley Ladies, with their puppets under the seventeenth-century ruff, and on and on... glosses for 21 minutes and 26 seconds. 'When you swim, you stop the mounting anxiety, the laboured breathing... the thoughts no longer crowd together and come one at a time...' says Cariello. This story, the little story of the swimmer, is broken up (Carucci's mannerist deposition, the swimming bodies, the green and yellow rosaries of the floats, the tattoos on the skin of the body, the figures of a real film crew who photograph her, help her dress, mount the camera on her skull) and is left, the story, seemingly without head or tail (the video begins with the ceramic tiles of the pool on which the water flows and ends with the 19th-century edition of " Lo specchio di vera penitenza " by F. J.Passavanti Fiorentino).

Cariello, she seems to take it for granted that the viewer already knows the before, the after and the why of her work; and that the viewer is only interested in grasping the visual clues, i.e. those disturbing shrieks and gasps that indicate how at a certain point

and time in the flow of images and sounds lies, hidden, the key to the story; or even an enigma. The author has gained, through her schizoid, elementary, meek and plush storytelling, not only a visual style (let us say that in her case this is something she has already experienced in the works that have represented her in galleries and museums for the past four years) but her own worldview. Iterating the strokes in the lanes with silences or with Gesualdo da Venosa's madrigals or with excerpts from Pontorno's diary means, in this case, evading, being reticent and suggesting the uncoordinated vision, listening and reading, not centring them on the character-author who prepares to swim and then swims and then comes out dry and then nods, talks, crouches on the floor next to one of the family members. It means, instead, shifting attention to the collateral, to the periphery of the place that hosts her, to what is happening around her, to the theatre of the dressing (and the Polaroids that have just been taken showing her in profile, in front, and from behind; and the technician who mounts the camera on her black hood, while she appears as if she is being tortured - and away with the madrigal voices - ; and the white bandages under her cap as in the very famous painting of Catherine of Siena by Andrea Vanni or as in Rudolf Schwarzkogler's self-portrait ).

Cariello traces his erratic paths and imposes on the spectator a hostile communication, a relationship of elaborate and programmed insubstantiality, often indecipherable but always studied in its tiniest recesses. As if the choice of this bodily exercise did not matter so much: the artifice of the ceremonial in the swimming pool is little more than a pretext for pointing out superimpositions and improbable plots, abstract and demediated linguistic whimsy, in which to make his smiling face appear but affected by Kirkegardian tremor or the cover of Sartre's 'The Kidnapped of Altona' or to hear the voices in the background with the typical echo of places where sport is practised. Just as it is a pretext to be forced to listen, against the backdrop of the noise of the water, to interjections, voices and dispersive sounds, to the reading of the pages of Teresa D'Avila or Hannah Arendt or the responsories or motets of Gesualdo. The spectator is subjected, with adolescent insistence, to a kind of visual and sonic acupuncture that forces him into an interpretative tension as he tries to order the multiple solicitations disseminated along the way. He must attempt to decipher the arduous and knotted complexity of the whole. It is precisely an insubstantial (in appearance) sequence of visions cooked up with a series of small, artificial and specious actions of feigned simplicity that serve to transform 'Hallenbad' into a destabilising game. Rumbles, non-sense, rambling fragments: perhaps this is the story. Cariello does not conclude.

Her fixation on the swimming pool and on the figure of the swimmer, which she emphasises with acuity - the brand of swimming cap, the yellow belt, the white bathrobe, the children swimming, the back and forth in the lanes, the camera screwed

onto the black cap, the plastic goggles - all presented with a slightly monstrous stubborn intensity, highlights another typical character of Cariello: the great extraneousness (or distance or indifference) of these minimal happenings or minimal data that neither cross, nor contradict, nor accompany each other, but seem to live by their exclusive and inexplicable vibration. In addition, the fanatical underlining of the fragment, of gestures, noises and sounds, also implies a process of ironisation and, at the same time, of contestation of this. Of course, this is metaphysical irony and contestation as a call to witness.

After all, Cariello is taking us for a bit of a ride. One looks at the comings and goings of the group of technicians that follows her as if it were a war or a group game or a carrot race. In the face of any coherence (but does Cariello know this?), the author amuses herself with a quiet madness that makes her bite and chew the edge of things. It makes her bypass the knots, slip on the tangents of the theme, of the theme of her works, which is, essentially, fear and the fatigue of living. In this she specialises. She extracts from it excruciating suggestions, impervious conjugations and conjunctions, mysterious mismatches. She recovers, with exasperated narcissism, the verses of the Prince of Venosa, the figures of Pontormo, the 'relaciones y mercedes' of the mysticism of Avila, Catherine's letters, the perplexity and the swimmer's desire for seduction; and she spices up all these instants as autonomous. Perhaps she draws on all this repertoire only to understand - herself - what she will not show. So a perturbing presence that, one stroke after another, shows almost nothing. And it is here that it is never declared, never made explicit, how the malice of this non-personage consists in the

emptiness, in the echoes, in the fancies, in the censures, in an innocent perversion, prone to a well-mannered yearning for dissolution, to an unnamed death, that accompanies Cariello's entire oeuvre. Does the swimmer with the beautiful, weathered face, the lost young woman - perhaps less perhaps more than a woman - besieged by forms of life she feels hostile, weep in the water of the pool?

Cariello skims over the detail, the minimal datum, the irrelevant thing: he barely lets it appear, as if in penumbra, the essential theme above. Only little by little do we understand (and feel) how acute and strategic is the technique of evasion, of deviation; the continuous shifting of attention that leads to those tasty echoes and noises and sounds that are both banal and significant that are "Hallenbad". Only if the spectator bends not to see and not to know - but only to guess - the central theme, the punctum dolens (of all of us, by the way), only if he allows himself to be deceived by the ambiguous itineraries of his little story, will he be able to access that limited but burning part of existence that Cariello has decided to offer. Which is, arguably, the very essence of language.

That's it. But there is still much to be said about Cariello, I think; and also about 'Hallenbad'.

# Giorgio Verzotti

## Seven Gates

Letizia Cariello says that drawing is the matrix of thought, that there is an inner prototype for everything, preliminary to every action. Thus she draws seven different windows on the walls of the Galleria Fumagalli exhibition space: they seem to exist there like Neoplatonic suggestions of her Inspirations. She was searching for an ur-window, a window-type, namely the Platonic ideal, an archetypal form that transcends history. To do this she has questioned history and selected seven window typologies that strongly convey its meaning. There is the double-arched window, used in late antiquity, in Byzantine Ravenna and then in the Gothic period, for which it became an emblem (and obviously replicated in abundance in late nineteenth-century neo-Gothic villas). There is the curved-arch window, which we see as far back as the Coliseum, and the window surmounted by a tympanum, as in Greek and Roman temples, which then comes back into favor in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. The Serlian window, named for Sebastiano Serlio, who describes it in *I sette Libri dell'architettura* (The Seven Books of Architecture, 1537-75) is the most complex, with a central arched opening flanked by two trabeated openings. This too is ancient in derivation, with origins in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. It was taken up in the Mannerist period and then by Palladio, who also adopts the Thermal window, so-called

because it first appears in the Baths (terme) of Diocletian. Then there is what we (Cariello and I) have arbitrarily defined as Modernist, the bare, basic rectangular window, which, especially for modern architects, (starting with Adolf Loos), was meant to signify the disappearance of distinctive signs of class on building facades. And finally there is the round, porthole window, which significant architects such as Mario Botta have more recently chosen from the major architectural orders.

These figures have been drawn on sheets of tracing paper, some large and, as the artist specifies, executed freehand, with some, but little measurement.

She adds that in order to make them, there must be an arm, following eye and thought, which opens up the space for her and for others. We might say that the idea is embodied, finds in the physicality of doing, its realization in the languages of reality. Thus the drawing, the eminently mental dimension that qualifies the work of art, does not see the body as a mere tool, imperfect by nature, for its grand manifestation. Here, instead, the idea is reversed, becoming only body. arm guided by thought but also by the senses.

A double voice traverses the entire installation. The drawing might

seem generated by a somewhat academic practice, but in reality it acts as a guide to what is truly an "anti-artistic" manuality; nails are hammered along the drawn outlines, functioning as hooks for red wool threads that are interwoven to form a mesh, weavings that chromatically ignite the walls, already studded with elegant and varied forms that now, according to the artist, can be touched with the eyes and hands. Again thought and senses. A play of references, metonymies opens up, the room stands for house, for architecture, and metaphorically the house is the body, the architecture is the head provided with eyes for looking out. There is a strong reference to the place set aside for meditation, the "chamber of the mind", the "inner castle" of the mystics to whom Cariello has turned in earlier work. In previous works, red wool threads also united different elements of the same type. objects or trees: here they apparently close things off. At first glance the artist plays with paradoxes. She draws windows, which would be openings, but in reality she depicts them closed, covered by grates, defending inside from a disturbing or even dangerous outside. In reality a grate is a diaphragmi, a filter that separates and distinguishes, but also puts two sides in communication. it is no accident that she calls them not windows, but gates - an opening, point of passage. but also a barrier, and also, precisely, a grille.

From a grate, viewers can look outside without being observed, you cannot look at the veiled women of Islam, but they look out at us.

The execution brings out another duality: the nails seem hammered at regular distances, which, in fact, are measured by eye, and thus there are minimal imprecisions that become visible when the red thread is stretched out. We see lines that go from being straight to diagonal; at some points warp and weft expand, creating sail gaps; in other words manuality disseminates surfaces with small compromises into an impulse-driven disorder. What the artist specifically wants, her order, tied to the body, to making and to what we might call the effort of making, allows her to contain and contemplate its reversal. Letizia Carriello's dual voice (again, her threads tie together objects, two by two) thus draws an ambiguous space. The opening is virtual, the window drawn: the closure, the nails and wool threads, are real, material, solid. But virtual and real refer to each other. The windows are the building's eyes, and our eyes are the windows of the soul. Carriello's work is valid as a meditation on architecture as the art of building, and at the same time it adopts architecture as a metaphor for our being in the world. The inner space, the "chamber of the mind," gives us direction, a discipline capable of orienting us amidst the multiform stimuli we receive in the outside world. Baroque mystics also found their "inner castle" in monastery gardens, and it sufficed to draw a square on the ground and to "lean out" from there toward the other. And a present-day mystic, Adriana Zari, has wisely written that a hermitage is not a snail shell.

# Francesco Tedeschi

## Over time

Over time, Letizia Cariello's "work" has taken on characteristics that define it in the contemporary art scene. The use of different media, the way they are combined, and the resulting image are fully integrated into the languages of the present. However, her way of being and doing does not confine itself to the realm of news, assuming aspects of depth rooted in an expanded temporality. Placing oneself in the course of time is also one of the themes that identify the fundamental nature of her creations, starting from the "Calendars" with which she has accompanied her creations since the late nineties, marking the dates following the starting day of each. Her "Calendars" are, in a sense, annotations directed towards the time ahead of us rather than the present. In this perspective, they differ from diary-like or memorialistic qualifications. In her daily exercise – and much of her various processes are composed of daily routines – they become a way of predefining the passage of time. The notations, composed in the manner of an ancient-scented manual script, are engraved on various surfaces, from paper to stone, featuring the initial of the day and the corresponding number, with few or almost no additional marks, seemingly intending to reduce time to a succession of the identical. However, with this mode of operation, it's as if Letizia Cariello expresses a trust in surrendering to what lies ahead of us. Without determinism, but with an almost obsessive

choice of fidelity to daily action corresponding to her way of being and feeling.

The passage of time also appears in photographic documentations of flowers, especially roses, immortalized as they decay, displaying signs of deterioration. In the tradition of still life, the beauty of detail also represents the moment when the peak of ripeness cracks, becoming a symbol of transience. In a certain sense, the use of thread, that red thread, whether wool or cotton, symbolizing blood or life flowing among things, words, and the spaces in which it unfolds, is also related to the passage of time. This is another constant factor adopted to distinguish her work, a visible trace to reconnect the here and elsewhere, as in the windows or thresholds – "Gates" – she has presented on some recent occasions. Silhouettes of windows, following various stylistic forms, from medieval mullioned windows to austere Renaissance windows to the linear ones of modern architecture, elaborated on walls and thus blind, leading back to contact with the interior, to that interiority to which Letizia Cariello has dedicated numerous works, rethinking the relationship between the most intimate dimension of enclosed space, the room where Caterina da Siena withdrew, or the monastic cells, which are not separated from the outside, entering into relationship with the

open, the infinite, the absolute. It is precisely this contact between the intimate dimension, of an inner investigation, but not autobiographical, and the relationship with the outside, in a worldly or universal projection, that perhaps best embodies the reason for Cariello's work.

In the confined space of a closed place, a room, a box, or even the center of a labyrinth, one can perceive the opening of light, the appearance of that infinite in which interiority is overturned. A process that may seem "mystical," compared to an operation nourished by the instant and dialoguing with the forms of art, the present, and times past. Her way of acting reflects indeed the obsessiveness of recent art forms, insisting on motifs and mental constraints that become style, but this obsessiveness itself can respond to a "religious" connotation. Such terms, long avoided and now almost abused, in her way of operating serve to describe a fact rather than to emphasize an aspiration. A repetitive and almost mechanical way of acting can only be supported by a higher reason: that of the creative condition, based on a relationship between manual skill and moral rigor, or that of someone who makes a life choice precisely "religious."

The encounter between these two worlds, otherwise distant,

recurs in various moments of Letizia Cariello's work, not tied to liturgical reasons or ecclesiastical commissions, but as a subject that in the simplicity of doing finds its coincidence with worlds and ways of being that maintain their independence, their respective "secularity." From this arises, for example, the Book of Silence, composed by reproducing in a limited number of copies a different combination of "Calendars," fragments of a text styled as a letter addressed to those immersed in reading, rose petals and wildflower blooms, images of details taken from works of the past, with the presence of the red thread distinguishing the narrative line, for which Cariello entrusted the enclosed nuns of the Viboldone Abbey, who sewed and assembled the materials. Among the works that characterize an attitude apparently distant from the noises of the present, this operation seems to be properly defined in a religious framework, which is not, however, to be understood in a reductionist and sectorial sense. The attitude with which Cariello relates to such a secluded and discreet condition naturally arises from the way things take shape. Even though, in some of her projects, she resorts to forms and tools of such a nature, the entirety of her work, composed of many and varied solutions, which involve physical contact with things like the possibility of resuming a mental dialogue with the history of art or with some literary or philosophical text, responds to a perspective that contemplates, in the present, the sense of an infinite that is philosophical and cosmic, as well as religious.

On this line, solutions like the one recently realized in Milan, in the "showcase" of Building Box, where Cariello traced, this time with

white wool and fluorescent paint, a web of threads reflecting the silhouette of a constellation, Chiron, with which to return to the concept of a cosmic order, quoting Platonic Nous. Also, this, like other interventions conceived in relation to space, the form of narrative in which to develop, the solicitations of forms and sensations to reflect upon, expresses a projectuality born from the artist's strong sensitivity to listening, to bending over the minutiae of everyday life, to discover those reasons that surpass the constraints of the present.





## LETIA (Letizia Cariello)

[www.letiziacariello.com](http://www.letiziacariello.com)

[www.instagram.com/letizia\\_kariello](https://www.instagram.com/letizia_kariello)



SAVING TIME, 2020

Penna, incisione e ricamo rosso su copertina

Courtesy l'Artista

Foto di Giorgio Benni