

Ricardo Aleodor Venturi, Elena Bellantoni, Deriva, Giovanni Gaggia, Adinda-Putri Palma, Alicya Ricciuto, Elena Ricciuto, Marco Rossi, Giuseppe Stampone

## ***Provincia Cosmica***

Curated by Alex Urso

This exhibition draws inspiration from the history of the space that houses it. After many years away from Ripatransone, Alex Urso decided to return to his hometown in 2023 with a precise aim: to create an innovative space for independent art capable of bringing leading international and Italian artists from the contemporary scene to an area that has had little exposure to this type of work. Thus, FIUTO Art Space was born: a space that stirs up emotion; a safe haven for experiencing art “from the ground up,” exploring new possibilities for dialogue and use. Only 12 square meters in size, in its first two years on the scene, the small gallery has showcased top-tier artists representing some of the most compelling currents in the contemporary world, while also involving the local community thanks to opportunities for exchange and dialogue. It has fostered prestigious collaborations with public and private entities in Italy and abroad. The fact that the Culture Ministry has deemed it a *Luogo del Contemporaneo* (Place of Contemporary Art) is validation for the ambitious aims behind the extensive, wide-ranging program carried out by the space in its early days.

### NINE ARTISTS ON THE OUTER REACHES

While eschewing any self-referential narrative, this brief but necessary introduction aims to highlight the central questions underpinning this exhibition. In looking at the varied regions of the Italian peninsula, which artists have taken similar approaches? What models can be identified today, five years after a pandemic that put a spotlight on the idea of “returning to villages” and life outside of cities? Who has *truly* embraced this idealized vision, taking on the real challenges of working in marginal contexts outside of major cities?

This exhibition emerges as a response to these questions, offering a sort of map (though, most certainly, not exhaustive) of artists who have chosen to go against the grain, turning away from the country’s major cultural centers to embrace places more on the outer reaches. And what results have they had?

### THE ARTIST, FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL

There are nine protagonists in this project, all united by the same “topographical” theme. These artists have chosen to invest in and work in areas on the margins, in terms of location. They have launched cultural initiatives that have had, and continue to have, an impact on their communities. A perfect example is **Giuseppe Stampone**, who returned to “his” Abruzzo after years of living in New York, Rome, and Brussels. After losing his parents, the artist, one of the most respected and versatile figures on the national scene, chose to establish his studio in the province of Teramo, carrying out projects rooted in active participation and public engagement. This is demonstrated by *Global Education*, the program Stampone created with his wife, the performer Maria Crispal. Since 2012, they have launched opportunities for dialogue, “aimed at building a new alphabet and a new world.” The series on display, which is dedicated to the Gran Sasso mountains, best embodies this choice to “return home” and to narrate where the artist comes from.

As we head north, we find **Marco Rossi**, who studied painting at Milan’s Brera Academy and decided to return to Romano di Lombardia near Bergamo, creating *Tempo-rari place* in 2021. This showcase regularly features contemporary artists, offering up targeted works that always engage passersby.

### ART AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL REACTIVATION

Representing the Marche region in this poetic mapping project is **Giovanni Gaggia**, an artist known

for his distinctly political, community-driven approach. In 2008, with Casa Sponge in Pergola (in the province of Pesaro/Urbino), Gaggia created the first residence for artists in the region, intending to promote contemporary art outside of traditional circles. The space, which played an active role in the *Pesaro Cultural Capital 2024* program – bringing a significant number of activities tied to the ministerial initiative to the provinces – has hosted almost 300 artists from around the world over the years, having a substantial cultural and touristic impact locally.

**Ricardo Aleodor Venturi** has done something similar, using his artistic practice as a tool for dialogue and reactivation, working closely with “fragile” communities through performative, interpersonal, and collective actions. One of his recent projects (*Studio con finestra/Studio with Window*) involved transforming a large warehouse on the outskirts of Pesaro into an interdisciplinary space, meant for cross-pollination and exchange. The goal was to offer an alternative approach to experiencing art that was rooted in interpersonal exchange as the origin for creation.

#### HOME AS A POINT OF DEPARTURE (AND ARRIVAL)

Staying in the same region but heading toward the province of Macerata, we find **Adinda-Putri Palma**, an interdisciplinary artist who has established her base of operations in the small village of Braccano, near Matelica. Adinda has worked with grit and determination to build her own eco-sustainable home/studio, while simultaneously reflecting profoundly on themes of building and dwelling. Her story is proof that it is always possible to attempt to repopulate these marginal areas, even by embracing bold, alternative forms of reconstruction.

The symbolic element of “home” – a point of departure and arrival – also serves as a guiding principle for **Alicya** and **Elena Ricciuto**, twin sisters who (individually and together) have, for years, reflected upon living in layered, transitional contexts, using art as a tool for reactivation and bringing people together. This aim takes concrete shape in the *Le Fonticelle* project, which is a residence for artists in Frosolone, a village in the Molise countryside with just under 3,000 inhabitants. Since 2020, the two young women have regularly hosted artists from across Italy, inviting them to create permanent or temporary works, often in collaboration with local craftspeople. The “headquarters” for these activities is an ancient mule track surrounded by greenery: a long-abandoned woodland path that is still deeply linked to the personal histories of the two founders. Over time, this beloved place has become a shared space thanks to slow acts of rediscovery and resistance.

#### GEOGRAPHICAL AND EXISTENTIAL MARGINS

And if we’re talking about new ways of inhabiting space, the name Denis Riva – known artistically as **Deriva** (meaning “to drift” or “to deviate” in Italian) – couldn’t be more fitting. He draws and paints, along with “gathering, observing, and assembling.” The artist left the Emilia-Romagna region a few years ago to move to the countryside of Veneto. In Follina, a small town in the province of Treviso, Deriva set up a studio/laboratory inside the historic Lanificio Paoletti, transforming part of this industrial complex into a hub for ideas, a place of expression for artists and experimenters alike.

A separate section of the exhibition is dedicated to Elena Bellantoni, an interdisciplinary researcher and performer who has made quite a name for herself on the Italian scene. She has always focused on topics related to gender, the body, and local and global politics, carrying out her work in Rome, which is where her studio is located. For her, now more than ever, the work almost always focuses on fragile, ambiguous contexts impacted by political and social narratives that deserve attention. One example is the piece on display, which tells about the environmental and performative installation *Pane e libertà* (Bread and Freedom). This piece, which resulted from a residency in Conselice, Emilia-Romagna, came about as part of a shared process with the community, which was invited to reflect on local historical dynamics along with the artist.

“My practice transforms and takes shape in the areas I move through and in the encounters I have,” she says. To this end, Elena Bellantoni fully embodies the idea of the “nomadic” artist, a mobile

conduit of connection whose wanderings go beyond cities and countries, reinvigorating places and contexts that don't necessarily have ties to her own background but need some form of intervention. In such cases, geography ceases to be a framework for analysis, giving way to experience and poetry. Margins shift from being merely "physical" to becoming "existential;" the landscape is transformed into language.