Chiara Valentini
Forget forget forget
Curated by Alex Urso

There is something in Chiara Valentini's sculpture that allows it to be both soft and monumental, elegant and solemn at once. This is not merely a matter of materials or scale. The use of wool, cotton and textiles certainly lends her works a delicate texture, while their dimensions amplify their sense of "weight" and grandeur. Yet the force of the artist's practice operates along more subtle lines, having above all to do with the stories held within them.

The sculptures of the artist from the Marche region (Fermo, 1981) are steeped in mythological references. This alone might be enough to account for their solemnity. Drawing on the seven years she spent on the island of Crete, the heart of Minoan civilisation, Valentini condenses into her works a visual universe in which mythological figures coexist with dreamlike suggestions. Stories passed down orally, sung across centuries and sedimented in the collective imagination, resurface among the warp and weft of her sculptures, evoking distant eras, fantastical events and ancestral memories.
Such is the case with *Il silenzio* (*Silence*), a "decadent" sculpture created in 2019 during a residency at Rome's MACRO Museum.

Inspired by a story by Franz Kafka, the work depicts the torn-open body of a siren. Made of wool and textiles, in keeping with a recurring practice in the artist's work, the siren is fashioned from soft, enveloping materials that nonetheless seem to stifle her song, depriving her of her most recognisable attribute.
Unlike the creatures evoked by Homer, Valentini's siren is one without melodies. Limp and silenced, alone – far from the group with which she once lingered seductively in the middle of the sea – she appears almost as the antithesis of her own mythological image. Her seductive, alluring power, the very force that, according to Homer's account, was meant to ensnare Odysseus and his companions, here fades into a voiceless lament. There is no longer any promise of seduction, no call capable of drawing listeners towards her: all that remains is a vulnerable body, exposed in its fragility.

Enclosed within the four walls of FIUTO, an aquarium-like space, the work invites us to reflect on the precariousness of existence, the vulnerability of bodies, and the possibility that even the most powerful figures may experience abandonment and helplessness.
And yet, it is precisely in this act of "withholding" that the work's strength seems to reside. Deprived of her enchanting voice, the siren no longer asks to be followed, but simply to be observed and acknowledged in her fragility.
At a time when everyone has a voice and everyone seems to have something to say, perhaps we have stopped listening. Chiara Valentini's siren, stripped of her song, reminds us of the very value of silence: not an absence, but a necessary space in which to turn our attention towards the other once again.