

Technocentric

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Sarah Ciracì



«How we became postuman?»

Sarah Ciraci and Gabriela Galati

«How We Became Posthuman» is the title of the book by Katherine Hayles, never translated in Italian of 1999, a text that investigates, with the theoretical tools of critical posthumanism and literary criticism, themes similar to those Sarah Ciraci addresses through her works in *Technocentric*. Just as Hayles (and not only her) postulates that we have always been posthuman, namely, that the intertwining of the the human with technology is given from inception, and that the dichotomy natureculture, or nature-technology is a fallacy that has caused quite a few confusions (and damages) along human co-evolution with the planet, in a similar way the new series of works by Ciraci investigate and highlight these topics within the artworks presented. The three series of works featured in *Technocentric* at IPERCUBO stem from a conscious vision of the past that in a recursive and non-linear movement reaches the present, projects itself to the future, and returns to the past, and so on... A key concept for understanding this movement in Ciraci's work it is that of *Pathosformel*, or «pathetic formulas», the name that the art historian Aby Warburg gave to those archetypal forms that return and repeat themselves in different contexts and eras throughout the history of art. In *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity* (1932) Warburg explains how in the reworking of forms of ancient art by Renaissance artists there was not only

a repetition, but a real resignification of these forms. In a broader cultural sense, human beings need to be guided by automatisms based on past experiences. So every time she finds herself in a new «technological environment», as Marshall McLuhan would say, the subject activates a series of mechanisms that seek a familiarity with previous environments. This phenomenon is what in the field of design has been called *skeuomorphism*: the persistence of useless traits belonging to obsolete objects into new objects. This persistence aims to make the assimilation and use of the new tools easier and more intuitive. Taking as a starting point materials, themes and/or *Pathosformel* already widely assimilated in previous works by the artist, in these new series there are elements that create anomalies, or disturbances in the previous *Pathosformel*, in order to make change more evident and accessible whilst at the same time maintaining a recursive temporal loop between past, present and future. Each series reflects on the tools developed by humans in order to control other living beings, and which generate an intertwining of human and artificial perceptions, of flesh and mechanical prostheses integrated into bodies. In this relationship unfolding between living beings and technology, a closed circuit loop is thus created in which every poetic and mythological idea is excluded to generate an immanent cybernetic system.



Featured works

1. *Giogo* (Yoke)

Is a remake of the Aerei (Planes) series by Alighiero Boetti, which he realised since 1977. His planes fly over the planet in a joyful way, fluttering in a sky without borders. In this ways Alighiero Boetti celebrated the triumph of freedom of the imagination and free time, two elements that feed each other. On the contrary, in *Giogo* the abundance and surveillance of satellites overturns the values expressed in Boetti's work: there is no freedom where there is capillary control. In turning the eyes to the sky and beyond the visible there is no longer God or mystery but control devices that accumulate data. A myriad of appartuses that separate humankind from the unknown and mysterious space and, like in a mirror, reflect life on Earth by feeding information. Consequently, the path between Earth and the universe is interrupted, apparatuses turn their look back to the planet. Technocentrism admits neither mystery nor freedom. Boetti's game turns into a preconceived and applied subjugation of subjects. However, the work introduces the anomaly as possible a way out: in the uniformity of control apparatuses, a foreign element could become a chance of subversion through anomalous difference.

2. *Sacrilegio* (*Sacrilege*)

Reflects on the control and exploitation of humans on non-human animals implemented through machines applied, among others, to intensive farming. The piece uses the archetype of the mandala, the circle, a symbol of unity and harmony, which however in this work is transformed into a distorted and perverse symbol that annihilates the sacred element into an instrument of domination: the form of the panopticon applied to the surveillance and torture of animals raised as food for another species. The mandala is represented in a bas-relief, a technique historically used to illustrate the hunting topos, reinterpreted in this work in a visual pattern whose module is a cow.



Giogo

3. *New Era New Hero*

Series of vases is inspired by Greek iconography of the of the Olympics reinterpreted in a contemporary key. Made by craftsmen specialised in the reproduction of Greek ceramics, at first glance the vases do not appear dissimilar from the original: The representation of athletes engaged in sports competitions. Only with a closer look one becomes aware that some limbs of the athletes are artificial, they are prostheses of contemporary manufacture. The series has different levels of interpretation: firstly, the posthuman key is reflected in the artist's interest in science and technology, on the difficult balance between culture and nature and the belief that, following Bernard Stiegler, the human being is fundamentally prosthetic. In this sense, the prostheses of Paralympic athletes belong to a particular category, among the infinite possible, and are therefore in continuity with the prostheses that humans have used every day and always. Secondly, *New Era New Hero* speaks of a continuity between the support that the Greek athletes of antiquity asked the gods to obtain victory, and, as a consequence, obtain a superiority that led to differentiation from the common citizen, and the contemporary athlete, with a disability, which calls for the overcoming of all limits through the use of technology. A technology which, for contemporary humans, is configured as belonging to a divine sphere: originally intended as a project to enhance the senses and the human body, it is now irreversibly bound to a divine project, in the hands of which humans have placed their practical and emotional life. The Paralympic athletes represent the incarnation of the contemporary hero, superhuman beings in which superiority of spirit is combined with the divine project of technology. Consequently, they become for humanity exemplary models of scientific achievement, which outcome is that nature and culture overlap indiscriminately in this way overcoming the ideology of anthropocentrism.



Sacrilegio



New Era New Hero

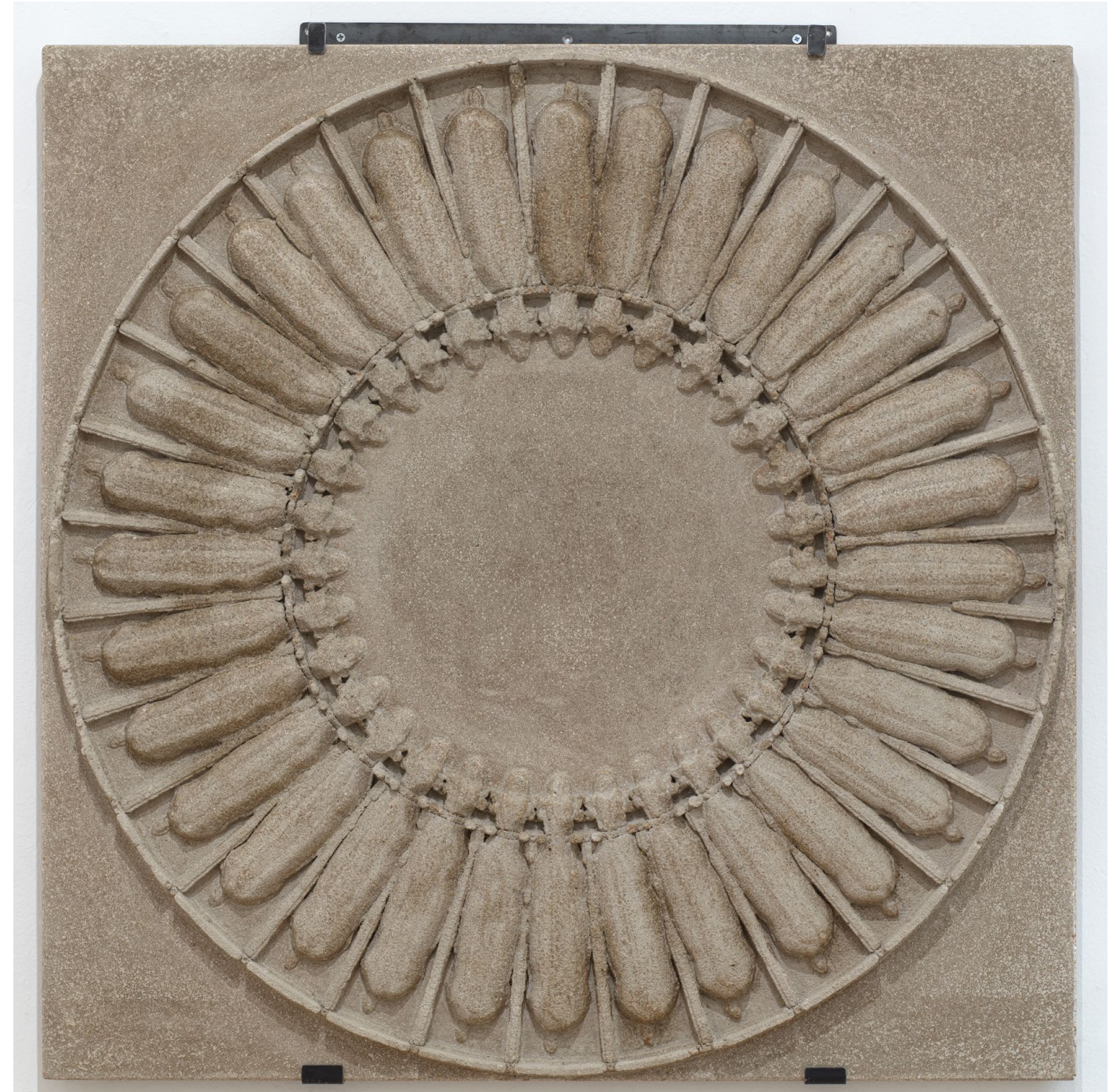






GIOGO, 2021

→ Ballpoint pen on paper laid down on canvas, three panels., 145 × 291 cm



SACRILEGIO, 2021

→ Concrete, 100 x 100cm

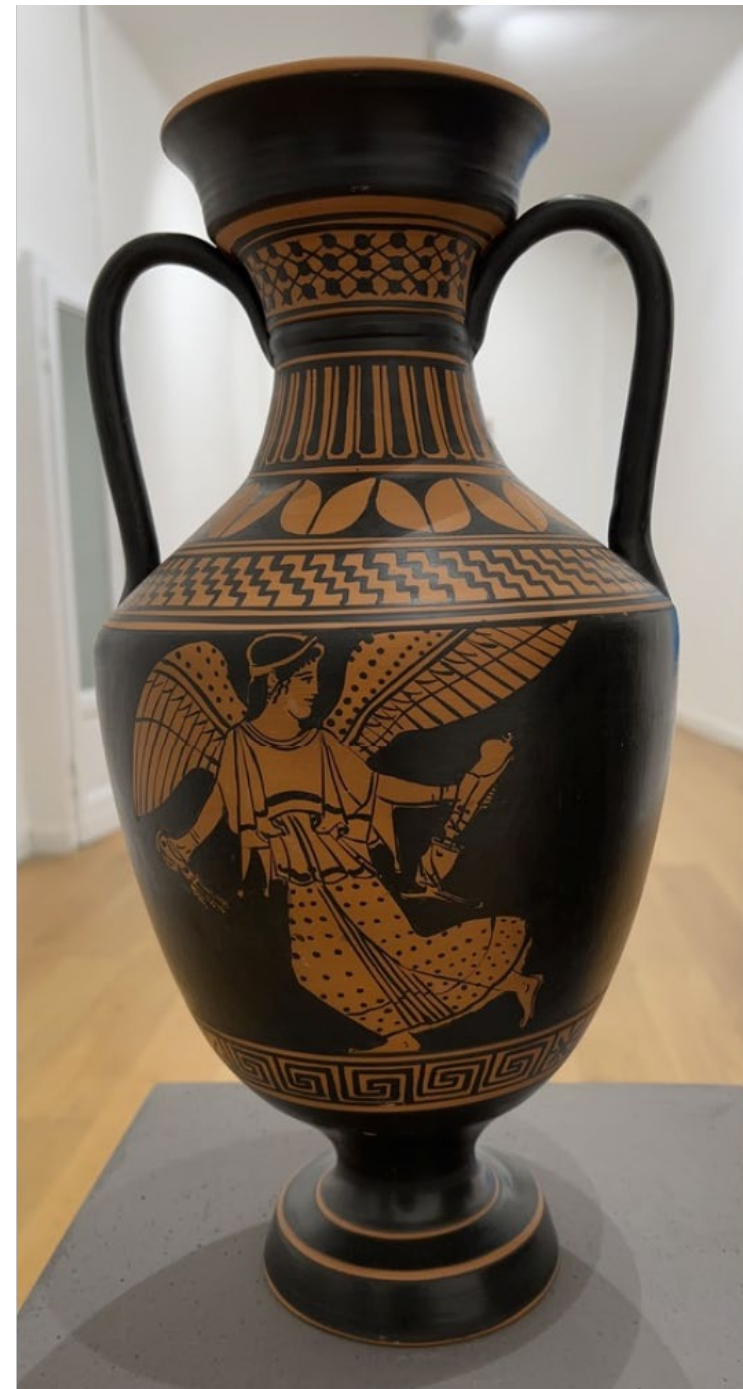
NEW ERA NEW HERO, 2021

→ Hand painted ceramic, 42 × 23 × 23 cm



NEW ERA NEW HERO, 2021

→ Hand painted ceramic, 42 × 23 × 23 cm



NEW ERA NEW HERO, 2021

→ Hand painted ceramic, 16 × 48 × 39 cm



NEW ERA NEW HERO, 2021

→ Hand painted ceramic, 25 × 34 × 23 cm







Sarah Ciraci

Sarah Ciraci (Grottaglie, 1972. Lives and works in Milan) studied at the DAMS at the Accademia di Belle Arti, Bologna, and got an MPhil degree at Plymouth University, UK. She has had solo exhibitions in museums that include Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Roma (MACRO), Rome; the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America at Columbia University, New York; and the Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna, Rome. She has participated in group exhibitions in the context of national and international galleries and museums, including the Museo nazionale della Arti del XXI secolo, MAXXI, Rome; the Yuki Kondo ACAC Aomori Contemporary Art Center, Japan; 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan; the Triennale di Milano, the FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, Montpellier; PAC Padiglione d'arte contemporanea, Milan, and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Guarene D'Alba, Turin, among many others. In 2003/04 she achieved the New York Prize, consisting of a yearly scholarship at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America at Columbia University, New York.

