

Studio Clelia Belgrado



VisionQuest
contemporary photography

PRESS RELEASE

Carla Iacono

“Re-Velation”

Curator Clelia Belgrado
Opening Reception: Saturday 21st March, 2015 – 6 pm
Show dates: 22 Marzo -23 Maggio 2015
Studio Clelia Belgrado - VisionQuest contemporary photography
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The veil used by Muslim women will continue to be subject of debate for many years, an accessory often used as a "symbol" of the distance between the Islamic world and the Western world, an area in which the rules of appearance, especially for women, are based more on "revealing" than "veiling"

As a matter of fact the situation is complicated just by the plurality of attributable meanings and the evocative power of the veil: the symbolism of the veil changes depending on the social context in which it falls, often with unbridgeable differences between the wearer and the perceiver.

Not only are there many types of veils (hi-jab or headscarf, niqab, chador, burqa) and just as many ways to wear them, but the now acquired polysemy has turned it into an emblem object of social, political, religious and cultural debates. If we analyse it from the point of view of the women who wear it or, on the contrary, reject it, the veil can be seen as a re-appropriation of identity, religious affiliation, political act, act of faith, rule of behaviour, standard of beauty, free choice, submission to God, resistance, patriarchal imposition, etc.

In Europe, in the secular State debate, the Islamic veil is often considered an attack on the principles of secularity and equality, thus becoming the subject of media debates and a real "veil" of discord. France, a country that hosts between three and seven million Muslims, is a clear example of this: in 1989 a dispute arose known as "l'affaire du foulard", where three Muslim students showed up in class wearing the veil and were suspended from lessons in the name of the secular constitution of the French Republic; since then the discussion on the subject has continued by addressing aspects of anthropology and sociology. Recently, young Muslim girls protested by parading with veils with the French flag colours thus expressing the right to a plural identity (Muslim and French), a deeply felt need since Islam does not rigidly distinguish between religious and social life.

Carla Iacono began this project by analysing the situation of Muslim women who have

immigrated to Europe, to reflect on the deception of exploitation, by focusing in particular on the hi-jab, the Islamic veil that frames the face and only covers the hair.

In Islam the "hi-jab" has over time acquired different meanings, following very different paths; historically it seems that the use of the veil was an Arab practice prior to Islam, also used in other cultures/religions, such as Christianity in Eastern Europe more specifically in the Byzantine world, where aristocratic women used it to cover their heads. Only over time was the veil imposed as a common use object, thus becoming a sign of belonging to the Islamic faith.

On the other hand the need to conceal the female body is common to many cultures in the Mediterranean area and still survives in certain environments, (eg. the veil of nuns and brides symbol of purity and chastity). At the end of the nineteenth century, first in Egypt and then in the Middle East, movements for the abolition of the veil were born; after the opening of the first women's colleges, some students began to ask for its abolition in 1926 and "Huda Sha'rawi Pasha" was the first woman to appear in public with her head uncovered.

Today in many European countries, facing the laws that prohibit it, many Muslim women are appealing to the rights and freedom of expression and religion to be allowed to wear it. The veil has become the bearer of new meanings and new ways of expression that are related to the issues of citizenship, cultural claims, and the search for new spiritual models; it reflects especially for migrant women the need to stay connected to their country and their families as a representation of their culture of origin.

In France prohibiting the use of the veil, has certainly not facilitated the integration process, but it has fired up the clash with the institutions. For this reason we should always promote a dialogue and seriously work towards the understanding of the representations and symbols of different traditions.

"Re-velation" is not just a denunciation project on exploitation, but it is also related to the main theme running in all of the artistic work by Carla Iacono; the analysis of the rites of passage. In classic Islam the veil establishes precisely the transition from childhood to puberty, claiming the respect owed to the woman who would be thus protected from the "impure" looks of men. Similarly, referring to other eras, cultures and religions, the veil, when used, is always linked to initiatory events/situations (eg. marriage, mourning, the nun veil in the Christian symbolism) or as "status symbol" (eg. for noblewomen in ancient Jewish society, or in the case of the hat-veil in the nineteenth century).

Finally, the widespread "rediscovery of the veil", especially among second and third generation Maghrebi immigrant girls, has become the means by which today's Muslim teenagers, born in a Western country, can distinguish themselves from the immigrant parents generation, who, in many cases have freed themselves from all outward symbols that could mark their "specificity".

From the comparison of the different interpretations, comes the knowledge that it is essential for a truly modern and pluralistic society, to give back to the symbols of traditions their value, or make them contemporary and not ban them but, at the same time, ensure that there are no impositions, remembering that the use of it or not should be a free choice. Finally we must not forget that the veil is not a uniform, but an accessory that tells a lot about who wears it by combining aesthetics and tradition. In the Islamic world fashion sees the veil as an essential accessory for the style of Muslim women, offering refined and elegant models, fashion shows, speciality stores, dedicated websites; not only, the market for Islamic fashion is growing in the West.

From the formal point of view the portraits of "Re-velation" all have the same protagonist, the artist's young daughter; this is to avoid placing emphasis on the origin of the people

portrayed but forcing the viewer to reflect solely on the polysemy of the symbol, going beyond the specificities of a country or religion. In addition, the autobiographical element contributes, as in other previous works by Carla Iacono, to emphasize the representation and to make it a genuine testimony.

The veil, constant element in the photographs of "Re-velation", is declared in different ways, sometimes with explicit references to specific cultures, sometimes in a fairytale or surreal manner, but always with the intent to reflect on the expressive language it brings. The compositions are reminiscent of the Flemish portraits of the seventeenth century, and this is the artist's device to obtain a symbolic contamination between the different cultures of the East and the West; also the subjects are photographed against a uniformly dark background that often is confused with the dresses. The side light makes the figures emerge from darkness revealing the facial features and the details of the veils, thus symbolically and visually reinforcing the concept of revelation.

According to the artist it is a female prerogative to face with levity but determination, complex and sensitive problems by not taking a position on the use of the veil, but delving into history to "reveal" a whole range of values and meanings with sincere and refined images in complete respect of the differences and similarities of cultures

And if that is enough to cause a graceful and passionate controversy on the subject, the goal will be achieved.

Carla Iacono, Clelia Belgrado, March 2015

Technical information

C-prints on gatofoam, framed
cm 85 x cm 73
Edition of 5 plus 2 a.p.

Biography

Carla Iacono lives and works in Genoa, using photography and installations as expressive media.

She has been exhibiting since 2004 in Italy and abroad, often with her husband, Guido Geerts, who has worked in Holland in the field of advertising photography.

Her work focuses on the themes of body and the metamorphoses, often examining adolescence as an extraordinary mechanism of defence, courage and adaptation.

It's conceptual photography that uses a mix of dreams, irony and fantasy aiming at "revealing" fragments of memory or the unconscious which resurfaces in a visible form from the depth of the invisible.

Selected exhibitions

2015: *Re-velation*, VisionQuest contemporary photography - Genova (mostra personale)

2014: *Fairy Glaze*, Frame Foto Festival, Palazzo dei Congressi - Salsomaggiore Terme (mostra personale); *Rencontres d'Arles 2014 - Prix du livre*, Parc des Ateliers - Arles; *300 ASA - Contaminazioni Fotografiche* - Dondolando ARTE Atelier, Martignana di Po; *Fairy Glaze*, Palazzo Fieschi - Genova (mostra personale); *Carla Iacono - Antiwonderland*, Facoltà di Architettura - Genova

(mostra personale); *Dia'-logos*, Massoero 2000 - Genova

2013: *Presenze in Theoria*, Theoria Gallery - Como; *Identita` (ri)velate*, Massoero 2000 - Genova; OFF - Art Fair Brussels, a cura di Vision Quest Contemporary Photography; *RED SHOES*, Plastic Passion - Genova

2012: *CIBO e` natura morta*, ANTIX temporary - Genova; "On your feet!", Vision Quest Contemporary Photography/ UnimediaModern, Genova; *Costruire des Histories – Doppia personale Carla Iacono/Nicola Vinci*, Vision Quest Contemporary Photography - Genova

201: *LABforART (site specific installation for Gabetti Property Solutions)*, Milano; *Art Brescia 2011 - Biennale Internazionale dell'Arte Contemporanea di Brescia*, Brescia; *...erba e fior che la gonna...*, Vision Quest Contemporary Photography/ UnimediaModern - Genova; *Biennale di VideoFotografiaContemporanea*, Alessandria

2010: *PhotoArtVerona - Disturbi e Disordini (Abstract Biennale Alessandria 2011)*, Verona; *Di segni @ messaggi*, UnimediaModern Contemporary Art - Genova; *Caducita`*, *Galleria Joyce & Co.* - Genova; *Bad Girls*, *Vision Quest Contemporary Photography/ UnimediaModern*, Genova

2009: *Ceci n'est pas une Barbie*, *DAC De Simoni Arte Contemporanea* - Genova; *ART & THE CITY*, ANTIX temporary - Genova; *Fairy Glaze*, Studio 28 - Milano (mostra personale); *La civetta di Klee (installation and performance)*, Galata Museo del Mare, Genova

2008: *Collettivo 180 "Il Quarto Occhio"*, Ex Ospedale Psichiatrico di Quarto - Genova; *Giardino Maraviglioso (site-specific installation)*, Spazio Pubblico Piazza Ragazzi - Genova; *Words: Omaggio ad Allan Kaprow*, Galleria Unimedia Modern - Genova

2007: *Lettere da Shangri-La*, Biblioteca Civica Berio - Genova (mostra personale), *Dining out*, Galleria Unimedia Modern, Genova; *Virginia Woolf: una stanza tutta per te*, Antico Palazzo della Pretura - Castell'Arquato; *Suoni e Visioni 3*, Galleria d'arte Moderna e contemporanea - San Marino; *Tracce e Sogni del Maraviglioso*, Museo Civico di Storia Naturale G. Doria - Genova (mostra personale)

2006: *Taccuini*, Harelbeche (Belgium); *L'altro sguardo: Visioni al femminile*, Palazzo della Commenda - Genova;

Il Villaggio delle Lanterne – ArtiVisiveDanzaMusicaPerformanceTeatro, Alessandria; *Synthetic Mermaids*, Biblioteca Civica Berio - Genova (mostra personale); *Suoni e visioni International "The best Italian photographers and composers from 1950 to today"*, Istituto Italiano di Cultura - Amburgo/ Museo d'arte contemporanea "Villa Croce" - Genova/ Istituto italiano di Cultura - Copenhagen

2005-2004: *Who am I*, CVB Space / IEP International Gallery - New York; *Premio Nazionale di Pittura e Scultura Città di Novara*, Palazzo dei Musei Civici del Broletto – Novara; *GenovARTE 2005*, Palazzo Stella - Genova; *Fighting Back-Stop Violence against Women*, MotoAzabu Gallery - Minato ku (Tokyo)

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