

# CHIARA FUMAI: LESS LIGHT



Published on the occasion of the exhibition  
*Chiara Fumai: LESS LIGHT*  
International Studio & Curatorial Program  
February 12–May 17, 2019

Curated by:

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Published by: the International Studio  
& Curatorial Program

Design by: Other Means

Printed by: Expert Printing, Inc.

**iscp**

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ISCP is a 501(c)(3), not-for-profit organization.

ISBN 978-1-7320876-2-0

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This exhibition is a collaboration with The Church of  
Chiara Fumai, an organization which preserves the  
artist's memory, archive and estate.

*Chiara Fumai: LESS LIGHT* is supported, in part,  
by Greenwich Collection Ltd.; Hartfield Foundation;  
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in  
partnership with the City Council; New York State  
Council on the Arts with the support of Governor  
Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State  
Legislature; Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF);  
The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts;  
The Church of Chiara Fumai; and The Italian Academy  
for Advanced Studies, Columbia University.



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CHIARA FUMAI: LESS LIGHT  
FEBRUARY 12–MAY 17, 2019



Installation view of *Chiara Fumai: LESS LIGHT*, 2019.  
Photo by Martin Parsekian. Image courtesy of  
the International Studio & Curatorial Program, The  
Church of Chiara Fumai and Guido Costa Projects

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## FOREWORD

Susan Hapgood

Chiara Fumai flashed through the world with intensity, both vulnerable and fierce. Our paths crossed briefly while she was an artist in residence at the International Studio & Curatorial Program. Fumai arrived on January 4, 2017 for her first extended stay in the United States, for a six-month residency as one of two winners of the Premio New York for Italian artists, during a particularly difficult time in our nation's history. It was right before Donald Trump was sworn into office on January 20, and the atmosphere throughout New York City was charged with disbelief, anger and foreboding. Fumai set to work painting the walls of her studio with symbols and inscriptions, reconnected with old friends and made some new ones as well in the international residency program. But within a month, deeply troubled by the political climate, and full of anxiety, Fumai decided to return home. Several colleagues, including Fabio Troisi, who was then Attaché for Cultural Affairs at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in New York; Allison Jeffrey, Assistant Director at The Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America, Columbia University; myself and Kari Conte counseled the artist about her plans, and tried to help her find a way to continue participating in the residency program, but she was resolute, and she returned to Italy in mid-February. Six months later, in Bari, Chiara Fumai tragically took her own life at the age of 39. She left us with a compelling and significant body of work that is being presented in multiple venues, including the Italian Pavilion of the 58th Venice Biennale, and will surely generate study for years to come.

ISCP is honored to present *Chiara Fumai: LESS LIGHT*, an exhibition of three of her extraordinary works, curated by Kari Conte, Director of Programs and Exhibitions, and Francesco Urbano Ragazzi, directors of the Chiara Fumai archive. This is the first solo exhibition in the United States of her art. Her wide range of references, her magnetic performative presence, and her intense convictions about the oppression of women resonate throughout the elegant installations in ISCP's second floor galleries. Installation views reproduced in this publication provide a preliminary intimation of the immersive and rewarding experience of seeing the show in person.

As with any such project, there are many individuals and organizations involved in bringing it to fruition. First, we thank and pay our extraordinary respect to Chiara Fumai who left this world too soon. I owe gratitude to the curators, Kari Conte and Francesco Urbano Ragazzi,

for their intensive collaboration on the beautiful presentation and informative publication, and Italian curator Stefano Collicelli Cagol for his catalogue essay. Thanks are also due to guest speakers associated with this exhibition's public programming, the feminist activist Silvia Federici, and artist and Fumai's friend, Micki Pellerano. We applaud the four women who electrified the opening with their performances as the S.C.U.M. Elite: Simone Couto, Alison Nguyen, Rachael Richman, and Martha Skou.

Lenders to the exhibition deserve our acknowledgement for their generosity in parting with the works to share them with the world: Guido Costa and Andrea Costa of Guido Costa Projects; Chiara Rusconi and Erica Fenaroli of APALAZZOGALLERY; and Chiara Fumai's mother, Liliana Chiari, who not only lent work but also came for the exhibition opening and spent precious time with us discussing her daughter.

I wish to acknowledge the entire staff of ISCP for their dedicated teamwork on this presentation, as well as former intern Elise Gérardin, who researched and assisted the curators on the preparations with efficiency and excellence. We thank Other Means for the design of the publication.

*Chiara Fumai: LESS LIGHT* was organized in collaboration with The Church of Chiara Fumai, and supported by grants from Greenwich Collection Ltd.; Hartfield Foundation; and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council. This project was also funded by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF); The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; and The Italian Academy for Advanced Studies, Columbia University. To all of these generous supporters, I express my heartfelt appreciation for entrusting us to produce excellent programming that focuses on underrecognized and underrepresented artists in this cultural metropolis.

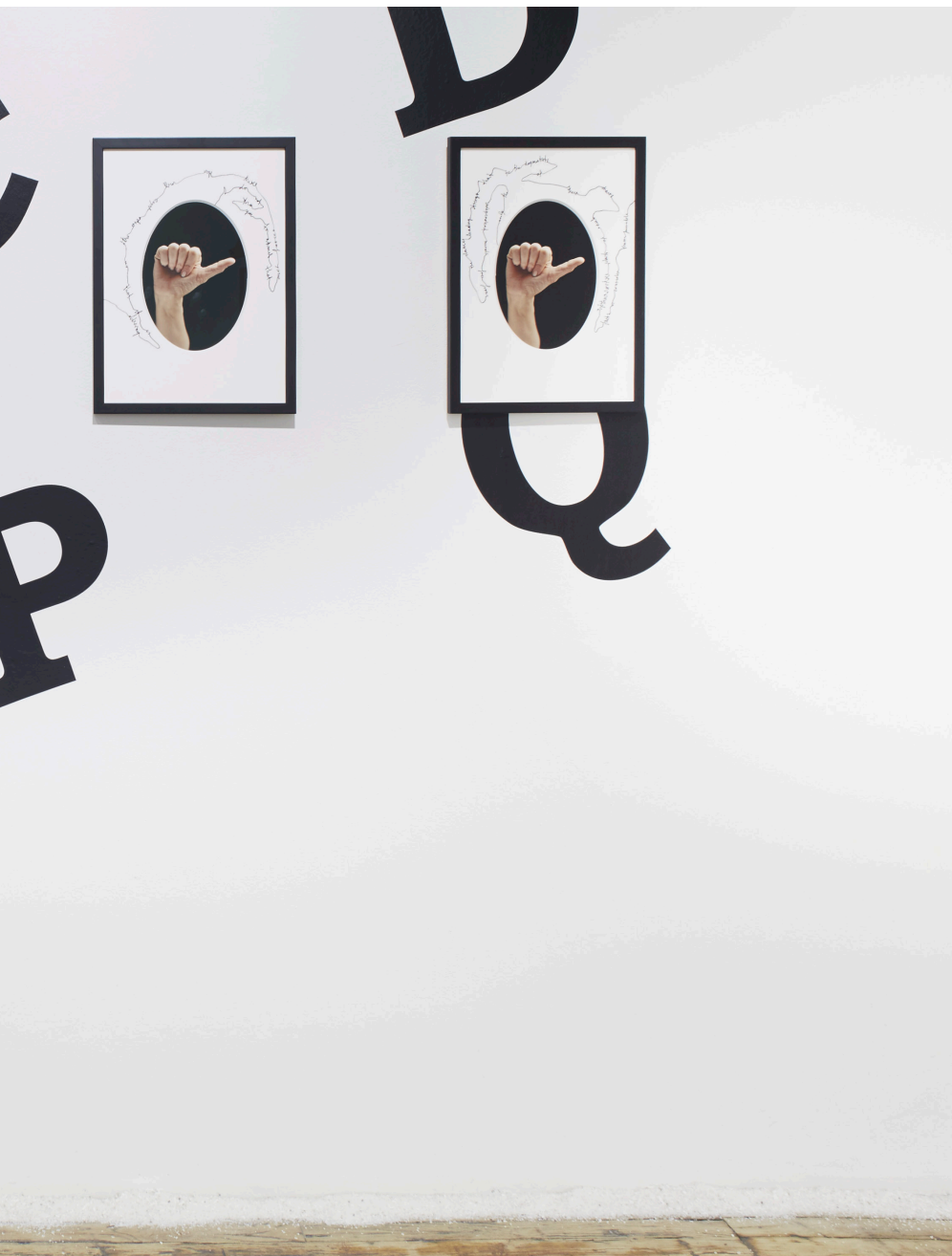




Chiara Fumai, *The Book of Evil Spirits*, 2015, single channel color video, 26 min. 25 sec. Image courtesy of the The Church of Chiara Fumai



Installation view of *Chiara Fumai: LESS LIGHT*, 2019.  
Photo by Martin Parsekian. Image courtesy of  
the International Studio & Curatorial Program, The  
Church of Chiara Fumai and Guido Costa Projects



# ARRIVEDERCI



Installation view of *Chiara Fumai: LESS LIGHT*, 2019.  
Photo by Martin Parsekian. Image courtesy of  
the International Studio & Curatorial Program, The  
Church of Chiara Fumai and Guido Costa Projects

## CHIARA FUMAI: ART AS A WEAPON

Kari Conte

Perched throughout the opening reception of *Chiara Fumai: LESS LIGHT* were four silent women clad in black balaclavas that veiled their faces and hid their identities. Through slits in the masks, their eyes scanned the gallery, moving between eye contact with each other and the audience. At an otherwise celebratory event, they created a sinister atmosphere that was heightened by the holsters with plastic guns slung against their bodies. The four performers brought to life the S.C.U.M. Elite, a group of fictional activists described in the *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* (Society for Cutting Up Men), which was written by anarcha-feminist Valerie Solanas in 1967 and first embodied by Chiara Fumai in her 2014 performance, *The S.C.U.M. Elite*.<sup>1</sup> Solanas's manifesto called for the total eradication of men with the goal of a radical feminist reordering of society. In its pages, Solanas characterized men as conformist and emotionally isolated, as well as entirely useless, even for reproduction. Solanas imagined the S.C.U.M. elite corps as "hard core activists (the fuck-ups, looters and destroyers) and the elite of the elite,"<sup>2</sup> those who would kill men and recruit other women to help. At the conclusion of Fumai's hour-long performance, the four women deposited their guns and holsters in a Prada handbag hung from the wall, where it remained throughout the run of the exhibition. Bringing Solanas's imagined band of revolutionary soldiers forward fifty years, into the present, fiercely marked the beginning of the first solo exhibition of Fumai's pioneering art in the Americas.

In a little more than ten years, Fumai produced a complex body of work that has a clarity and precision rare for such an abbreviated time period. She worked as a disc jockey for years before beginning her art practice. In this first career, Fumai learned to coherently blend material from different sources, gaining a keen understanding of how to transform an audience; these skills carried over into her work in the visual arts. From dance music to terrorist propaganda, radical feminism to occultism, and Italian Autonomist Marxism to nineteenth-century freak shows, Fumai's interests were far-reaching and constantly evolving, always taking unexpected turns.

The foundation of Fumai's practice was a commitment to rethinking the stories of historical women using both a performative and feminist lens, one that allowed women from four different centuries to co-exist in the present. Fumai was interested in the untold stories of women who, in one way or another, pushed the envelope of the status

quo: the marginalized, the freaks, the downtrodden, the exploited, the rebels. She brought contemporary relevance to women who were to some extent known in their lifetimes, yet who have been forgotten or misrepresented in the ensuing years and whose stories she deemed worthy of another look. Much like the women Fumai focused on in her practice, countless other women have been stamped out of *(his)story*. Significantly, while women account for 50% of the population, only .05% of all recorded history is about women.<sup>3</sup>

“It is more arduous to honor the memory of anonymous beings than that of the renowned. The construction of history is consecrated to the memory of the nameless.”<sup>4</sup> These words, written by Walter Benjamin nearly a hundred years ago, resonate with Fumai’s practice. By bringing marginalized voices back to contemporary consciousness, Fumai reconstructs histories—giving new life to these individuals—and offering a deeper understanding of how society impacts the female condition. A compelling group of figures who span centuries and geographies make up Fumai’s canon. Among them are two Italian women, Eusapia Palladino, a nineteenth-century Spiritualist medium who lived from 1854 to 1918, and Carla Lonzi, a second-wave feminist author and activist. There are twentieth-century political nonconformists such as Rosa Luxemburg, a Marxist revolutionary; Ulrike Meinhof, cofounder of the militant Red Army Faction; and Valerie Solanas. Nineteenth-century P. T. Barnum freak-show performers also inhabit Fumai’s work, including silent Circassian beauty Zalumma Agra and “bearded lady” Annie Jones. In several works presented together for the first time, *Chiara Fumai: LESS LIGHT* convenes nearly all of Fumai’s “companions” who reappeared continuously throughout her oeuvre. By merging existing historical facts—which she viewed from a metaphysical perspective—with her own fiction, Fumai filled in the gaps in history, thereby giving relevance and reverence to these women and reconceiving their lives in light of female oppression and identity.

Fumai’s blurring of fact and fiction began with her first artwork, which reimagined Italo-Disco from the 1980s by falsely attributing her father, Nico Fumai, with making an important contribution to the genre. An unlikely influence on her work was the Lebanese artist Walid Raad, with whom she studied at the Antonio Ratti Foundation in Como, Italy. Raad’s work, often in the guise of his fictional institution The Atlas Group, encourages the viewer to look beyond the binary of fiction and non-fiction, as he presents the knotted history of Lebanon through the production, preservation, and dissemination of fictional documents

(audio, visual, literary). In this way, Raad endeavors to produce a speculative history of Lebanon, a country where knowledge and truth have often been concealed as a result of the country's fifteen-year Civil War (1975–90). Raad and Fumai similarly question how meaning is produced—history is often misperceived as objective, but histories are usually constructed subjectively, with both factual and fabricated fragments.

In *LESS LIGHT*, six photographic portraits of Fumai reading the *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* are hung at the entrance to the exhibition: *Dogaressa Elisabetta Querini, Zalumma Agra, Annie Jones, Dope Head, Harry Houdini, Eusapia Palladino read Valerie Solanas* (2013). Fumai is in the character of each person named in the title, with some reading from the manifesto and others having it close at hand. Written on the wall behind Fumai in each image is a quote from the manifesto: “A Male Artist is a Contradiction in Terms.” All those depicted are dressed in clothes that refer to their identities and sit behind a table filled with signifiers of their lives: the Dogaressa's jewels, Jones's cosmetics, Houdini's cuff and ropes, Palladino's apparition, and so on. Fumai considered the *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* a polemic against or parody of the patriarchy, yet her focus on it implies that she still valued it, despite its illogic. The first sentence of the manifesto sets its grand aims in motion; in the pages that follow it calls for violence in overthrowing the government, eliminating the financial system, and eradicating all men. Solanas wrote about radical feminist ideas rather than trying to provoke change through direct action, and is perhaps best known today for having shot Andy Warhol. The writer Olivia Laing has written about Solanas at length, particularly in relation to Laing's own isolation and loneliness:

Like Warhol, Valerie Solanas, the woman who once shot him, has been eaten by history, reduced to a single act. The crazy woman, the failed assassin, too angry and unhinged to be worthy of attention. And yet what she had to say is brilliant and prescient and brutal and psychotic. The story of her relationship with Andy is all about words—about how much they're valued and what happens if they aren't.<sup>5</sup>

Referring in the exhibition's photographs to Solanas's prolific writing, rather than to her criminal past, helps recuperate Solanas and complicates the way she is commonly remembered. The portraits are a postscript to Fumai's earlier work, *Chiara Fumai reads Valerie Solanas* (2013), a video in which Fumai invokes former Italian Prime Minister

Silvio Berlusconi in a lecture-performance of the *S.C.U.M. Manifesto*. Fumai reads it as a battle cry, knife at hand, with the bravado and authoritative tone of Berlusconi, imitating the infamous 1994 announcement he made from his own home of his entrance into politics.<sup>6</sup>

An installation with multiple elements entitled *The Book of Evil Spirits* (2015) forms the crux of the exhibition. Consisting of a 26-minute video, a suite of fifteen photographs encircled by automatic drawings, and a textual component akin to a Ouija board in-the-round,<sup>7</sup> in totality *The Book of Evil Spirits* is reminiscent of a psychic parlor and brings together many of Fumai's primary concerns and characters. Large letters that replicate those on a Ouija board line the walls of the installation. The alphabet, the numbers 0 through 9, and the words "Ouija," "yes," "no," and "arrivederci" (goodbye) envelop the viewer. Aligned with Fumai's growing interest in performative ritual magic and occult symbolism, and as included in her last exhibitions, salt lines the bottom of the walls.

In the video component of the installation, Fumai channels medium Eusapia Palladino, who is also one of the six people featured in the Solanas photographs. Palladino's séances were attended by the likes of Nicholas II of Russia and Nobel laureates Marie and Pierre Curie. In addition, Palladino was tellingly born in Puglia, Italy, the same region where Fumai grew up. Perhaps for this reason, or because of Palladino's spiritualist life, she was since 2011 Fumai's muse and the principal character in her work. During her lifetime, Palladino was held in high esteem by some, while others considered her a fraud and trickster. Indeed, she was often caught cheating during her séances: she claimed that furniture was levitated by spirits when it was sometimes moved by her feet. On the other hand, many were convinced of the veracity of her séances, and went to great lengths to corroborate her powers.

One of Palladino's supporters, Camille Flammarion, was an astronomer and author who closely followed spiritualism and organized séances with Palladino. Most of the script for *The Book of Evil Spirits* is taken from a 500-page book Flammarion wrote in 1907 titled *Mysterious Psychic Forces: An Account of the Author's Investigations in Psychical Research, Together with Those of Other European Savants*, which gives a detailed account of his experiences with séances and mediums, including Palladino. In the video, a blindfolded Fumai (as Palladino) conjures the spirits of a powerful group of women including freak-show performers Zalumma Agra and Annie Jones and militant Ulrike Meinhof. The video begins with Palladino seated at a table with a Ouija board—a peculiar sight as Palladino could not read or write—and a candle and crystal ball.





*The S.C.U.M. Elite*, 2019, as performed in the exhibition *Chiara Fumai: LESS LIGHT*. Photo by Manuel Molina Martagon. Image courtesy of the International Studio & Curatorial Program and The Church of Chiara Fumai



*The S.C.U.M. Elite*, 2019, as performed in the exhibition *Chiara Fumai: LESS LIGHT*. Photo by Manuel Molina Martagon. Image courtesy of the International Studio & Curatorial Program and The Church of Chiara Fumai



Fumai narrates Palladino's early life with Flammarion's words. Her manifestations began at puberty and her spiritual education began in her early twenties, "... at this epoch of her life, it was remarked that the séances to which she was invited, succeeded much better when she was seated at the table." Her later life is partially described as a series of hoaxes, tremors and attempts to seduce investigators.

Annie Jones, Zalumma Agra, and Ulrike Meinhof appear in succession; along with Palladino, they recite a collage of texts, some of which were quoted repeatedly in Fumai's previous work. These include the second manifesto of the Rivolta Femminile (Feminine Revolt), "I Say I," a text about self-awareness written in 1977 by radical Italian feminists Carla Lonzi and the Rivolta Femminile. Zalumma Agra fervently delivers the text in the video, which sharply begins, "Who says culture is the sublime? It is the sublime of self-destruction. In our current culture, you have complied unreservedly with a request that excludes you. You wanted to participate but without existing on your own. At the end, you are unrecognizable and in the meanwhile you feel inadequate. You claim solidarity because you went to the fight. To my mind, you got yourself into a mess. You've given your life to show that we are mediocre. You got stuck while climbing the phallus."

Ulrike Meinhof's 1967 open letter to Farah Diba Pahlavi (the wife of the Shah of Iran) follows, recited by Fumai-as-Palladino-channeling-Meinhof. This letter was filled with outrage about the rampant poverty and tyranny of the Iranian people. Meinhof, Jones, and Agra come together on the spiritual plane created by Palladino, and their new speech not only conflates history but also—in a sense—emancipates the speakers from oppression. Meeting in Fumai's world, they are her companions as she reinterprets their work and life from the position of female resistance.

"Less Light, My Dear" (*Mio caro, mena luce*)—from which the title of this exhibition is taken—is a line uttered by Fumai in the video and excerpted from Flammarion's numerous reports of Palladino requesting less light at her séances: she often asked the attendees to turn down the gas lamps. Through performance, writing, and text-based installations, language permeated Fumai's practice as a way of addressing struggle, knowledge, and power. "Less Light, My Dear" is also the phrase spelled out in the fifteen photographs installed on top of the Ouija board in-the-round. Each letter of "Less Light, My Dear" is spelled out in Italian Sign Language, with the resulting photographs framed in an oval matte and surrounded by automatic drawing created by Fumai of lines from Flammarion's book, with some letters drawn in reverse.



*The S.C.U.M. Elite*, 2019, as performed in the exhibition *Chiara Fumai: LESS LIGHT*. Photo by Manuel Molina Martagon. Image courtesy of the International Studio & Curatorial Program and The Church of Chiara Fumai

Fumai, who often employed sign language and automatic drawing, was interested in the subversive qualities of language, perhaps as a way to signify the voice she gave to women who were prevented from speaking during their lifetimes. The video is also punctuated by four separate moments in which Fumai signs excerpts from a 1979 recorded conversation with an anonymous female participant in an armed Italian feminist group who said, “Maybe that’s because I have no history ... perhaps because everything I see as being my history appears otherwise to me like a suit of clothes put on my back ... I can’t get it off of me so then I start to think about the act of fragmenting myself if I don’t recognize my rage.”<sup>8</sup> Automatic drawing—a form of mark-making that emerges from the subconscious and is made without the pen leaving the paper—was considered by some mediums as a way to channel spirits and was further developed by the Surrealists. Fumai incorporates automatism into not only the *Less Light, My Dear*<sup>9</sup> photograph-drawings, but also in the video, where the apparitions created by Palladino have sheets with automatic drawing draped over their figures.

No one but Fumai could bring all these remarkable women together—Palladino, Agra, Jones, Solanas, Querini and Meinhof. They inspired her, and in return she unbound them from the pages of history, bringing them together in solidarity, and more importantly, with Fumai herself. They are not considered only as mothers, wives, and daughters—as women are often positioned in the annals of history—but are instead presented with dignity and in all their complexity, as a collective voice of resistance, jumping from one of Fumai’s works to another. As Fumai says, “I’m interested in worlds that have something to do with the invisible, as they seek the truth and re-present it to an audience in other forms, using any method, at the cost of embracing artifice, mystery, and uncertainty. In this regard, I believe that the end justifies the means, and that surrealistic means are capable of producing new sustenance for the mind. Thanks to the after-effects of the abstract work, what seems a monument to memory can speak to the present and the future, the ghosts are themselves the future ...”<sup>10</sup> Thank you Chiara Fumai, a thousand times into the future.

- 1 First presented at *Open Museum Open City*, MAXXI, Rome, 2014.
- 2 Valerie Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (London: Verso, 2004).
- 3 Maya Salam, “Women’s History Myths, Debunked,” *The New York Times*. March 1, 2019. Accessed March 1, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/01/us/womens-history-month-myths.html>.
- 4 Walter Benjamin, Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, and Michael W. Jennings, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings. Vol. 4, 1938–1940*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003) 406
- 5 Olivia Laing, *Lonely city – adventures in the art of being alone* (New York: Picador, 2016) 78
- 6 This video is written about at length in Stefano Collicelli Cagol’s insightful text in this publication, “The Wandering through Time of Chiara Fumai.”
- 7 Fumai’s installation practice was fluid, she exhibited *The Book of Evil Spirits* video alongside different corresponding installations each time. These sometimes included performance props from the video such as the ouija board and crystal ball, and wig, gloves and shoes worn by Eusapia Palladino.
- 8 Ida Fare and Franca Spirito, *Mara e le altre. Le donne e la lotta armata: storie, interviste, riflessioni*. (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979)
- 9 The fifteen photographs were titled *Less Light, My Dear* when shown as standalone works.
- 10 Announcement for the 2011 Volcano Extravaganza, organized by the Fiorucci Art Trust in Stromboli. Fumai participated with the work *Free like the Speech of a Socialist*. Accessed March 01, 2019. <https://fiorucciarttrust.com/works/volcano-extravaganza-fumai/>



Chiara Fumai, *Prada Bag with Guns and Balaclavas*,  
2016, bag, fabric and plastic, 21 × 16 × 9 in.  
(50 × 22 × 26 cm). Photo by Martin Parsekian.  
Image courtesy of the International Studio & Curatorial  
Program and The Church of Chiara Fumai



## LESS LIGHT

The demon-possessed woman, in conversation with  
Francesco Urbano Ragazzi

Let's build a wall at the border. Less light. Let's drown people at sea. Less light. Let's forbid the right to abortion. Less light. Let's shoot black people and beat the homosexuals. Less light. Let's suspend the nuclear arms treaties. Less light. Less. Light. LESS LIGHT.

I don't want to sound apocalyptic, but we are not far from hearing these kinds of horrific and merciless claims casually included in political discourse, both in Europe and the United States. No later than November 2015 for instance, Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, guest on a morning TV show, declared he would happily have employed bulldozers to solve the problem of Roma shantytowns. In these interesting times, now that the Enlightenment seems to be over, how does one answer Chiara Fumai's request for "Less Light"?<sup>1</sup> We are already plunged into darkness.

When, around 2008, Chiara Fumai stopped being a DJ to become a visual artist, everything was different. We were venturing into a world that was perceived as dominated by the cold, escalating rationalism of technology and the transnational monopolies connected to it. Following the critical path of Adorno and Horkheimer's negative dialectics thus appeared to be natural<sup>2</sup>—morally right trying to resuscitate the repressed forces that had shaped the unconscious of Western modernity, from Nietzsche down to Helena Blavatsky, Annie Besant and Austin Osman Spare.<sup>3</sup> But what about now? Doesn't saying that "truth is as spherical as a planet"<sup>4</sup> equate to justifying the slimy relativism of every fake news story? Isn't quoting the words of a terrorist<sup>5</sup> the equivalent of rooting for the end of democracy? Isn't embodying a possessed medium or alluding to black magic<sup>6</sup> the same as indulging the antiscientific trend in these new Middle Ages?

During the last period of her life, Chiara herself was questioning the value of her work within this new political climate. She had started to study Christine de Pisan's *Le tresor de la cité des dames de degré en degré*, wanting to build her own fortified citadel for the comrades she had been channeling during her performances: Annie Jones, Zalumma Agra, Ulrike Meinhof, Valerie Solanas, Eusapia Palladino, Elisabetta Querini, the Invisible Woman and all the others.<sup>7</sup> The last time we met—Milan, July 2017—she explained why.

"Not every wall is the same" she told me. "The one Trump wants to build at the Mexican border, for instance, is pure fascism; the walls of a

gay club, instead, serve to protect a safe space: it's right if there are a velvet rope and some bouncers at the entrance." And then she added: "I think the time for me to display the semiotics of violence, as I did in the past, is over. I'd like to show everybody that all I have done in the last ten years has been to defend a space against oppression." I believe that Chiara wasn't speaking about a change to her working methods, but rather about an essential clarification. Something related to the difference between the characters she was embodying and her own identity, between the discourses she was appropriating and the meta-discourse emerging from her practice.

The problem of language – and its relationship to truth – has always been at the core of Chiara's oeuvre: this is what she declared at every interview, including the one that follows. The ability to speak is indeed a complicated matter for all the personas populating her Mount Olympus: Eusapia is illiterate, Zalumma mute or muted, Dope Head self-narcotized by opium, Elisabetta forbidden to talk in public. Confused by the unintelligible speech of these figures, the viewer is unable to go beyond how they appear and the literal meaning of their words. Some misunderstandings might thus occur. The viewer might not catch the silent matter of spoken language: a certain tone, the context of enunciation, the metaphorical senses and performative power that permeate every sentence. Chiara's personas are viewed as simply the virago, the unmanageable diva, the cunt, the junkie, the witch, the fanatic – the frigid, the frantic, the emasculating. Or even worse: while being unable to see beyond the dull surface of their appearance, one expects these figures to reveal magic powers and inaccessible mystic truths.

But what if the artist, through the indecipherable codes on which her artworks are based, was only measuring the viewer's attention, that is to say their will to exercise the faculty of understanding? What if the artist, disguised as a moral philosopher, was only testing the grounds of our habitus and sets of beliefs, that is to say everyone's tendency to categorize and thus stereotype?

What we believe, and why, are questions that haunt every bit – every byte – of this young century as a specter. In each performance, Chiara exposes us to the grammar of superstition, credulity, reductionism, and ideology (not only the ideologies we proudly dislike, but also the ones we adore). If the artist, for instance, impersonates Zalumma Agra (the Circassian beauty of P. T. Barnum's Circus) while she recites the words of Carla Lonzi (the author of "Let's Spit on Hegel" and "I Say I")<sup>8</sup> during the ecstatic dream of fraudulent Italian psychic Eusapia Palladino,

again impersonated by the artist,<sup>9</sup> who exactly is taking responsibility for the monologue and its interpretation? Are these women all sisters in feminism, fighting for the same cause? Are they all speaking with the same voice? Are they all the same, or not? Is irony true or false?

Trapping us in a net of quotes that we don't fully understand without some studying, Chiara blinds us with the automatism of our laziest thinking, while at the same time keeping us awake. Her work pushes us to desire "the human being's emergence from his self-incurred minority. Minority is inability to make use of one's own understanding without direction from another. This minority is self-incurred when its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. Sapere aude! Have courage to make use of your own understanding!"<sup>10</sup> This is Chiara Fumai's motto.

Chiara Fumai: not the Illuminati, but rather the Illuminist, the Enlightened. Lucifer, qui mane oriebaris.

When she saw Jesus from a distance, she ran and fell on her knees in front of him. She shouted at the top of her voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!" For Jesus had said to her, "Come out of this woman, you impure spirit!"

Then Jesus asked her, "What is your name?"

"My name is Legion," she replied, "for we are many." And she begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the woman who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in her right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed woman – and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. (Mark 5:9)

FUR All your performances are remixes, mash-ups of texts written by others: playwright and anarchist Valerie Solanas, art critic and feminist Carla Lonzi, journalist and terrorist Ulrike Meinhof, to name a few. Has your career as a DJ influenced your artistic practice?

CF We had worked as DJs for many years before completely dedicating ourselves to contemporary art. That's why our artistic practice has so many things in common with DJ mixing techniques. As artists we only assemble, select, re-edit, re-contextualize and give rhythm to other people's works. We focus on certain points that culture hasn't digested, yet: the madness assigned to Ulrike Meinhof compared with the rationality of her writings and the consistency of her actions (*Der Hexenhammer*, 2015), the brilliant parody of macho culture which was so cleverly written by Valerie Solanas only to be mistaken for a real manifesto (*Chiara Fumai reads Valerie Solanas*, 2013), the repression of the deep philosophical thought of Carla Lonzi and *Rivolta Femminile*, and the prejudice against theories considered useless and out of fashion (*Shut Up, Actually Talk*, 2012).

Here is an example of a performance piece that assimilated the mash-up structure: the intervention at the Foundation Querini Stampalia in Venice, where we hid an anonymous message during a tour of its historical art collection (*I Did Not Say or Mean 'Warning,'* 2013). We began by saying that the hidden message is a short, anonymous text, printed on a 1970s flyer. Apparently, it was left in an answering machine, but we found it many years later while we were studying some pages about feminism and violence. As we were reading it, we had goose bumps; it felt like being thrown into the void, all of a sudden. It's a violent message using the first person and concerning subversion, a subject absent from history and an upcoming threat. We like to call the author "Invisible Woman" and imagine her like a sort of kamikaze, but we actually don't know who she is. We like to play games within our art, but not this time: we didn't make up that message.

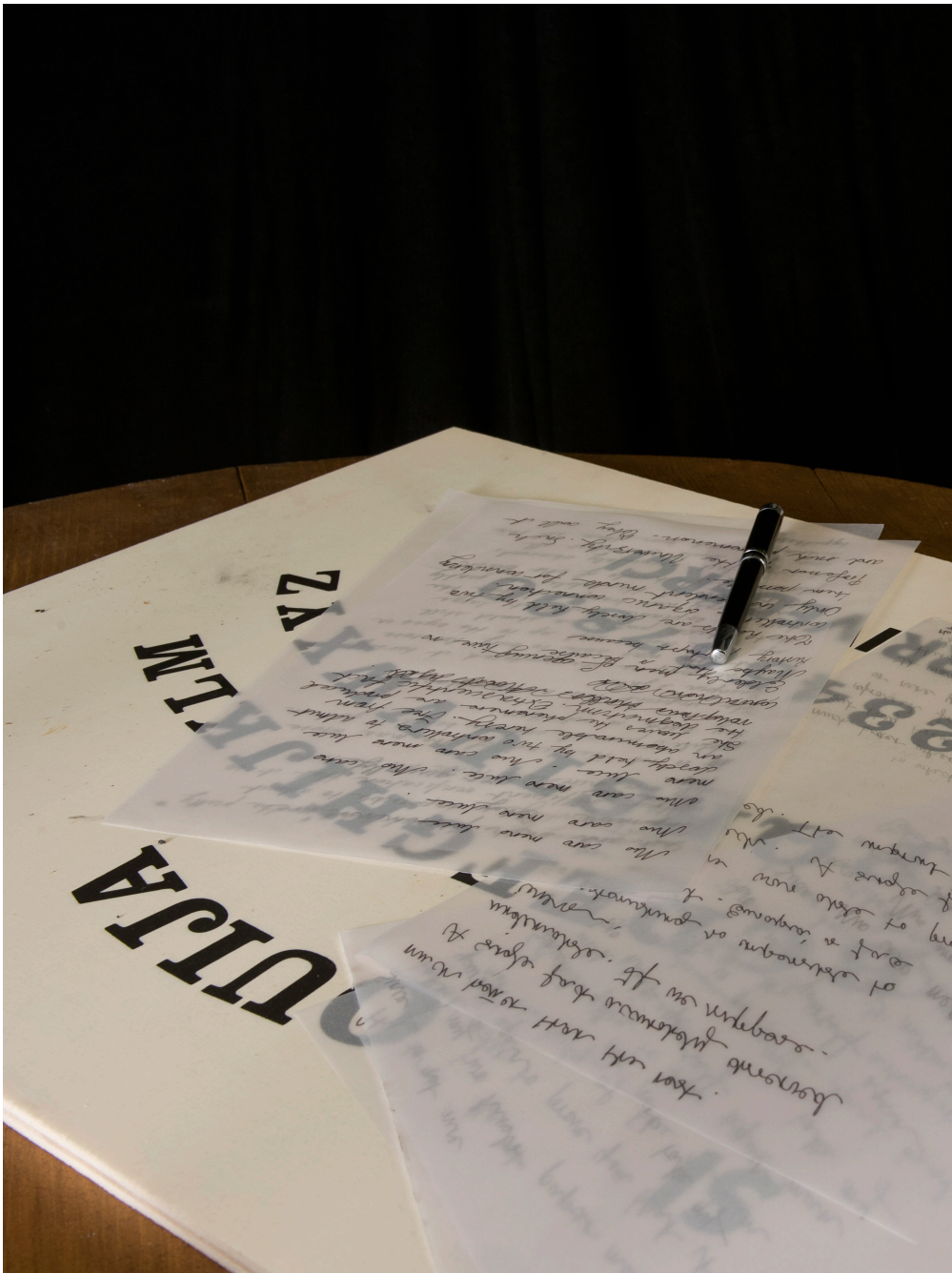
As the words of the Invisible Woman were still echoing in our heads, we were offered the chance to make an exhibition at the Querini Stampalia Foundation in Venice (*Furla Art Award*, 2013). The silence of the Venetian halls, the eyes of the Renaissance portraits exhibited in the building, the lack of information about the models, felt like elements which could create a suitable context for the expression of that anonymous message, in order to amplify, on a spatial dimension, the vertigo we experienced when we discovered it. So, we started studying the female portraits exposed in the palace, putting together the pieces of the

unknown stories of figures like the Dogaressa Elisabetta Querini and Nicolosia Mantegna, in addition to the many female faces whose identities we can only hypothesize. Their biographical information and historical-cultural contexts contributed to a very detailed and somehow traditional “guide” to all the female portraits exhibited in the Querini Stampalia collection. At certain moments in the guide, we inserted parts of the anonymous message, sentence after sentence, like a haiku. We blended the two texts, making it impossible to tell them apart, just like when a DJ plays two pieces, mixing them into one. Some parts of the message were too direct to dialogue with an art history tour, and that’s why we “effected” them, applying some seconds of silence: we learned to perform certain words using the LIS (Italian Sign Language) hand-spelling. You know when during the peak of a mix the DJ lowers the volume and the audience goes into raptures? In *I Did Not Say or Mean ‘Warning’* we applied the same effect: by censoring some of the spoken parts we amplified the emotion of their transmission.

FUR You are also interested in late nineteenth-century forms of “spectacle” such as freak shows, magic shows, and séances. Why do these forms fascinate you? Are you attempting an alternative reading of modernity?

CF We like alternative histories related to performance practice, i.e., the historical counter-culture of performance art. Art allows people to transcend history and present a whole Anti-World. With Anti-World I’m not speaking about the romantic idea of a certain artistic practice, something very far away from real-world problematics and facts. We should avoid the typical mistake of materialism, in other words, underestimating the impact that an artwork can have on its present and future, its ability to anticipate its own times, and art’s ability to pose questions that cannot be formulated through the common alphabets of culture or politics. Besides this, from a strictly formal point of view, we have developed a sort of fetishism towards some performative formats that are not contemplated by contemporary art, for example freak shows or séances. If you pay attention, all those practices have a common denominator: they show the invisible but without using the rhetoric of Minimalism, the same rhetoric that gives value to absence, a concept that we consider highly overrated by Contemporary Art. Our formal choice is, in other words, a declaration of extreme love for every other form of Immaterial Art.

FUR Your live performances are always anti-spectacular, and the feelings you provoke, especially in men, are often frustration,



Chiara Fumai, *The Book of Evil Spirits*, 2015, single channel color video, 26 min. 25 sec. Image courtesy of the The Church of Chiara Fumai



embarrassment, or even boredom and anger. One has to be a little queer or freak or punk to understand the comical side of your work. How do you think about your relationship with your audience?

CF We're more interested in the dynamics of the spectacular rather than the audience, or better, as you have properly defined it, the anti-spectacular. Our method and language work towards breaking the established rules on which stand the relationship between the viewer and the artist. Our artworks often appear to be politically incorrect. Nevertheless, they are always perfectly inserted into an institutional context that supports them, so much so that everybody should wonder how they ended up there. That's it; our main job is making one thing appear as if it was something else, and making this experience pleasant for the most prepared audience.

We don't quite know at what point this kind of art actually addresses men, since we usually embody female figures. It's likely that in some countries men feel called into question by our artworks, as men are culturally more used to expressing opinions, even disagreement, and feeling like protagonists even when they're not supposed to. However, this phenomenon doesn't really trouble us: we hit female stereotypes, and we surely aren't the only ones to do that. It's the way we do it that creates estrangement.

FUR You often play the role of the preacher, the lecturer, and the tour guide in a dialectic based on frontality. Is there a pedagogical aspect to your lecture-performances, or are you simply mocking the traditional forms of education? Is it possible to teach feminism through discipline?

CF Our work stands exactly on this contradiction, and that's why it belongs – thank God – to art and nothing else. It happened in the past that someone, because of the intrinsic complexity of these artworks, came to us to sermonize about how some topics should be treated, about what should or shouldn't be said, without realizing that if we had accepted those suggestions, we would have quit being artists. Our job is not about giving answers, it's about formulating questions, cannibalizing language, the alphabet of the same culture that our artworks put up for discussion. We aren't here to put everything in order, but to participate in this mess. Deconstruction is our party.

FUR Your collages function as scripts in automatic writing, your photographs set the iconography of the characters you play, your installations and objects are the continuation of your performances by other means. Apparently, there's no place for proper documentation in your artistic practice. Why?





Chiara Fumai, *The Book of Evil Spirits*, 2015, single channel color video, 26 min. 25 sec. Image courtesy of the International Studio & Curatorial Program and The Church of Chiara Fumai

CF There's no space for proper documentation in our practice because we don't love tautologies, but, on the other hand, we love to put into circulation several material forgeries of live performances. Such operations, which we call *post-performative*, require the audience to pay a lot of attention, precisely because they play on the border between artwork and falsity, between the oral language of the performance and its echo, between the impossibility of transmitting the cognitive experience through an image and its own parody. There's a performativity even in this. I'm thinking about the case of the photographic prints where the protagonists of some of our artworks simulate the execution of another of our artworks, doing something that has nothing to do with their role (e.g., *Eusapia Palladino reads Valerie Solanas*, 2013). If this performative action was really carried out, it would make no sense at all, but the diffusion of its pseudo-documentation is an act that can destroy the idea of performance as an original, heroic, and historically unique act.

Think about the mediumistic tradition. The séance represents the immaterial performance at its highest point. Have you ever watched a film that really documents a séance, without its being a simulation? No. At the same time, the way everyone orally reports a paranormal experience is loaded with a strong performative charge, something out of the ordinary. It's not important whether Eusapia Palladino (a world-renowned nineteenth-century psychic and our muse since 2011) could actually create ectoplasms with the power of thought or if she realized them with a tissue placed on clay. The fact that her ghosts put the positivists up for discussion makes her a great artist. Who cares if, on an artistic dimension, Dalí was divinely inspired during a hypnotic trance or if he composed unconscious visions using the instruments that he could more easily find? Psychics like Eusapia did the same thing. That fear, that alienation, that sinister irony that often emerges from paranormal phenomena are the features that we try to apply to the immaterial work and to the performative space, precisely because they recall in all respects the real nature of the unconscious. Moreover, what does a viewer expect to receive emotionally from the observation of a video in which an artist performs in front of a group of other people? It's too easy. The viewer who wants to witness a real miracle must show up.

- 1 Chiara Fumai's solo exhibition at the International Studio & Curatorial Program is titled after a collage series the artist made in 2016: *Less Light, My Dear*. The same request for lowering the light is made by the artist while she is impersonating psychic Eusapia Palladino in her video *The Book of Evil Spirits*, 2015, single channel color video, 26 min. 25 sec.
- 2 Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "Excursus II: Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality" in *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972)
- 3 All these authors were included in Chiara Fumai's library, which was donated to CRRI – Centro di Ricerca Castello di Rivoli by The Church of Chiara Fumai in 2018.
- 4 Francesco U. Ragazzi, "Chiara Fumai: Follow This You Bitches," *ATP Diary*, February 22, 2013. Accessed August 3, 2019, <http://atpdiary.com/exhibit/chiara-fumai-praga/>
- 5 Chiara Fumai, *Der Hexenhammer*, performance, 2015, Museion, Bolzano, Italy. Chiara Fumai, *I Did Not Mean or Say 'Warning,'* performance, 2013, Querini Stampalia Foundation, Venice, Italy.
- 6 Chiara Fumai, *The Book of Evil Spirits*, single channel color video, 2015.
- 7 All recurring characters in Chiara Fumai's performances and artworks.
- 8 Carla Lonzi, "Let's spit on Hegel," in *Feminist interpretations of GWF Hegel*, ed. Patricia J. Mills (Philadelphia: Penn State University Press, 1996), 275–298; Carla Lonzi, "Io dico io," in *La presenza dell'uomo nel femminismo*, Marta Lonzi. Carla Lonzi, Anna Jaquinta (Roma: Scritti di Rivolta Femminile, 1978), 9.
- 9 Chiara Fumai, *The Book of Evil Spirits*, single channel color video, 2015.
- 10 Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 11–23.

The quotations above are excerpted from a transcribed interview between Chiara Fumai and Francesco Urbano Ragazzi in Milan on November 26th, 2015. The interview first appeared in Spanish in *Revista Errata #15: Performance, Acciones y Actionismo*, January–June 2016.



Chiara Fumai, *Der Hexenhammer* (detail),  
Museum Project Room, 2015. Photo: Luca Meneghel

THE WANDERING THROUGH TIME OF CHIARA FUMAI  
Stefano Collicelli Cagol

Listening:

Martha Argerich's 1961 performance of *Toccata in D minor, Op. 11* by Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953).

A good way to grasp the level of precision, wildness, complexity, and research in Chiara Fumai's work is to compare it with Martha Argerich's performance of Prokofiev's *Toccata in D minor, Op. 11*. If you have never come across Fumai while she was sharing the worldly dimension we are inhabiting at the moment, this piece of music may suggest the intensity, dark joy, and meticulousness characteristic of Fumai and her practice. This solo piano piece compels the pianist to use swift, acrobatic hand movements. For example, after the repetition of a single D note at the beginning, the player's hands switch positions, with one taking up the chromatic leaps of the other, and the latter maintaining a figuration similar to that played by the former. The piece develops with the hands sometimes mirroring each other on the keyboard, weaving together different musical patterns, slowing down and speeding up, and finally ending on D after a frantic *glissando*. The melody plays with contradictions, hands replacing each other, themes and figures emerging to disappear and then appear again: multiple subjects co-exist in one piece of music.

So it is with Fumai as she unabashedly lets her multiple selves emerge at any given moment. Hers was a vision of temporality that is nonlinear, where subjects and events travel through time, creating fugues, going and returning, and intervening over and over again to change the course of history. She was obsessed with precision and the desire to control, from as many points of view as possible, the implications of her words, actions, and works. Contradictions inhabit Fumai's various worlds, including a vivid and ironic take on the art world as well as the everyday one we inhabit. The capacity to hold everything together – highbrow and lowbrow, minor histories and forgotten figures with major historical protagonists, languages spoken by many and those understood by only a few, and multiple time-frames – gives her productions an eccentric yet consistent trajectory within the history of performance. The personal, the marginal, the mainstream equally co-exist and participate in the creation of her cosmogony, and all these three dimensions are held together by her relationship with time. Fumai's practice does not privilege only one of them.

Take *Chiara Fumai reads Valerie Solanas* (2013), the photographic series presented at the *LESS LIGHT* exhibition at ISCP, New York, in 2019. The setting of a video performance from the same body of work (not exhibited at ISCP) was carefully studied by the artist in order to place Valerie Solanas within Fumai's own time period. A room with white walls covered with black and white diagrams and writings unravels Solanas's *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* (1967), framing the video performance, which is presented on a flat screen where Fumai reads Solanas's words. Fumai produced the work as a commentary on a prize for young Italian artists. Out of the five artists shortlisted for the prize, Fumai was the only woman, despite everyone knowing that, as Solanas writes in her manifesto, "a 'male artist' is a contradiction in terms."

It was 2013, the former European Commissioner for Competition, economist and Italian Senator for Life Mario Monti, was Prime Minister of Italy after the fall in 2011 of Silvio Berlusconi's government. Berlusconi's *ventennio* was finally over, and his grasp on Italian politics, culture, and society was ready to be forgotten. However, the impact on Fumai and others of her generation growing up in that age of stasis can hardly be ignored. But how can one address it without naming it and letting it take center stage again? How can one avoid being again inhabited by those patriarchal forces, and at the same time take a stance against them? Fumai from her side, looked for allies, welcoming them when they appeared. Like emerging selves, allies may make an appearance when needed. Fumai could return with them to the time when everything started, thereby establishing a new jumping off point, a new battlefield. At the same time, with a "back to the future" move, Fumai made sure their actions had an impact on the present.

In the video performance at the core of the 2013 installation, Fumai writes on the wall the sentence from Solanas's *S.C.U.M. Manifesto*: "a male artist is a contradiction in terms." She does this not only because she is the only woman shortlisted in a competition (that she eventually won), but also as a way to intervene in a bourgeois interior. In her tactic, she echoes the one adopted by the protagonists of the film *La Chinoise*, by French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard. However, in Fumai's case it is a very Italian interior. It was January 26, 1994, when Silvio Berlusconi announced his decision to run for general election with his brand-new party. He did that with a TV message that was 9 minutes and 30 seconds long. Recorded in his home, among wooden shelves, books, photos of his family in the background, and a long letter opener on the foreground,

the video certified the so-called political *discesa in campo* (descent into the field) of Berlusconi. The soccer term – which means the entrance onto the field by the players – is used here as a metaphor, but with the sinister connotation of a battlefield. This historic Italian television moment epitomised the beginning of a new era in the country’s politics.

Fumai turned that scene into an unadorned interior, where only a few cues referred to the original model for the set: the dart she is using, the small stack of books together with the characters on Xerox paper. With a *détournement*, Fumai goes back to 1994, when everything started, without explicitly evoking it. She establishes her battlefield by bringing back to her future both that moment and Solanas, to unravel it and question its power. It is Fumai’s face, and her body and voice, but the words she speaks are from Solanas, who comes back to this dimension to unleash again her powerful and witty manifesto against the male presence (and need) within the world. By organizing the set being used in the video itself in such a clear way, Fumai provides a platform for Solanas’s words to return, with resonance for today. In addition, those words functioned against the phallogocentrism experienced with a particular violence in Italy since 1994 onwards within the language of (mainly male) politicians. Excessive, ironic, and fierce, Fumai’s work bends time, not caring for the linear temporality used by power to make history, but rather aiming to dismantle the very concept of history from within. This is not because of a lack of concern about the past, but because the narrative implied by history takes its form through the serious language Fumai’s work aims to abolish.

The space created for the 2013 video performance becomes the matrix for the series of photographic portraits of people and characters exhibited at ISCP, which Fumai gathered and brought back to life throughout her career. From Zalumma Agra to Annie Jones, Eusapia Palladino, Dope Head, and Harry Houdini, they are all reading Valerie Solanas, as well as the last Dogaressa of Venice, Elisabetta Querini Valier. Fumai recounts the history of the latter in her 2013 performance at the Querini Stampalia Foundation in Venice, *I Did Not Say or Mean ‘Warning.’* A guided tour through the collection of the eponymous foundation, the performance – as its title suggests – plays with the idea of stating something by negating it at the same time.

One of the paintings discussed in the guided tour is the portrait of the Dogaressa attributed to the painter Niccolò Cassana. The Dogaressa, wife of the Doge Silvestro Valier, received the crown on March 4, 1649, despite the fact that it was prohibited by law: women



Chiara Fumai, *I Did Not Say or Mean 'Warning'*  
(detail), 2013, wall drawing, performance  
document, text by Anonymous Woman, 78 × 131 in.  
(200 × 332 cm) Image courtesy of The Church of  
Chiara Fumai and Apalazzo Gallery



There is nothing in between



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were not entitled to become Dogaresse; only men could aspire to the masculine counterpart of the title. It was the Doge himself who broke the law, allowing her crowning and asking Cassana to celebrate both of them with two singular portraits in which they are wearing the rich garments of their new status. No men in the Querini family ever managed to become Dogi, therefore the Dogaressa had an important function as well within the mythology of the family.

Fumai's tour through the works of art in the collection highlighted different women figures presented in the paintings, although no women painters figure in it. The guided tour was further enriched by Fumai delivering, through sign language, a subversive message left by an anonymous woman in the answering machine of the Lotta Femminista group in the early 1970s. The text addresses violence and its presence within society, questioning how it can be expressed without being unleashed in the same way that patriarchal society has perpetuated it. Again, the past has a message to be delivered in the present moment. The fact that Fumai performed the text using sign language meant that it was accessible only to those able to understand that language. Completely avoiding the use of her voice, Fumai instead used hand gestures and facial expressions, frightening viewers with her very angry look. The use of sign language alternated with portions of the tour when she was speaking.

By using an institutional guided tour to publicly declare a revolutionary text through gestures, Fumai found a way to redefine the role of a traditional guide. Fumai achieved that by reviving the violence of the *serate futuriste*, which played an important part at the beginning of the twentieth century in paving the way for the recognition of performance and participatory practices as mediums. Rather than following the Futurists' example, who addressed their violence to the public, Fumai used it to express the rage of the content and to further extend its communication power. In this way, she undermined from within the institution, turned into a medium for a revolutionary message. Fumai as the guide of the Fondazione Querini Stampalia uses words – and the knowledge they produce – and, at the same time, she replaces them by action. The message of the anonymous terrorist expressed through sign language is a substitute for the violence of language, and therefore, the violence of the knowledge formed by words, with Fumai providing a performance of a performance.

Rather than an invitation to “spit” on language (echoing “Let's Spit on Hegel,” by Carla Lonzi), Fumai's performance proposed a

frame in which to embrace opposites, making them coexist, detouring their traditional functions, revealing their limits, and adopting strategies of resistance to repetitive patterns of behavior. However, she warned her viewers at the beginning of her tour that they shouldn't take anything as personally addressed to them.

Together with words, images are also under scrutiny, not only because of the lack of women painters in the collection of the Querini Stampalia Foundation, but also because of the representation of women within the collection. Fumai discussed the fresco on the ceiling at the entrance, pointing out the positive meaning of the figure of Lucifer within the pagan world. After that, she introduced viewers to the *Presentation at the Temple* (circa 1470), by Giovanni Bellini, a painting inspired by a similar work by Andrea Mantegna. In Bellini's version, however, the seductive palette of Mantegna becomes more austere and based on mundane reality, with characters losing their nimbus, among other things. Moreover, Bellini adds two new characters to the scene; according to Fumai, one is a self-portrait staring at visitors with an intense and odd gaze, the other a portrait of his sister, Nicolosia Bellini, who was given by Jacopo, the painter's father, as a bride to Mantegna himself (also painted in this work) in order to link his talent to the family business. At the moment, we have very little information about Nicolosia, as her life left hardly any documented traces. As Fumai highlighted, in history as much as within the painting, Nicolosia is a spectral presence. The sudden recognition of Nicolosia casts a shadow on the male artists of the family, who are all depicted in this painting and all ignored by Fumai's narrative. Not intimidated by the intense gaze Bellini gave himself in this painting—as if he, as a male painter, was preparing for this woman performer, waiting for centuries for this very moment—Fumai fiercely challenged it. Her performance finally makes sense of the puzzle art historians are still pondering: why is Bellini gazing so intently at those standing in front of his painting? For more than five centuries Bellini's intense gaze stood as a message for Fumai: a cautionary tale against any attempt to challenge the painted patriarchal organization of the Bellini family. After Fumai's performance though, the gaze has turned into one of dismay and impotence for the profanation perpetrated by Fumai in her standing up for Nicolosia through her performance. Allies from the past may have looked to Fumai to have their voices heard again, but she also did well picking up comrades for her artistic fights and her love songs in a bad time.

Stefano Collicelli Cagol is Curator of the  
La Quadriennale di Roma.

**A MALE ARTIST IS  
A CONTRADICTION  
IN  
TERMS**



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A CONTRADICTION  
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TERMS**



Chiara Fumai, *Dogaressa Elisabetta Querini reads Valerie Solanas*, 2013, C-print, 31 ½ × 47 ¼ in. (80 × 120 cm). Image courtesy of The Church of Chiara Fumai and Apalazzo Gallery

Chiara Fumai, *Dope Head reads Valerie Solanas*, 2013, C-print, 31 ½ × 47 ¼ in. (80 × 120 cm). Image courtesy of The Church of Chiara Fumai and Apalazzo Gallery

**A MALE ARTIST IS  
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IN TERMS**



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Chiara Fumai, *Annie Jones reads Valerie Solanas*, 2013, C-print, 31 ½ × 47 ¼ in. (80 × 120 cm).  
Image courtesy of The Church of Chiara Fumai and Apalazzo Gallery

Chiara Fumai, *Eusapia Palladino reads Valerie Solanas*, 2013, C-print, 31 ½ × 47 ¼ in. (80 × 120 cm).  
Image courtesy of The Church of Chiara Fumai and Apalazzo Gallery

**A MALE ARTIST IS  
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Chiara Fumai, *Harry Houdini reads Valerie Solanas*, 2013, C-print, 31 ½ × 47 ¼ in. (80 × 120 cm).  
Image courtesy of The Church of Chiara Fumai and Apalazzo Gallery

Chiara Fumai, *Zalumba Agra reads Valerie Solanas*, 2013, C-print, 31 ½ × 47 ¼ in. (80 × 120 cm).  
Image courtesy of The Church of Chiara Fumai and Apalazzo Gallery

Chiara Fumai (Rome, 1978–Bari, 2017) was a resident at ISCP in 2017. In 2019, along with two other artists, Chiara Fumai's work represents Italy at the Venice Biennale. Her solo exhibitions were presented by Rosa Santos, Valencia (2016); Museion, Bolzano (2015); Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice (2013); Apalazzo Gallery, Brescia (2013); Futura—Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague (2013); MACRO Testaccio, Rome (2011); and Careof—DOCVA, Milan (2008). Group exhibitions include: Tatjana Pieters, Gent (2017); David Roberts Art Foundation, London (2015); Contour 7—A Moving Image Biennale, Mechelen (2015); Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Madrid (2015); Whitechapel Gallery, London; De Appel Arts Centre, Amsterdam; Nottingham Contemporary; Fiorucci Art Trust; SongEun Foundation, Seoul (all in 2014); MUSAC Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, León (2013); dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel (2012); and the Nomas Foundation, Rome (2011). She won the Furla Art Award (2013) and the Premio New York (2017).

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