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Alys Williams, INTERVIEW with Ludovica Gioscia on The Tenderness of Insects at VITRINE, Basel (November, 2019),
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INTERVIEW with Ludovica Gioscia on The Tenderness of Insects at VITRINE, Basel



Ludovica Gioscia, *The Tenderness of Insects* (Detail), 2019. Courtesy VITRINE. Photographer: Nici Jost.

Ludovica Gioscia: The Tenderness of Insects

VITRINE, Basel

Vogesenplatz 15, 4056 Basel, Switzerland

Through January 19, 2020

On the occasion of her first solo exhibition in Switzerland, at VITRINE, Basel, Ludovica Gioscia speaks to Alys Williams (Exhibition Curator and VITRINE Director) about the energy of a rural ecosystem and her collaborations with nature for this heartfelt exhibition 'The Tenderness of Insects'.

Alys Williams: You have named your *modus operandi* the 'Infinite Present' and have described your studio as having become "a magical location in which artworks from the future and from other dimensions appear, and past creations are de-assembled and reconsidered." Could you start by telling us about this method of working and your relationship with your studio?

Ludovica Gioscia: The Infinite Present began to coalesce in 2016, as a natural evolution of my previously anachronistic working methodology. I see my *modus operandi* as a system that interprets the world partially through a quantum physics spectrum and reflects on aspects of the digital revolution which have contributed to a change in our collective understanding of space and time.

I think the Internet has manifested and confirmed physics theories that refuse the linearity of time. Rather than travelling like an arrow following one direction, we exist connected in a digital soup of infinite layered information that perpetually intensifies, compressing and expanding in all directions simultaneously.

Alys: And you apply this to your practice?

Ludovica: Yes. Back in 2016, applying a non-linear filter to my practice seemed the most natural step to take. Since then, the studio has become an alchemical laboratory where past works are constantly renegotiated and future works, or creations coming from other dimensions, magically appear. Artworks that I dream are brought to life. It is a way of working that relies heavily on instinct and has brought a great freedom to my practice. It has created a very fertile ground for collaboration.

Alys: During a recent visit to your studio, I had the pleasure of encountering two bodies of work installed on either side of the space together. The first, an installation of works produced between 2017 and 2018, which will be exhibited in a forthcoming exhibition 'Women to Watch UK: Paper Work' at Sotheby's, London, and reflect the colour palette, energy, materials, and techniques that have come to epitomise your practice. The second, a grouping of some of the new works that are exhibited at VITRINE, which have grown from your time spent on the grounds of La Boissière, Charente, in rural southwest France on the residency, Launch Pad LaB.

Whilst the new work is undoubtedly an extension of the earlier practice, much seems to have changed. Could you describe this transition?

Ludovica: It has been very interesting to work simultaneously and in the same room on two large installations, which are made from similar processes but differ quite radically in the choice of colour palettes and materials. The installation spilling from my left wall was a layering of various fragments and debris of works in paper, produced between 2008 and 2019, featuring hyper saturated colour palettes embedded with a jungle of patterns. On the contrary, the installation on the right side had an immediate recollection of the palette of greens encountered in rural environments. This laid the grounds for my solo show 'The Tenderness of Insects' at VITRINE, Basel. For this exhibition, I have brought a section of a personal forest to the concrete square where VITRINE is situated, which includes natural elements such as branches, dried flowers, and stones.

Alys: These natural elements, are they the materials we can see within the papier-mâché and fabric works in the show? Could you describe these pieces?

Ludovica: Yes. You can see these natural elements in many of the works: The ceramics have orifices, into which I have weaved dried flowers; One textile 'Portal' work is made of a collection of found materials that include a bird's nest, which I discovered flattened on the forest floor; This work also contains rolled up algae (commonly found on southern European beaches and resembling meat balls); the papier-mâché works contain grass from the lawn together with branches, pine cones, and leaves.

Alys: In La Boissière, you collaborated with a 200-year-old oak tree, worked with locally produced clay, and drops of vibrational remedies, such as Bach flowers, to name just a few of the diverse materials. You clearly love experimenting with materials and letting them lead you to new ideas. What material inventions, combinations and techniques can we expect to see in the show?

Ludovica: This is possibly the most heartfelt show I've ever produced. It is a celebration of life, friendship and nature. 'The Tenderness of Insects' is dedicated to my dear friend Heinz, who loved trees. I have channeled my affection for him into these works as well as the energy from further friendships that I developed with the wonderful beings I met (both green and human) during my residency at Launch Pad LaB. I have produced many papier-mâché works, which include a variety of unusual ingredients. I borrow processes used in the production of vibrational medicine, such as the methods which capture the vibrations of plants. Maria, the coordinator of our residency, would pick flowers for our dinner table from the surrounding fields. She was very nurturing towards us and would cook delicious dinners full of care and creativity. Once the flowers were no longer fresh, but fully impregnated with her affection, I would boil them and use the water infusion to soak my papers. I title this process 'distilling affection'.



Ludovica Gioscia, *Gifts for Trees 1* (Detail), 2019.
Courtesy VITRINE. Photographer: Nici Jost.

Alys: The title of the exhibition is "The Tenderness of Insects", which further reflects the natural environment. How did you arrive at this title?

Ludovica: On my first walk in the forest, during the residency, I met a majestic 200-year-old Oak and I knew instantly that I would collaborate with this awesome spirit. The title of the show 'The Tenderness of Insects' originates from a message from the tree, which I refer to as the 'Generous Oak'. I would spend time with the Oak and perform various activities in its presence, such as meditating by its roots, and it was during this time that the Generous Oak communicated with me. For instance, he asked me to hug him in clay, which led to the series titled 'empathic frottages'. He transmitted symbols to me telepathically, which I've translated into ceramics; messages included "imitate the generosity of nature and channel the green hand and the green heart". The Generous Oak also suggested I listen to Philip Glass, which became the soundtrack to my residency. I read the Generous Oak's tarots, laughed with it, rested in its shadow, and painted its aura in watercolour. These watercolours were later translated into the large-scale textile work 'The Generous Oak', which is the first in a new series of transparent and translucent fabric works, stitched together to form hovering colour fields.

Alys: Global warming is perhaps one of the most defining issues of our time. Is the discussion around this a motivation for the new work?

Ludovica: Yes, definitely. My feelings towards the ecosystems that surround us are becoming increasingly stronger as the discussion around global warming has intensified and visionary people, such as Greta Thunberg, are working to awaken our consciousness on the issue. I owe much of my understanding of the green kingdom to books like 'Gaia' by James Lovelock, which I read as a teenager. Also, more recently authors such as Stefano Mancuso, who has explored the intelligence of plants and their ecosystems in numerous publications. I am reaching out to the 'green beings' that our own survival is dependent upon.

Alys: Your wallpaper installations are an important part of your exhibition and are built out of an extensive archive of found and custom hand-printed wallpapers. For "The Tenderness of Insects" you

are using William Morris wallpapers for the first time. How and where did you source these and how are you working with them in the exhibition?

Ludovica: I have a vast archive of wallpapers at my studio, some of which are vintage and have been sourced on Ebay, during my travels, or in shops that were selling their basement left overs. On occasions, I have been lucky enough to stumble upon rolls of Morris & Co wallpaper printed between the 1960s - 80s. This isn't the first time that I employ the Morris & Co wallpaper in an installation; however, it is the first time that I use it to echo a forest. Other wallpapers used in 'The Tenderness of Insects' are vintage cork and hand watercoloured, which reflect a weeks worth of dreams which were in green.



Ludovica Gioscia, Heinz, 2019. Courtesy VITRINE. Photographer: Jonathan Bassett.

Alys: VITRINE's exhibition space is a glass architecture with exhibitions viewable 24/7 from the surrounding public square. Viewers approach and experience the work in-the-round and through glass. How have you approached the challenges of this unique space for your show?

Ludovica: It is the possibility to walk around the gallery space and see the work from multiple perspectives, as if it were a sculpture, which I find very exciting. I think it looks like a glass spaceship, landed in a heavily cemented urban environment. In preparing for my exhibition, I decided to approach the space as my own large greenhouse. Inside this, I place my imaginary personal forest which unfolds at different tempos. Each side of this greenhouse narrates a different aspect of the journey I underwent whilst collaborating with the Generous Oak.

Alys: I earlier mentioned your forthcoming exhibition 'Women to Watch 2020: Paper Work' at Sotheby's, London, and 2019 has been an extremely busy year for you including shows at Palazzo da Mosto, Fondazione Palazzo Magnani, Reggio Emilia, and Museo della Figurina, Fondazione Modena Art Visive, Modena. What do you have coming up in 2020?

Ludovica: I am now looking forward to returning to my studio in London. I am planning to develop a new body of work by establishing new friendships and collaborations with trees in London. I've also begun collaborating with my cat Arturo. Sometimes we fall asleep together and in these moments I feel like we dream together. I am hoping that in one of these shared dreams a collaborative artwork will appear, which I can recreate at the studio. **WM**