

# CARLA TOLOMEO

## Manual de Zoología Fantástica

March 12th – June 12th, 2022



Contini Art Gallery and Viareggio renew their artistic partnership: the Lorenzo Viani Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art will feature Carla Tolomeo's colorful and whimsical artworks from March 12th to June 12th, 2022; the show will create an ensemble that will make us travel in a parallel world, made of fantasy and cosmogony.

The exhibition is sponsored by the City of Viareggio, and the Department of Culture; Contini Art Gallery of Venice and Cortina organized the solo show featuring the artist that the gallery has been representing nationally and internationally.

Carla Tolomeo discovered Jorge Luis Borges through the passionate reading of his books, from "The Gold of the Tigers" to the "Manual of Fantastic Zoology", which became a sort of breviary for her.

"I was conducting research about bestiaries, as I've always been fascinated by the relationship between human kind and the animal kingdom. I was investigating the fantastic world established through this connection, the magic that animals suggested, the myth that they created, the circularity of thought, because all the most ancient texts feature singular, sometimes parallel conceptions about the origin of the world through animals."

Hence the exhibition's title and theme: "Manual de Zoología Fantástica" (Manual of Fantastic Zoology), which brings to light the artist's research on how animals have become the bridge between earth and sky, and how the legends and allegories they contain have led human beings to question themselves about the origin the whole of world. Exactly as Borges did with his "Manual", Carla Tolomeo puts us in touch with our most primitive side, made of handed down stories, traditions, dreams that connect us all as if we were a single being, a single tribe.



Carla Tolomeo's world is an eclectic and cultured imagination, of creations suspended in a fascinating territory poised between art and design, using literary echoes of books full of visions.

Carla Tolomeo researched the traditional writing about bestiaries, which came from the human idea of uniting the human sphere with the divine one. Over the course of centuries, artists and writers included animals in their paintings and writings as hidden allegorical symbols, precisely to demonstrate their careful and meticulous study of animals' symbolism, as each of them featured both divine and human characteristics.

Through the passing of time, the moralizing function of the bestiary faded away, shifting and becoming more of a broader imaginative compendium conceived by the human kind. A great example is the "Manual of Fantastic Zoology" (1957) by Jorge Luis Borges, which describes the unique entities that the human imagination has generated in the course of time and space. Nothing happens by chance on this earth, especially the encounter between human beings and animals, from which Carla Tolomeo takes inspiration in creating the works featured in this extraordinary exhibition.

Tolomeo was greatly influenced by the writer and every time she can, she tries even if only with the imagination of her works, to return to the city of Borges – Buenos Aires.

Combining all this with the Japanese and metaphysical style of her early education, along with her admiration for Gaudi's Catalan modernism, the artist's childhood memories came to be, making her a fantasist of allegory, just as Dante did in his time. The result is an art form that translates into the refinement of the fabrics of her famous chairs, true works of art that unite nature and human being in search of a totemic spirituality in the midst of animals and symbols.

The creative process begins with the recovery of an antique chair, or with the creation of a new form on whose structure, the "blank canvas", develops the phase of research and choice of modules and fabrics, like a selection of colors in a painting. The modules are designed, cut out and assembled in order to create the sculptural forms that characterize her creativity. Enriched and personalized by velvets with exclusive designs, brocades, trimmings and lampas, Tolomeo's chairs are no longer just furnishing objects, but true hymns to life.

Presented by Contini Art Gallery, the collection affirms itself as a unicum on the panorama of contemporary art, whose small armchairs with infinite chromatic variations bring to mind a possible fairy-tale zoology, testifying the creative force of its unstoppable eclecticism.



## Biography

Carla Tolomeo was born in 1941 in Pinerolo (Torino), but grew up and studied in Rome where she began her career as a painter, encouraged by Giorgio de Chirico and later by Guttuso, Gentilini and Attardi. In 1971 she exhibited her artworks in Lugano, selecting Japanese painting as the primary source of her inspiration. Introduced by Giovanni Testori to the art galleries in Milan, Carla began a new fervid artistic period gathering the fruits of her studies on works by the renowned Old Masters - Vittore Carpaccio, Albrecht Dürer and Leonardo. Following a period of time spent in Paraguay, the artist found herself once again based in Milan where, in addition to her artistic practice, she also taught etching at the Academy in Brera as well as in Venice. In 1997 she began showing her Sedie (Chairs) which would mark a turning point in her artistic production. With these creations – a pretext for refined pleasure that has been well-received worldwide – Tolomeo greatly surprised her collectors. Strengthened by her past experiences, her studies, the wealth of knowledge acquired through her research on Borges, her capability, her studies on Japanese painting and the teachings by her former master Giorgio de Chirico, Carla Tolomeo was able to transform the chairs into totems, wriggling fish, a flower of gigantic proportions etc... Her Chairs-Sculpture have become something magical eventually – almost a rediscovered infancy – with that twist of mischievousness from someone who has lived life intensely.

## CARLA TOLOMEO “Manual de Zoología Fantástica”

Lorenzo Viani Modern and Contemporary Art Gallery

Palazzo delle Muse

Piazza Giuseppe Mazzini

Viareggio (LU)

Inauguration on Saturday, March 12th, 2022 at 3:30 pm at the presence of the artist.

The exhibition will remain open until June 12th, 2022.

Opening hours:

Wednesday-Saturday: 15:30-19:30

Sunday: 9:30-13:30 / 15:30-19:30

Monday-Tuesday: closed

Exhibition Catalogue available on site.