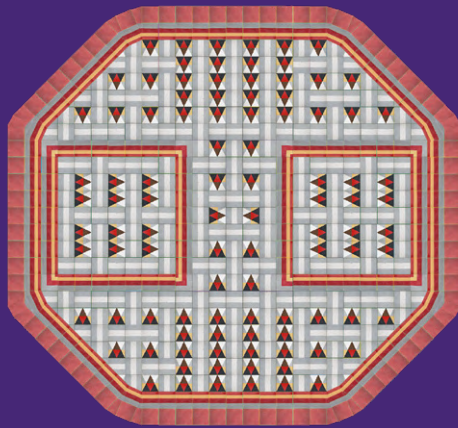


OCTAGON

×

THE BREEDER



LISA PONTI

THE SPRING OF AN ANCIENT TREE

14.03.2024 | 13.04.2024

ATHENS

Lisa Ponti

## THE SPRING OF AN ANCIENT TREE

Lisa Ponti's career started with her work for popular and influential design magazine *Stile* (1941-1947) and then as editor-in-chief (1948-1966) and deputy director (1966-1986) of the architectural magazine *Domus*, where she was responsible for the magazine's art pages through the critical postwar period. The magazine was very influential at the time and was distinguished among others for maintaining an intense collaboration with artists, allotting features and interviews to many prominent figures from Lucio Fontana, Piero Manzoni, Yves Klein, Ettore Sottsass and Christo through to Robert Wilson, Tony Cragg, Arakawa & Gins, and Basquiat.

While working for both of these magazines, which were established by her father, internationally renowned architect Gio Ponti, she substantially contributed to shaping a vivid art and culture scene in postwar Italy. Lisa Ponti was always at the forefront of her father's creative activity and connections. He always encouraged her artistic endeavors and they regularly collaborated throughout her career. Perhaps one of the artist's greatest legacies, has always been the important and deep relationships that she cultivated and maintained in her life with many artists and intellectuals that she bonded with over their intense and sincere passion concerning art.

Despite drawing for almost all of her life for others, Lisa Ponti was 70 years old when she first showed her work publicly as an artist, with a solo exhibition in 1992. Throughout her artistic career her style and the manner in which she approaches art has remained succinctly consistent.

Her most preferred and never changing medium has always been the "utilitarian", world standard A4 paper: *"It's a universal format, so the drawing knows where to land. A4 is putting yourself in the limits that entice you. Inside the standard, the minimum reduces the immense to the distance between the marks."*

These dainty lines and strokes, which are at the core of her artistic expression, carry through them a sense of whimsicality, spontaneity and purity that the artist let unfold. Despite that, she never strays away from approaching diverse, sometimes melancholic topics through her drawings. It is exactly this apparent and seemingly simplistic, almost childlike, nature of her "artless" compositions that makes them so intriguing and captivating. It's her innate ability to aim for the portrayal of complex feelings and emotions through the simplest of imagery. Each brushstroke, pen, pencil or marker line carries a profound intentionality, imbuing her work with a calm and meditative sense of clarity, that glows beyond the edges of the paper.







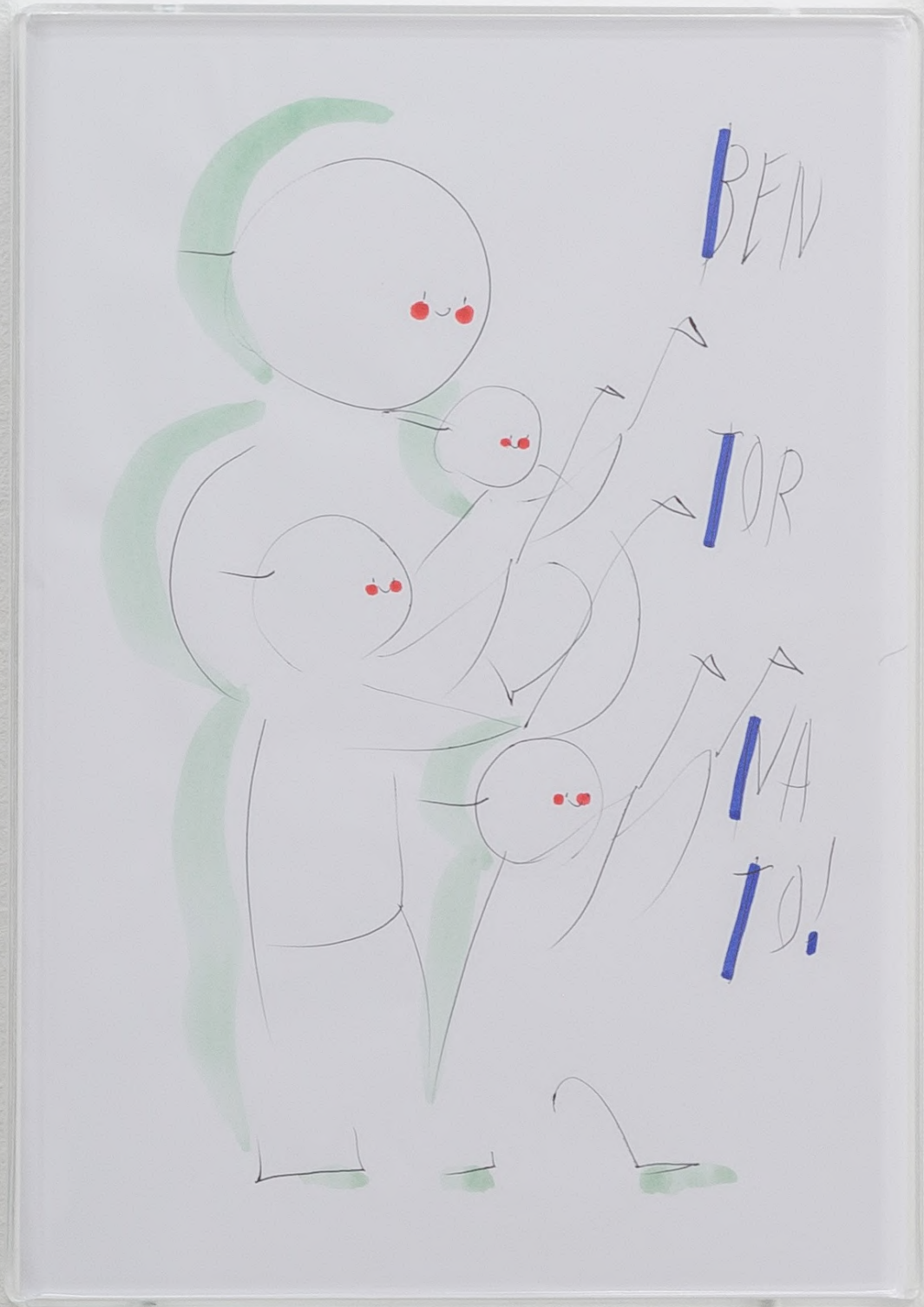
Senza titolo (Angelo cuore) | Untitled (Angel heart)  
Red ink and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





Volo (Flight)  
Pencil and postcard on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches  
NFS





Bentornato! (Welcome Back!)  
ink, pencil and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





Senza titolo (Sogni) | Untitled (Dreams)  
Pencil, marker and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





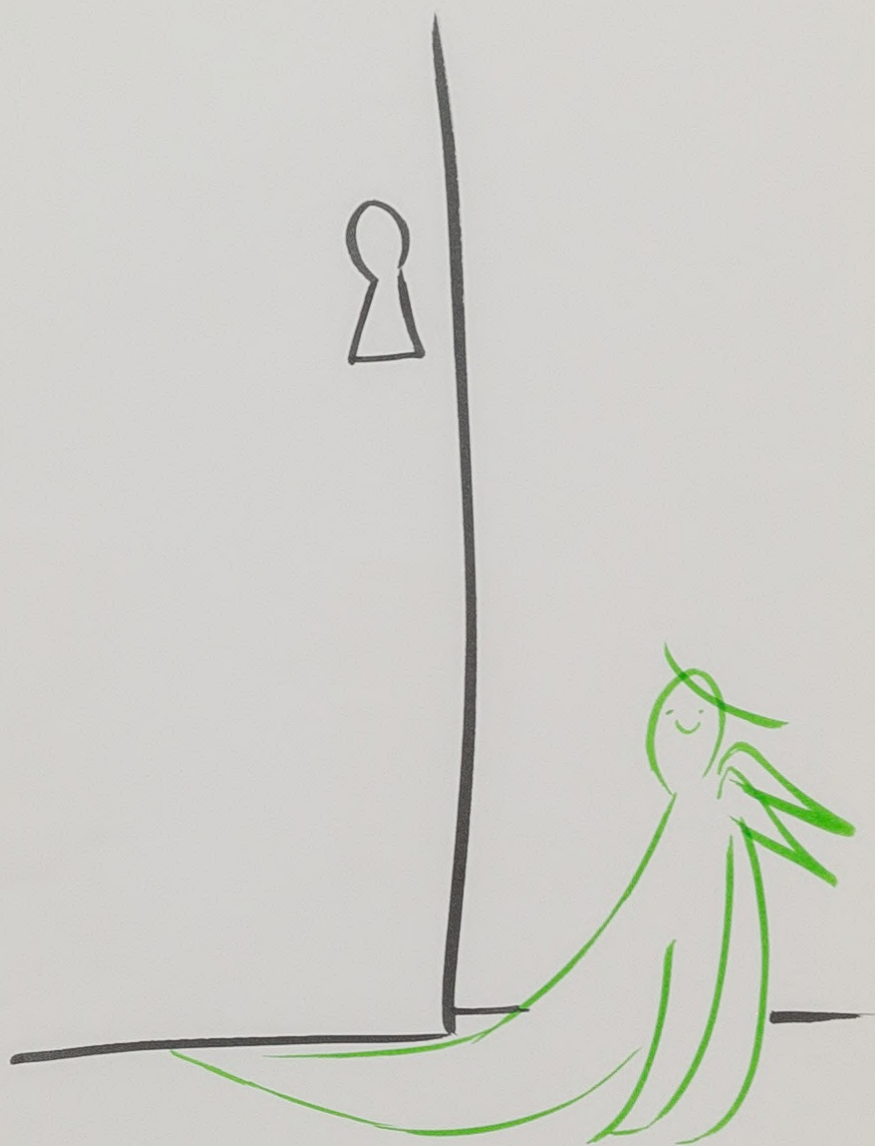
Strega 2 (Witch 2)  
red ink and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





Cappuccio di neve (Snow Cap)  
pencil and sticker on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





I DISEGNI PASSANO SOTTO LA PORTA

I disegni passano sotto la porta (Drawings pass under the door)  
Marker on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





Senza titolo (Angelo con formica) | Untitled (Angel and ant)  
Pencil, marker and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





Che Fare? (What to do?)  
Ink, watercolor and sticker on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





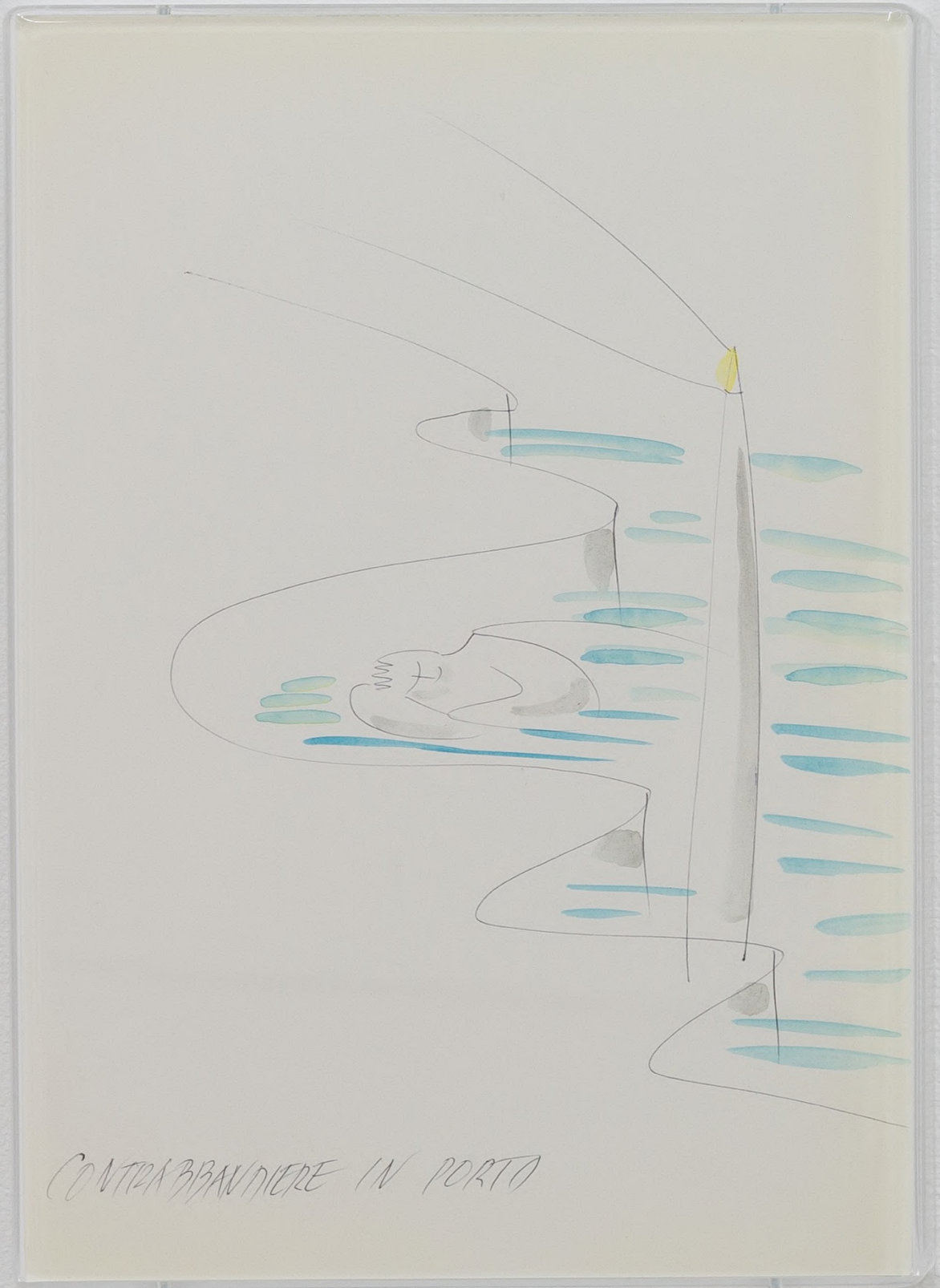
Riposo (Rest)  
Markers on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





Senza titolo (Nonna maga racconta storie) | Untitled (Grandmother wizard tells stories)  
Pencil, marker and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





*CONTRABBANDIERE IN PORTO*

Contrabbandiere in porto (Smuggler in the port)

Pencil and watercolor on A4 paper

21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





Senza titolo (Uovo nel sacco) | Untitled (Egg in the bag)  
Pencil and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





Chi ringrazio? (Who should I thank?)  
Pencil and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





Fiore che esplode (Exploding Flower)  
Pencil and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





Entriamo insieme nel nostro mese (We enter our month together)

Pencil and watercolor on A4 paper

21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7in





CONTRAVELENO

Contraveleno (Counter poison)  
Pencil and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7in





I punti cardinali hanno le ali (Cardinal points have wings)

Pen, watercolor and stickers on A4 paper

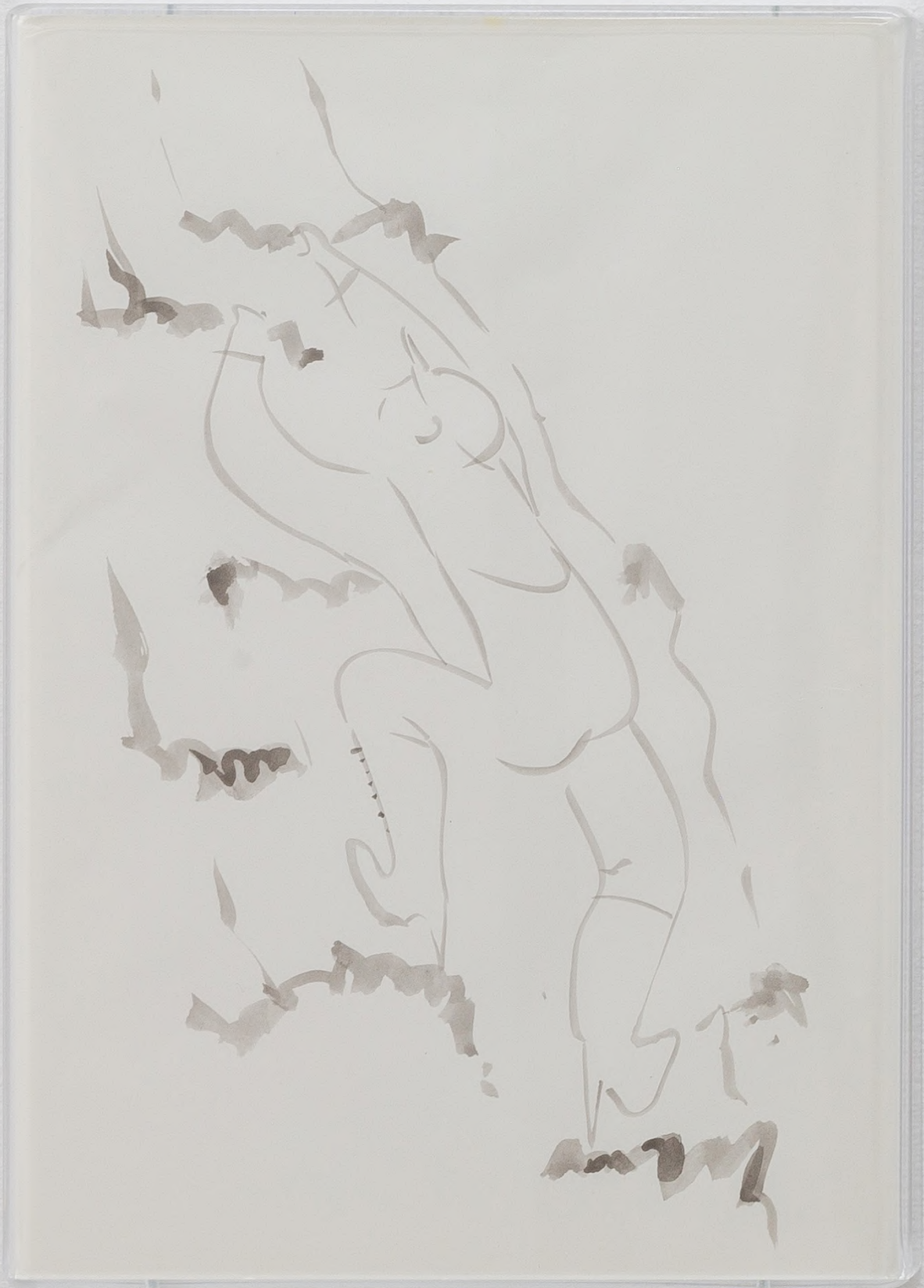
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches





Senza titolo (aliens) | Untitled (aliens)  
Marker and stickers on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches



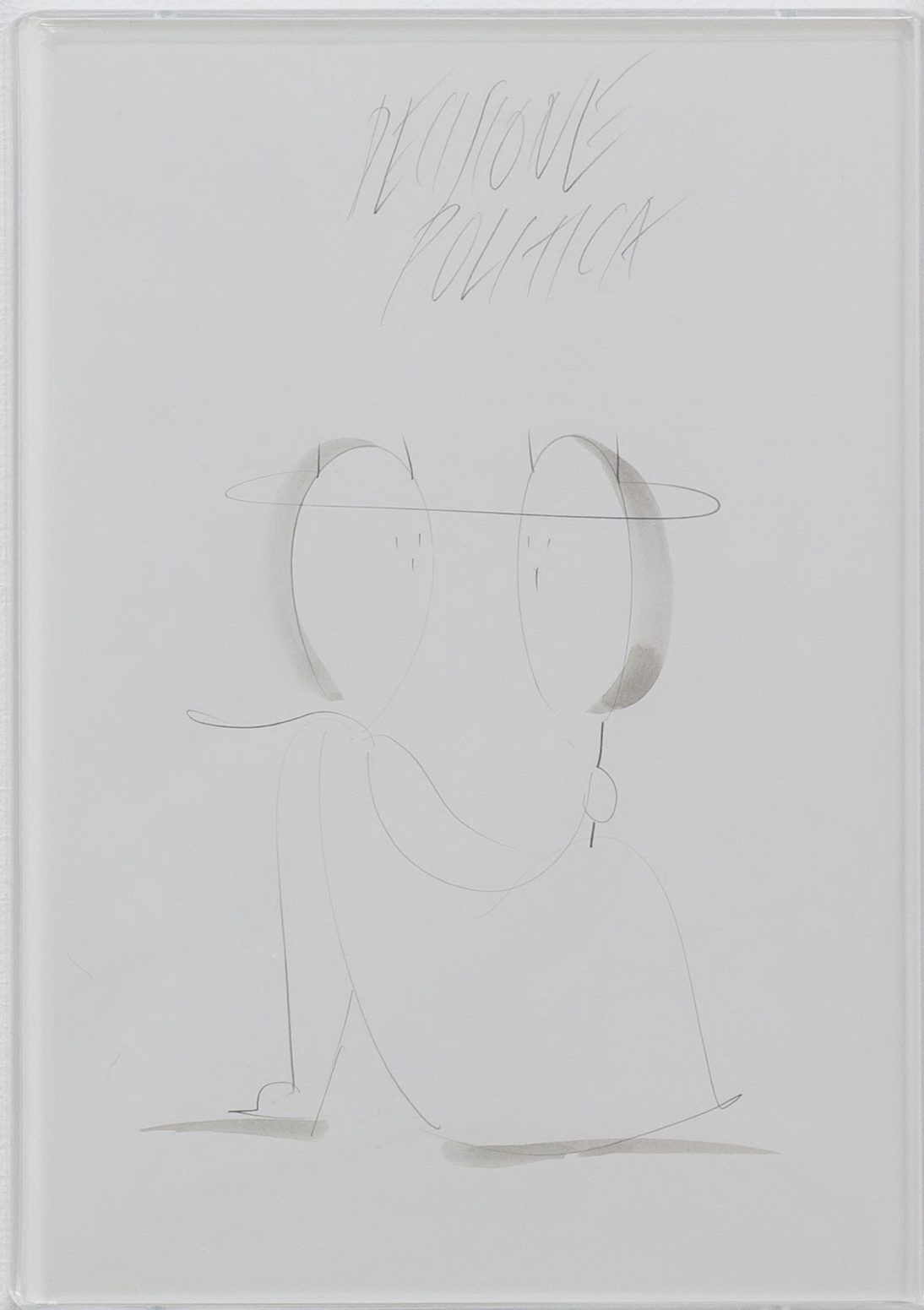


Senza titolo (Scalatore coi tacchi) | Untitled (Climber in heels)

Markers on A4 paper

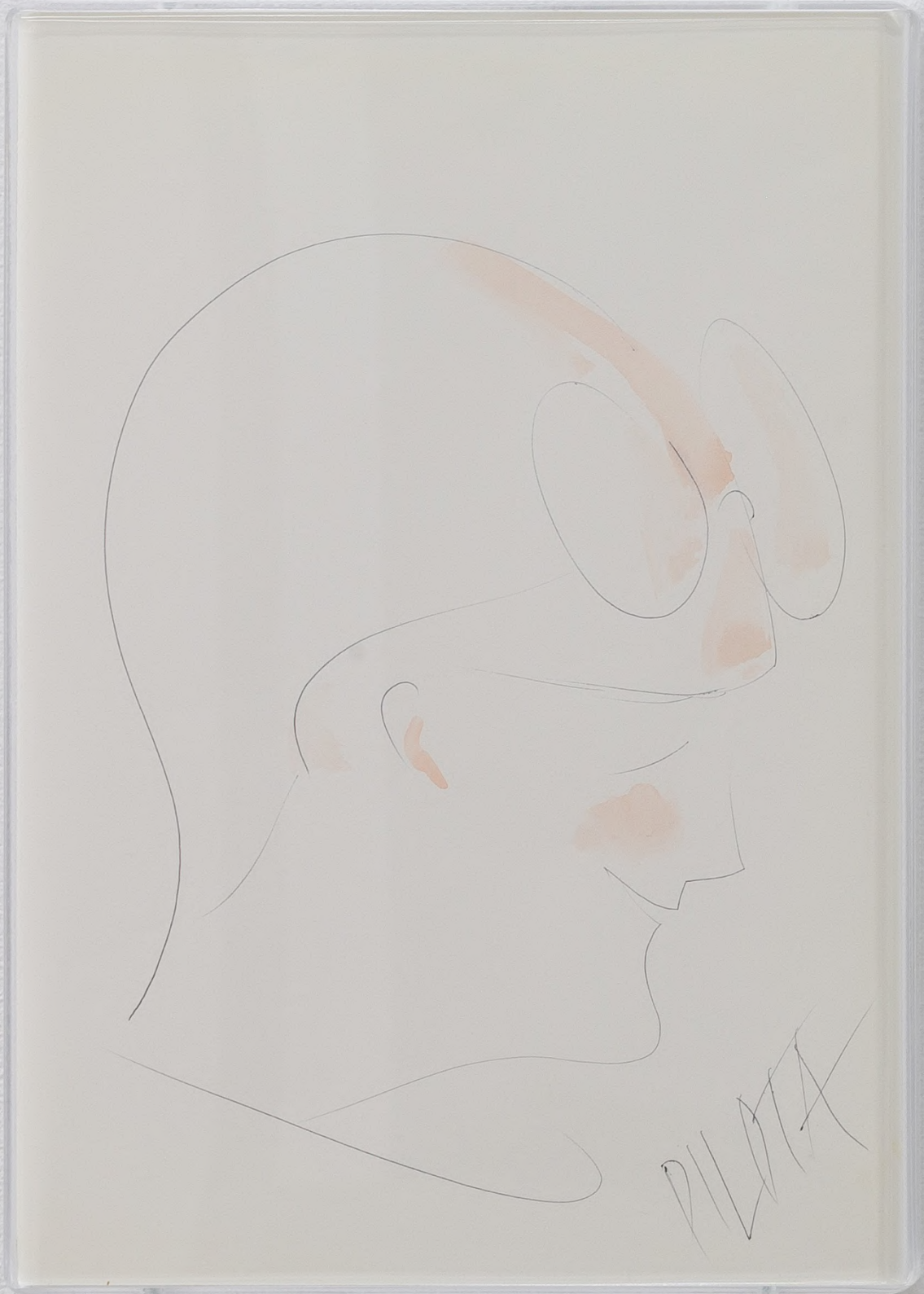
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7in.





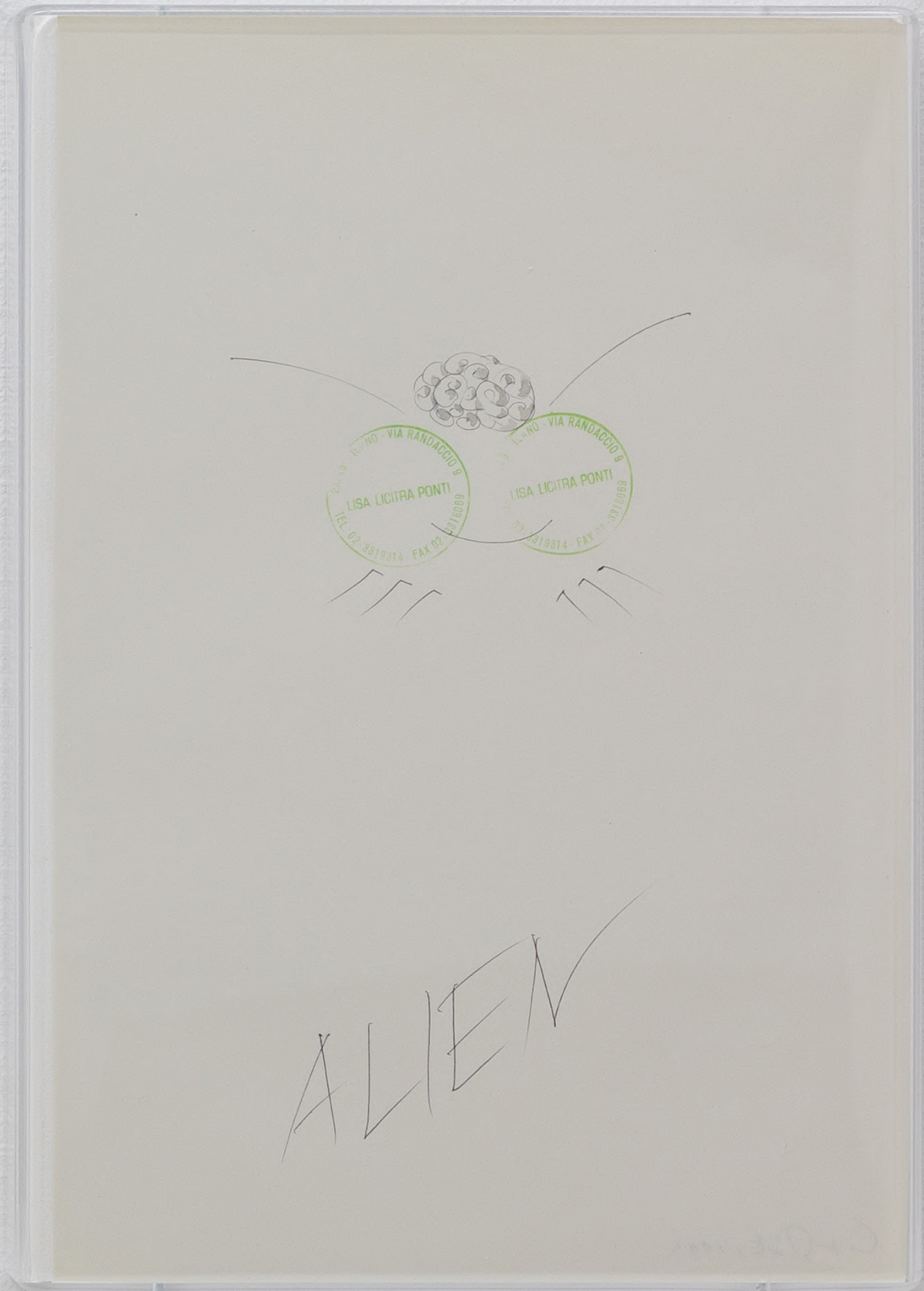
Decisione Politica (Political decision)  
Pencil and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7inches  
NFS





Pilota (Pilot)  
Pen and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7in.





Alien (firmato e datato 1993 sul retro) | Alien (signed and dated 1993 in the back)  
Pencil, watercolor and stamp on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7 in





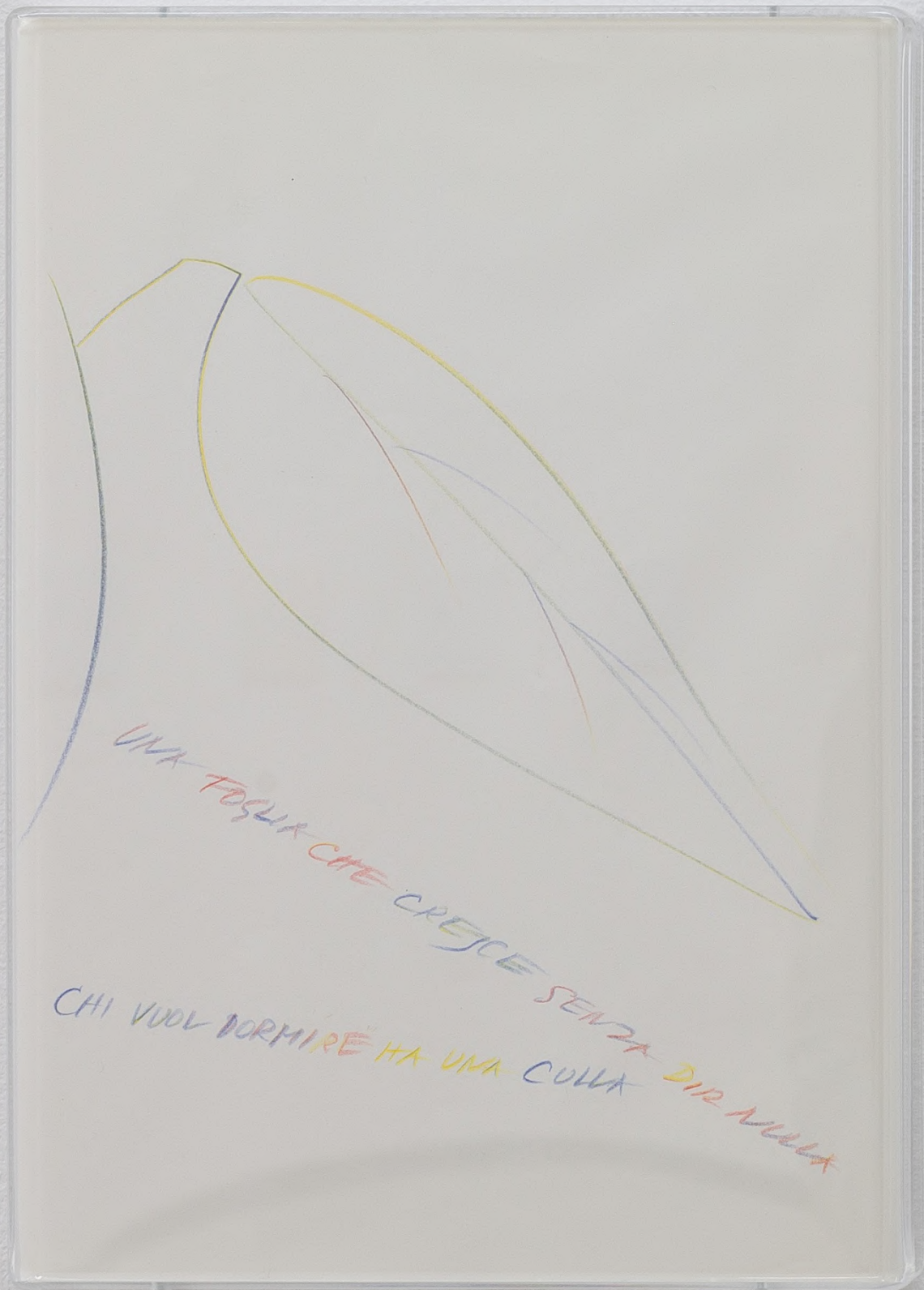
Senza titolo (musicista) | Untitled (musician)  
Pencil and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7in





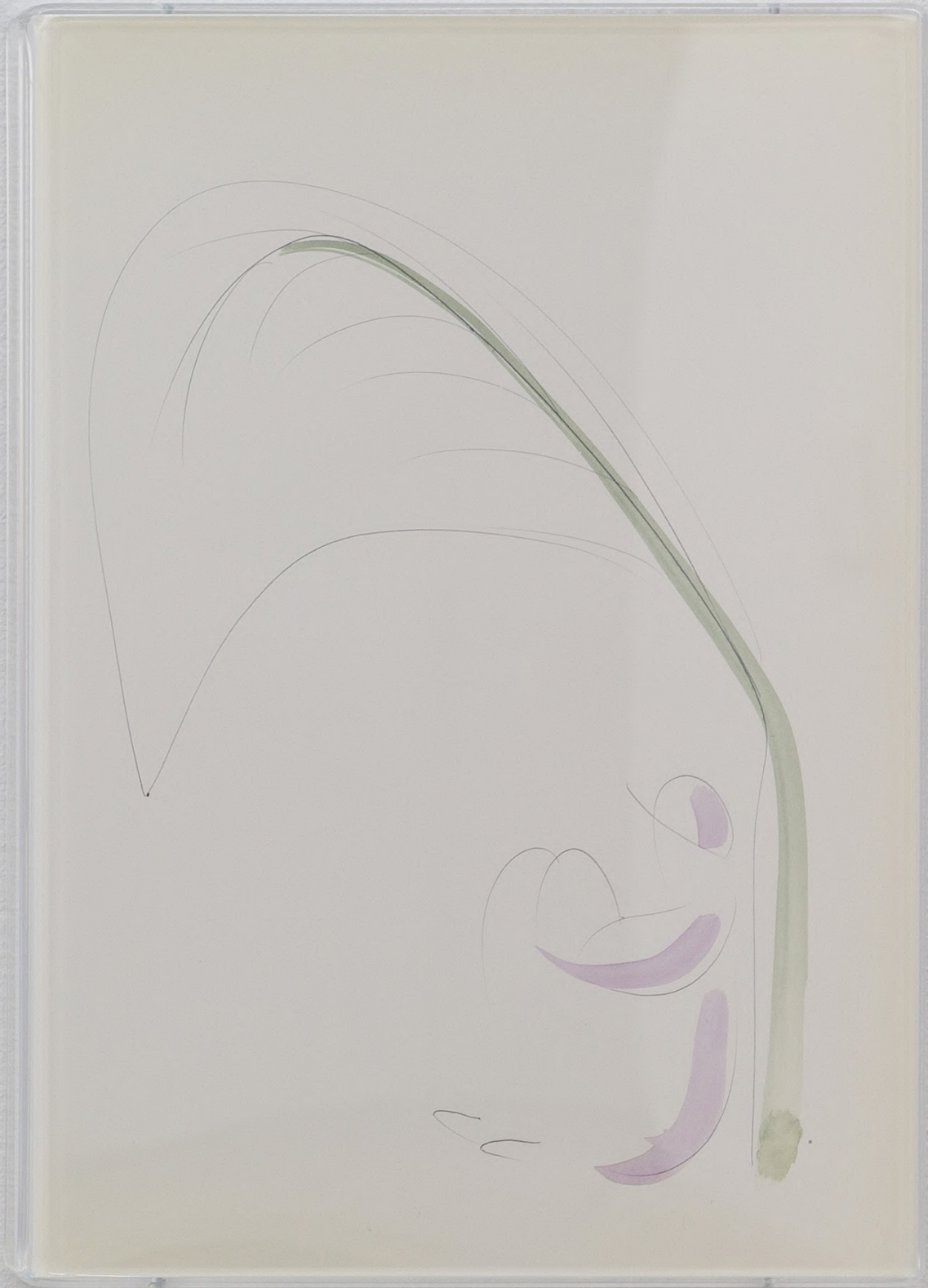
Toc toc toc toc  
Pencil and marker on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7in





Una foslia che cresce senza dir nulla / Chi vuol dormire ha una culla | A leaf that grows without saying anything/ Who wants to sleep has a cradle  
Multi-colored pencils on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7in





Senza titolo (sotto la foglia) | Untitled (under the leaf)  
Pencil and watercolor on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7in





Mr. Topo di rovo (Mr. Thornbush mouse)  
Multi-colored pencils on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7in





Re Leone (Lion King)  
Pencil and stickers on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7in





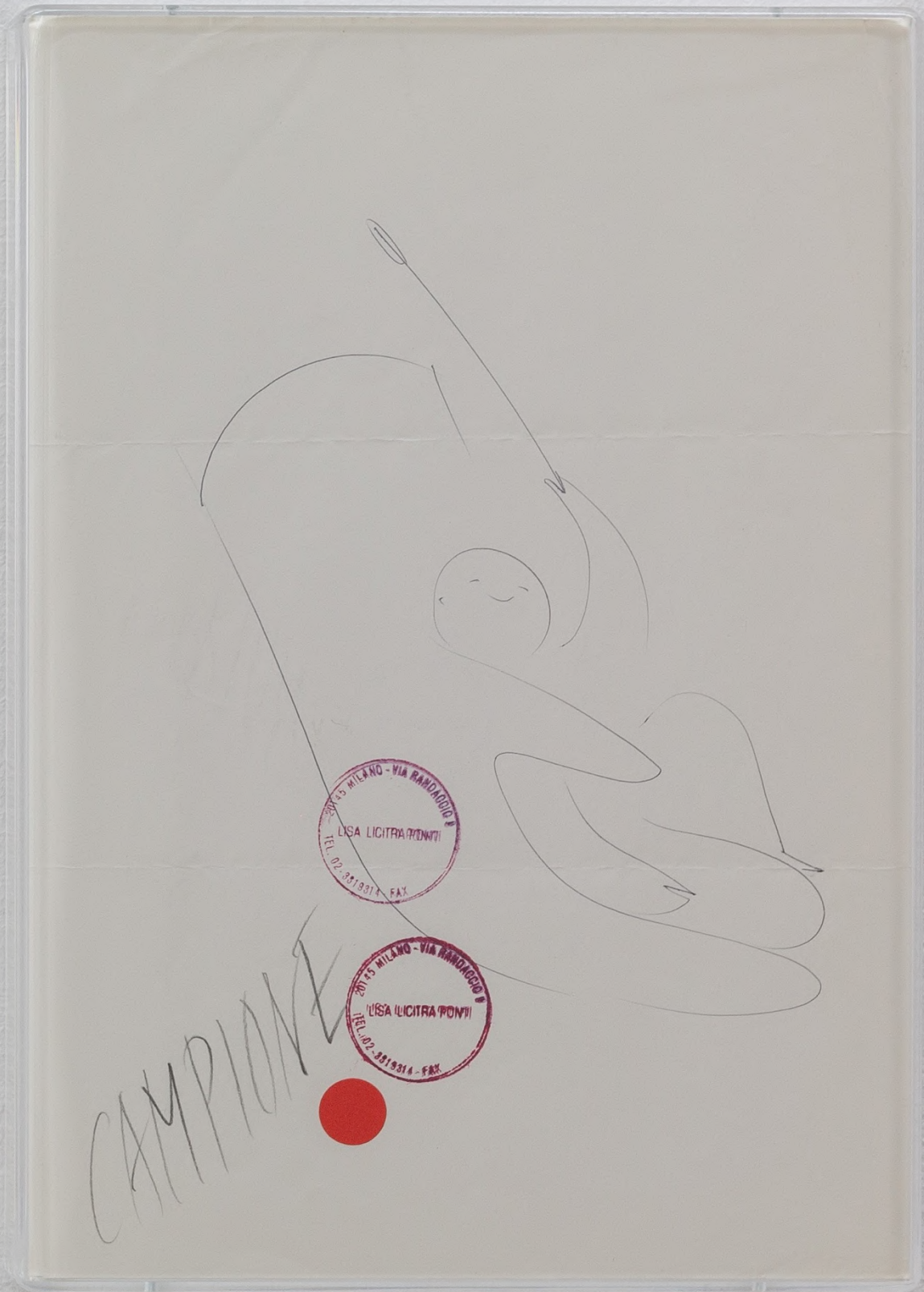
L'AUTUNNO  
È IL MIO  
MESTIERE

L'autunno è il mio mestiere (Autumn is my profession)

Pencil and watercolor on A4 paper

21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7in





Campione (Champion)  
Pencil, stamp and sticker on A4 paper  
21 x 29.7cm | 8.3 x 11.7in





Matteo ha una importante collezione di disegni di sua mamma, tutti rigorosamente in formato A4, compreso uno di un cerchio: "Lei lo ha tracciato a mano libera in un attimo" mi dice, "ma se gli si sovrappone il compasso, si può verificarne la perfezione."

Questo per dire di come i disegni di Lisa siano sì lievi, lirici, evocatori di sogni, generatori di incanto fino a rasentare il sublime, ma sono anche tecnicamente perfetti ed escrutivamente ineccepibili.

Sebbene abbia tenuto la prima mostra dei suoi disegni quando aveva già compiuto settant'anni, disegnare è sempre stata la sua vera passione. Così ne ha scritto lei stessa in una intervista rilasciata all'amico Franco Toselli, che è stato anche il suo primo gallerista:

"I miei disegni mi salvano, mi appaiono nel sonno e al mio risveglio la matita mi prende la mano e io la seguo con fiducia verso una meta benefica, una costellazione, un viaggio ad Albano Terme. Dell'arte riconosco gli strumenti, come gli artigiani: il foglio, la matita, il temperino, il colore, il tavolo, l'arcobaleno... Non uso la gomma che frena la matita, il mio disegno è un eroe casalingo. San Giorgio legge il giornale, il drago è nella cuccia, forse suona il violino, se la matita si altera è solo per un duello tra disegno e acquerello; il mio disegno non evolve, è come l'erba di un campo da golf. Nell'arte la protezione dell'infanzia giunge fino a tarda età, pur vivendo i tempi supplementari."

A chi un giorno le aveva domandato perché utilizzasse sempre e solo il formato A4 per i suoi disegni, Lisa ha risposto: "È un formato universale, così il disegno sa dove atterrare. L'A4 è mettersi nei limiti che ti invogliano; è un sistema industriale, una misura standard che in tutto il mondo non mancherà mai. Ne ho qui delle pile. Mi sono imposta questo metodo e non mi viene nemmeno la curiosità di provare su un foglio più largo: dentro lo standard il minimo riduce l'immenso a distanza fra i segni."

Come suo padre, anche Lisa era una collezionista delle opere degli artisti che amava, molti dei quali erano suoi amici, e questi, a loro volta ne apprezzavano le doti di giornalista e di disegnatrice. Se se ne facesseelenco si comprenderebbe la ricchezza del mondo che gravitava attorno a casa Ponti, così rappresentativo della vivacità culturale della Milano di metà novecento.

A tale proposito ecco una dichiarazione di Lisa tratta da una intervista da lei rilasciata a Elena Pontiggia che le chiedeva come mai avrebbe voluto intitolare "Grazie" la mostra che la sua città le stava dedicando:

"La luna specchia il sole e lo ringrazia. Perché la luna quando è colpita da una luce forte diventa lucente. Ecco, io sono nata in un luogo popolato di bellissimi soli, e sono stata colpita dalla loro luce. Ho specchiato gli artisti che ho incontrato."

E del suo saper disegnare così ha scritto Franco Toselli: "Lisa è un raro esempio di predisposizione naturale al disegno, questo le permette di non progredire, come accade per il merlo in giardino. Lo stesso canto in tutte le epoche. Ha iniziato a disegnare negli anni '30 e '40 nello stile panciuto dell'epoca, dopo di che si è permessa di regredire per inventare i veri disegni di Lisa Ponti. Una telefonata fiume con le sorelle Grimm e lo zoccolo duro finalmente sorride, il drago si addormenta. Lisa traghetta i sogni in piena luce. La matita corre, anzi fila. Il talento di Lisa viene dal sonno, dalla capacità di dormire anche di giorno. I suoi disegni hanno l'entusiasmo e l'allegria del risveglio. Il mio compito è di sorvegliare le matite di Lisa: mi tremano le gambe."

Vorrei concludere questo breve omaggio alla "matita" di Lisa Ponti con un pensiero di Jean Cocteau che ben si addice al suo essere lieve:

"Gli angeli volano perché si prendono alla leggera."

E poi essi si vanno a posare sulla vela che suo padre Gio ha costruito nella concattedrale di Taranto, simile a una trina ricamata sul cielo, proprio "per far sostare gli angeli". E padre e figlia siedono lì con loro, nella luce e nella poesia. Per sempre.

Maria Luisa Ghianda

O Mάthου έχει μια σημαντική συλλογή από σχέδια της μαμάς του, όλα αυστηρά Α4, μεταξύ των οποίων και ένα με έναν κύκλο: "Το σχεδίασε με ελεuthero χέρι σε μια στιγμή", μου λέει, "αλλά αν το βάλεις μια πυξίδα, μπορείς να δεις πόσο τέλει είναι".

Αυτό σημαίνει πως τα σχέδια της Λίζα είναι όντως ανάλαφρα, λυρικά, παραπέμπον σε όνειρα, δημιουργούν νοησία σε σημείο που αγριίζει τα όρια του μεγαλειώδους, αλλά είναι επίσης τεχνικά τέλεια και εκτελεστικά άψογα. Παρόλο που πραγματοποιήσε την πρώτη έκθεση των σχεδίων της όταν ήταν ήδη στα 70 της χρόνια, το σχέδιο ήταν πάντα το πραγματικό της πάθος. Η ίδια έγραψε γι' αυτό σε μια συνέντευξη της στον φίλο της Franco Toselli, ο οποίος ήταν και ο πρώτος της έμπορος τέχνης: "Τα σχέδια μου με σώζουν, μου εμφανίζονται στον ύπνο μου και όταν ξυπνάω, το μολύβι παίρνει το χέρι μου και το ακολουθώ με αυτοπεποίθηση προς έναν ενεργητικό προορισμό, έναν αστερισμό, ένα ταξίδι στο Albano Terme. Της τέχνης αναγνωρίζω τα εργαλεία, όπως οι τεχνίτες: το φύλλο χαρτί, το μολύβι, η ζύστρα, το κρέμα, το τραπεζίδι, το οφθαλμό τούτο... Δεν χρησιμοποιώ τη γόμα που φρενάρει το μολύβι, το σχέδιό μου είναι ένας επιτικός ήρωας. Ο Άγιος Γεώργιος διαβάζει την εφημερίδα, ο δράκος είναι στο κυνικομαχί, η αρκούδα παίζει βιολί, αν το μολύβι αλλάξει είναι μόνο λόγω μιας μοναχίας μεταξύ σχεδίου και ακουαρέλας: το σχέδιό μου δεν εξελίσσεται, είναι σαν το γρασίδι σε ένα γήπεδο γκολφ. Στην τέχνη, η προστασία της παιδικής ηλικίας συνεχίζεται μέχρι αργά στα ζωη, ενώ εί μεσα από τον επιπλέον χρόνο".

Όταν ρωτήθηκε μια μέρα γιατί χρησιμοποιεί πάντα μόνο Α4 για τα σχέδιά της, απάντησε: "Είναι ένα καθολικό σχήμα, ώστε το σχέδιο να έξει ποί να προσεγωθεί. Α4 είναι να βάζεις τον εαυτό σου μέσα στα όρια που σε βάζουν σε παρσό". Και έτσι είπε σε μια συνέντευξη για το Doppiozero: "Ήρθε αυτό το "βουρκανικό" σύστημα της χρήσης φύλλων Α4, τα οποία είναι ένα τυποποιημένο μέγεθος και δεν θα λείψουν ποτέ από οποιοδήποτε στον κόσμο. Έχω στοίβες από αυτά εδώ. Έβρεα στον εαυτό μου αυτή τη μέθοδο όπου είμαι υποχρεωμένος να χρησιμοποιώ το Α4, το οποίο είναι παγκόσμιο. Δεν έχω καν την περίπτωση να δοκιμάσω ένα μεγαλύτερο φύλλο". Και σε άλλο σημείο έγραψε: "Μέσα στο πρότυπο το ελάχιστο μειώνει το τεράστιο στην απόσταση μεταξύ των σημείων".

Όπως ο πατέρας της, έτσι και η Lisa ήταν συλλέκτρια των έργων των καλλιτεχνών που αγαπούσε, πολλοί από τους οποίους ήταν φίλοι της, και αυτοί με τη σειρά τους εκτιμούσαν τις ικανότητές της ως δημοσιογράφου και σχεδίστριας. Αν τους απαρτήσουμε κανείς, θα καταλάβαινε τον πλούτο του κόσμου που περιτριγυρίζει το σπίτι των Πόντι, τόσο αντιπροσωπευτικό της πολιτιστικής ζωντανιάς του Μιλάνου στα μέσα του εικοστού αιώνα.

Στο πλαίσιο αυτό, παραθέτουμε μια δήλωση της Λίζα από μια συνέντευξη που έδωσε στην Έλενα Ποντίτσια, η οποία τη ρώτησε γιατί ήθελε να ονομάσει την έκθεση που η πόλη της αφιέρωσε στην Grazie:

"Το φεγγάρι καθρεφτίζει τον ήλιο και τον ευχαριστεί. Πατι όταν το φεγγάρι χτυπιέται από ένα δυνατό φως γίνεται φωτεινό. Εδώ, γεννήθηκε σε έναν τόπο που κατοικείται από όμορφους ήλιους και χτυπήθηκε από το φως τους. Καθρέφτισα τους καλλιτέχνες που συνάντησα". Και για την ικανότητά της να ζωγραφίζει, ο Franco Toselli έγραψε: "Η Lisa είναι ένα σπάνιο παράδειγμα μιας φυσικής προδιάθεσης να ζωγραφίζει, αυτό της επιτρέπει να μην προσεύεται, όπως συμβαίνει με το κορφοβί στον κήπο. Τραγουδάει το ίδιο τραγούδι σε όλες τις εποχές. Ξεκίνησε να σχεδιάζει στις δεκαετίες του 1930 και 1940 με το στυλ της κουλίας της εποχής, μετά επέστρεψε στον εαυτό της να οπισθοδρομήσει για να επηνοήσει τα πραγματικά σχέδια της Lisa Ponti. Ένα τηλεφώνημα ποταμού με τις αδελφές Γκριμ και ο σκληρός πυρήνας τελικά χαμογελάει, ο δράκος κοιμάται. Η Λίζα μεταφέρει τα όνειρα στο φως. Το μολύβι τρέχει, η μάλλον περιστρέφεται. Το ταλέντο της Λίζα προέρχεται από τον ύπνο, από την ικανότητα να κοιμάται ακόμη και κατά τη διάρκεια της ημέρας. Τα σχέδια της έχουν τον ενθουσιασμό και τη χαρά του ξυπνήματος. Η δουλειά μου είναι να εμπλέκω τα μολύβια της Λίζα: τα πόδια μου τρέμουν". Θα ήθελα να κλείσω αυτό το σύντομο αφιέρωμα στα "μολύβια" της Λίζα Πόντι με μια σκέψη του Ζαν Κοκτώ που ταυριάζει πολύ στον ελαφρότητα της: "Οι άγγελοι πετούν επειδή παίρνουν τον εαυτό τους ελαφρά".

Και στη συνέχεια πάνε να ξεκουραστούν στο πανί που έχτισε ο πατέρας της Γιο στον συν-καθεδρικό ναό του Taranto, παρόμοιο με μια δαντέλα κεντημένη στον ουρανό, ακριβώς "για να ξεκουραστούν οι άγγελοι". Και ο πατέρας και η κόρη κάθονται εκεί μαζί τους, μέσα στο φως και τη ποιηση. Για πάντα.

Maria Luisa Ghianda

Matteo has an important collection of his mom's drawings, all strictly A4, including one of a circle: "She traced it freehand in a moment," he tells me, "but if you superimpose a compass on it, you can verify its perfection."

This is to say of how Lisa's drawings are yes slight, lyrical, evocative of dreams, generating enchantment to the point of bordering on the sublime, but they are also technically perfect and excrutively flawless.

Although she held the first exhibition of her drawings when she was already in her seventies, drawing has always been her true passion. She wrote about it in an interview with her friend Franco Toselli, who was also her first art dealer:

"My drawings save me, they appear to me in my sleep and when I wake up the pencil takes my hand and I follow it confidently toward a beneficial destination, a constellation, a trip to Albano Terme. Of art I recognize the tools, like the artisans: the paper, the pencil, the sharpener, the color, the table, the rainbow... I do not use the eraser that brakes the pencil, my drawing is a homemade hero. St. George reads the newspaper, the dragon is in the kennel, the bear plays the violin, if the pencil alters it is only because of a duel between drawing and watercolor; my drawing does not evolve, it is like the grass on a golf course. In art, the protection of childhood reaches late in life, while experiencing the extra time."

Asked one day why she only ever uses A4 for her drawings, Lisa replied, "It is a universal format, so the drawing knows where to land. A4 is putting yourself in the limits that tempt you: it's an industrial system, a standard size that all over the world will never be lacking. I have stacks of them here. I set myself this method and I don't even get the curiosity to try it on a wider sheet: within the standard the minimum reduces the immetense to distance between marks."

Like her father, Lisa was also a collector of the works of the artists she loved, many of whom were her friends, and they, in turn, appreciated her talent as a journalist and draftsman. If one were to make a list of them, you would understand the richness of the world that gravitated around the Ponti household, so representative of the cultural vibrancy of mid-twentieth-century Milan.

In this regard, here is a statement by Lisa taken from an interview with Elena Pontiggia who asked her why she would want to name the exhibition her city was dedicating to her "Grazie" [Thank you]:

"The moon mirrors the sun and thanks it. Because the moon when it's hit by a strong light becomes bright... I was born in a place populated by beautiful suns, and I was struck by their light. I mirrored the artists I met."

And on her ability to draw, this is what Franco Toselli wrote: "Lisa is a rare example of a natural predisposition for drawing, this allows her not to progress, as is the case with the blackbird in the garden. The same song in all ages. She started drawing in the 1930s and 1940s in the pot-bellied style of the time, after which she allowed herself to regress in order to invent the actual Lisa Ponti drawings. An endless phone call with the Grimm sisters and the hard-core finally smiles, the dragon falls asleep. Lisa ferries dreams into full light. The pencil runs, or rather spins. Lisa's talent comes from slumber, from the ability to sleep even during the day. Her drawings have the enthusiasm and the joy of the awakening. My job is to supervise Lisa's pencils: my legs are shaking"

I would like to conclude this brief tribute to Lisa Ponti's "pencil" with a thought by Jean Cocteau that fits perfectly her light-heartedness:

"Angels fly because they take themselves lightly!"

And then they go to rest on the sail that her father Gio built in Taranto's co-cathedral, resembling a lace embroidered on the sky, precisely "for the angels to take a pause." And father and daughter sit there with them, in light and poetry. Forever.

Maria Luisa Ghianda

Cara Lisa,  
gli acrobati ci insegnano che tutto è immaginabile  
e possibile, aldilà dei limiti, ma con lieatezza, forza,  
coraggio, e giovinezza, immaginazione, bontà.

Tuo Padre,  
Giugno 1973

Γεια σου, αγαπητή Λίζα,  
οι ακροβάτες μας διδάσκουν ότι όλα είναι εφικτά,  
και εφικτό, πέρα από τα όρια, αλλά με χαρά, δύναμη,  
θάρρος, αλλά και νεότητα, φαντασία, καλοσύνη.

Ο πατέρας σου,  
Ιούνιος 1973

Dear Lisa,  
acrobats teach us that everything is imaginable  
and possible, beyond limits, but with gladness, strength,  
courage, and youth, imagination, goodness.

Your Father,  
June 1973