

# FRANCESCA PERRONE

*in raw skin  
I see you fade*

curated by Sole Castelbarco Albani

Opening:

21.05.2025

22.05 - 11.07.2025

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2:00PM - 7:00PM

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In Francesca Perrone's work, the body is a place of tension and truth, never idealized, never definitive. It appears fragile, exposed, as if each figure were the visible residue of an inner experience, of an affective memory that does not allow itself to be archived. Each drawn body, the artist says, is a self-portrait: a reflection not only of what it is, but of all that she has loved, experienced, lost. Drawing then becomes a deep, intimate act of love, a gesture that attempts to restore the complexity of relationship and loss, not through representation, but rather through presence. The bodies thus become an emotional map, a topography of a search for identity that is intertwined with memory, fragility, and the ambivalence of ties.

These bonds, in Perrone's works, are never simple. The figures often brush against each other without touching, or they intertwine in an ambiguous embrace, as in the case of *Figure legate separatamente* or *I nostri giochi dell'amore*. The body of the artist - fragile, rational, Apollonian - confronts that of the other, powerful and Dionysian. There arises in this encounter a tension that never finds balance: the desire to transform into the other is coupled with the feeling of being overwhelmed by that very otherness. The relationship is consumed in a space of interrupted overlaps, in a dance of contact and distance that reveals the depth of desire and the impossibility of complete fusion.

Here, gender identity is never a fixed fact. Perrone faces it with lucidity and delicacy, as a condition to live with but also to question. Her artistic practice becomes a refuge, a language, a tool to cross the shyness and tension between being and appearing. In her works, the female body is celebrated, loved, never stereotyped. Femininity is constructed and broken down with ironic details - booties, bows, sweetly caricatured poses - that reveal a willingness to play with the codes of femininity without giving in to their rhetoric. Even the artist's homosexuality enters this discourse as an interrogative force: the body that Perrone draws eludes labels, it is a body that does not allow itself to be framed.

It is precisely in this tension between intimacy and rejection that irony, a central aspect of Perrone's work, is embedded. Titles such as *Accostamento al disagio* and *Castello di sabbia in riva alla finestra* create ambiguities that make one smile and reflect at the same time. Irony is for the artist an act of resistance, a filter through which to pass pain without denying it. Like a bitter smile or a childish nursery rhyme that hides a tragic echo, her works use irony to defuse and, at

the same time, to bring out the unspoken. It is in this contradiction that the strength of her visual language is revealed: in that tightrope between apparent lightness and emotional depth.

Eroticism, in Perrone's works, is never simple surrender to pleasure: it is an uncertain territory, a play between desire and repulsion. Sitophobia, the obsession with and rejection of food, becomes a metaphor for the same emotional dynamic that governs relationships: attraction and fear, nourishment and lack. Food - a recurring and ambiguous presence - is never just nourishing: it is evocative, sensual, disturbing. It is caress and threat, promise and disillusionment. The fruit, the mouth, the hunger: all symbols that recall not only sexual desire, but a deeper and more radical need - that of belonging, of understanding, of fullness. Yet, this hunger always remains unfulfilled as what is sought is, by its very nature, unattainable.

The works' titles, often enigmatic and allusive, are another key to her language. Francesca Perrone plays with words by creating small semantic traps that attract and confuse. Dialect terms, childish references, puns and double entendres draw a lexicon of intimacy that never offers unambiguous answers but invites one to get lost. *Voglia di chiaùtu*, for instance, combines the sweetness of phonetics with a dark, funereal meaning - "coffin" in Salento dialect - overlapping life and death, pleasure and end, in a poetic short-circuit that characterizes her work.

Even when dealing with dramatic themes, Perrone does not give up her naïve aesthetic. The apparent sweetness of childlike forms becomes, paradoxically, the ideal container for restraining pain, for making it narratable, bearable, almost soothable. The stylistic simplicity does not trivialize the content; on the contrary, it intensifies it. It allows the most intense pain to be spoken in the language of innocence, as if each work were a tragic fable that teaches us to look suffering squarely in the face without being overwhelmed by it.

From a technical point of view, oil pastel becomes a privileged tool for Francesca. Instinctive, physical, direct, it allows her an immediate expressiveness without filters or mediations. The gesture becomes thought, the sign emotion, and the material reacts with rawness and truth. Hers is an "impure" drawing which does not seek perfection but the presence, the urgency, the vibration of what happens at the very moment it is traced. It is a language that rejects perfection by choosing instead imperfection as a manifestation of authenticity.

Finally, light. In Perrone's research, light has an affective, almost spiritual function. Her stay in Sweden has left a visible trace in her poetics: the colorful houses, the ritual of candles throughout winter, the intimacy that opposes darkness. Light is not only a visual element, but a way of being in the world: it is resistance against shadow, an emotional refuge, a promise of warmth even in the longest night. In her works, that light becomes color, symbol, pictorial caress: it is what saves, softens, makes visible even what we would like to keep hidden.

Hence, Francesca Perrone's universe is built as an inner space that finds drawing as its mother tongue. A language where fragility and desire, irony and trauma, sweetness and ambiguity are never excluded but coexist in balance. It is precisely in this instability - in this impossibility of separating what is beautiful from what hurts - that lies the most authentic strength of her vision.

- Sole Castelbarco Albani