

# Ilaria Vinci<sup>✧</sup>

S E L E C T E D                      W O R K S



Ilaria Vinci's research explores the "mechanics of imagination" and the ways fantasies shape or challenge personal identity and society. This is carried by an "anti-escapist" intent, offering a meditation on the porous nature of reality. By embracing strangeness and error as generative forces, the works transform recurring themes and aesthetics that populate the collective imaginary. Billboards, food replicas, emotions, fandom tropes, and mythical creatures are key motifs of Vinci's multimedia practice. Each element functions as a node of a broader speculative network, a fragment of an open-ended storytelling process.

Ilaria Vinci was born in 1991 in Cisternino, Italy and lives and works in Zurich since 2018. Her work has been included in solo and group exhibitions at Kunsthau Zurich (2024), Kunsthalle Zurich, (2023), Museion, Bolzano (2023), Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich (2023); MACRO Museum, Rome (2022); Fondazione Sandretto, Turin (2021); Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen (2021); Plymouth Rock, Zurich (2021), among others.

Born in Cisternino, Italy,  
in 1991.

Lives and works in Zurich

## SELECTED SOLO AND TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Fantasy Students, Berufsschule Bülach, CH
- 2022 (April '22 - July '23) Phoenix Philosophy Café, Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich, CH
- 2021 Iris IV - Our Last Best Hope, Plymouth Rock, Zurich, CH  
Iris IV - Mind Gamer, Longtang, Zurich, CH  
A Great Cosmic Joke with no Punchline, Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen, CH  
Sunday Was Already Today, with Leila Niederberger, WallRiss, Fribourg, CH
- 2020 120% Fairy Challenge, Galerie PCP, Paris, FR
- 2019 Tonight stay in (sin), with Joshua Hopping, CASTRO, Rome, IT
- 2017 GIORNALI TABACCHI LOTTERIA, Armada, Milan, IT

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2024 Malerbuch, Kunsthaus Zürich, Zurich, CH  
Fedeli alla linea, Chicken Town, Zurich, CH
- 2023 Zurich Biennale, Kunsthalle Zurich, Zurich, CH  
HOPE, Museion, Bolzano, IT  
The Seashore of Endless Worlds, Le Commun, Geneva, CH  
Demanding, Yet Gentle, KunstXaus, Zurich, CH  
Swiss Art Award, Basel, CH  
City of Zurich Art Acquisitions, Helmaus, Zurich, CH
- 2022 Retrofuturo, Museo MACRO, Roma, IT  
Welcome stranger, Lemme, Sion, CH  
Bluff, LOVAAS Projects, Munich, DEBadly Buried, Fondazione
- 2021 Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Guarene, IT  
A moment of Being, Bollag Atelier, Basel, CH  
PERIOD S01E02, Longtang, Zurich, CH  
Evidently Chickentown, Wartsaal Wipkingen, Zurich, CH
- 2020 Woshbourg, 2020, Weiss Falk, Basel, CH  
On the Brink of Forever, Im Grafenhag, Winterthur, CH  
Hope Springs Eternal, L23 Residency, Zurich, CH
- 2019 Whispering Walls, Last Tango, Zurich, CH  
Cafe Spit, 2019, curated by Will Benedict at Galerie PCP, Paris, FR  
FORMAT MONDIAL, 2019, Artemis Fontana, Paris, FR  
Workers of the world Unite, UP STATE, Zurich, CH  
Voi rubate del tempo alla fretta /./, Hypermaremma, Ansedonia, IT
- 2018 Tutto subito, possibilmente due volte, No Conformism, Prilly, CH
- 2017 MOROSO CONCEPT, Museo Etnografico del Friuli, Udine, IT

## EDUCATION

- 2015 - 2017 MFA, ÉCAL, Lausanne
- 2011 - 2015 BFA, Brera Academy, Milan

## RECIDENCIES

- 2023 (January 2022 - January 2023) F+F /AIR - Atelier, Zurich
- 2022 (August - January 2023) Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris
- 2020 (September 2020 - December 2021) Longtang, Zurich
- 2019 (March-July) Castro Recidency, Rome

## AWARDS

- 2021 Kunststipendien der Stadt Zürich, Helmhaus, Zurich
- 2018 Menabrea Art Prize 2018, selected by Cura Magazine

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- Kunstsammlung Kanton Zürich, Switzerland
- Macro - Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome, Italy
- Kunstsammlung der Stadt Zürich, Switzerland

## CURATORIAL PRACTICE

- 2014 - 2018 | Co-founder of the artist-run space [Armada](#) in Milan

## TALKS & TEXT

- 2024 Künstler:innen on Artists talk, Kunsthalle Zurich (talk)  
Italiane Ancora, Gucci Prospettive Vol.3 (printed)
- 2023 CCA - Center of Contemporary Art, Tbilisi (talk)  
Language of Fiction, with Mai Tu Perret and RM, Swiss art Award (talk)  
In Ilaria Vincis Welt, text by Gianna Rovere, Stadt Zürich Kultur (online)
- 2021 Letter From the City, text by Ilaria Vinci, Flash Art Italy (online)

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Installation view: **Zurich Biennale**, Kunsthalle Zurich, 2023; Artwork: **Are you thinking what I am thinking?**, 2023, ceramic, satin ribbon, acrylic on wood, 4 x 3 m



**Are you thinking what I am thinking?, 2023**

ceramic, satin ribbon, acrylic on wood, 4 x 3 m

**Welcome to our pond, 2023**

Silkscreen on coconut fibre doormat, 120 x 180 cm





**Girl Boss, 2023**

fibreglass, acrylic and oil paint, 120 x 90 x 80 cm

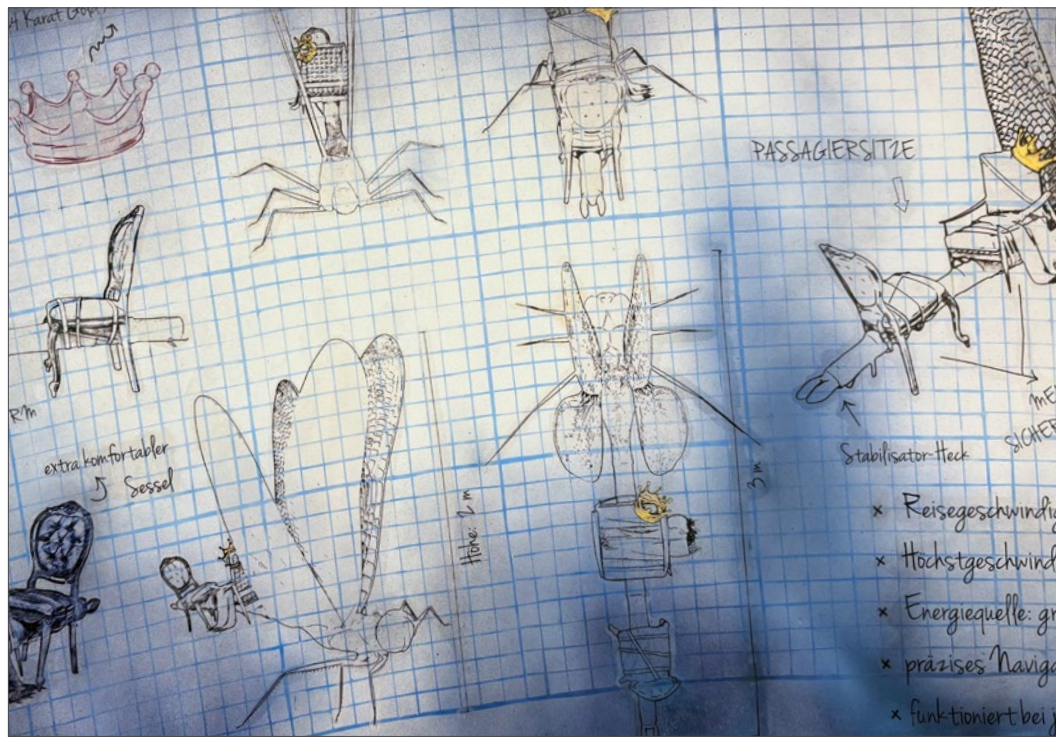
Installation view, **Demanding, Yet Gentle**, KunstXaus Zürich, CH, 2023





Installation view, **Fantasy Students**, Kunstebau for the Berufsschule in Bülach, Switzerland, 2023





Details: **Fantasy Students**, 2023  
painted wood, plexiglass, stainless steel, 270 x 140 x 18 cm



In *Fantasy Students*, an installation is presented as part of the school architecture by the Italian-born, Swiss-based artist Ilaria Vinci, whose practice often draws upon the ideas of evolution and metamorphosis; the narrator and the traveler; and finally, the necessity for the imaginative that begets an optimism against a cynicism of every day life.

My interpretation of Ilaria's work has always been founded on the idea of world building – which is a term that has broadly been co-opted by contemporary game enthusiasts as we look to combining the commercial technologies of video game platforms, the history of saga or narrative, and futuristic aspects of artifice. But for me, world building would be something more akin to architecture, whose pure definition is simply 'the build environment'.

In this capacity, Ilaria's *Fantasy Students* is a perfect mirror for a kunst und bau project. Symbolically speaking, the literary tropes used to articulate the journey—or the adventure, as the artist centers in on—incorporate a fundamental romanticism that is rooted in youth, and very often play.

Extract from "Fantasy and interpretation in Ilaria Vinci's work, *Fantasy Students* created for the Berufsschule Bülach".







Installation view: **HOPE**, Museion, Bolzano/Bozen, 2023





**A delicate system (Planet Fortuna J5), 2021**  
mixed media on globe, 100 x 65 x 65 cm

**This window is my sky, this room my world, 2021**  
Wood panels, airbrush painting, fiberglass, 4 panels (221 x 220 cm each)

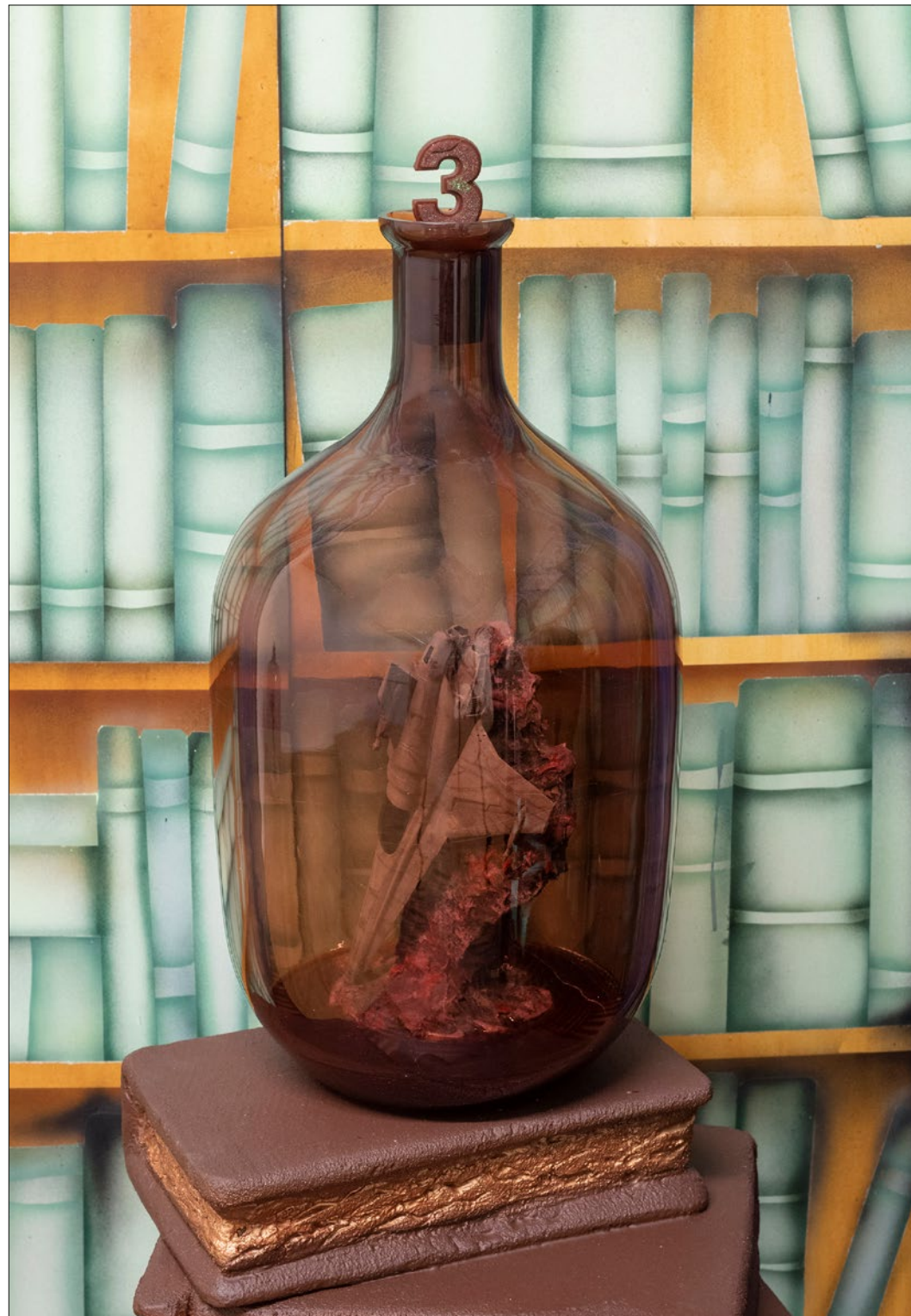
Next page: **A beating of giant wings (Viper MK VII), 2021**  
Glass jar, Battlestar Galactica action figure, mixed media, 55 x 25 x 25 cm;

**A beating of giant wings (Narcissus), 2021**  
Glass jar, Alien action figure, mixed media, 55 x 25 x 25 cm;

**A beating of giant wings (Worker Bee), 2021**  
Glass jar, Star Trek action figure, mixed media, 65 x 35 x 35 cm









Installation view: **HOPE**, Museion, Bolzano/Bozen, 2023

**A Great Cosmic Joke with No Punchline (Museion)**, 2023  
inkjet print on Sihl paper, 3 x 2 m

**Key to Freedom**, 2023  
fibreglass and pigments, 120 x 50 x 5 cm





Installation view, **The Seashore of Endless Worlds**, Le Commun, Geneva, 2023

**Iris IV - Mind Gamer**, 2023

inkjet print on Sihl paper, 269 x 167 cm



Iris is a hero type in an epic franchise, the absent main character of a saga exhibition.

In the giant diorama here, part toy / part stage, she researches. Books are piled high to the cosmos, an icy desert globe spotted with desirable seas sits center and a collection of extraterrestrial vehicles are preserved in giant glass jugs. Impossible bottles have been curios in wonder cabinets for centuries, but it wasn't until civilization started mass producing waste, glass included, that the ship in the bottle became a classic of vernacular creativity.

The work of Ilaria Vinci, in pieces and wholes, is technical, sweeping in scale and concept and anchored by a belief in the power of truths hidden out in the open. It's become a cliché that our last decades lean towards science fiction and fantasy. But hasn't it always been true? The hopeful mirror we create in our own image? In Vinci's compositions that place entertainment and literature and advertising and our known universe into a blender she speaks to honest realities of possibilities. There is a deep optimism in depicting any far future. Iris, unseen but hovering, surely acts as an alter ego for the artist and as a selectable avatar for the rest of us visiting these visual games. A place where knowledge is collected and stored and saved is our last best hope.

Exhibition text of "Iris IV: Our Last best Hope", Plymouth Rock, Zurich, 2021

Mitchel Anderson



**Key to Freedom, 2023**  
fibreglass and pigments, 120 x 50 x 5 cm





Installation view, **RETROFUTURO**, MACRO Museum, Rome, 2022

**Key to Immortality**, 2022

fiberglass and spray paint, 98 x 33 x 5 cm



*Key to Immortality* is part of a larger series that the artist devotes to the key, commonly used as a metaphor in spoken language. Part of the series are “Key of Success,” “Key to Your heart,” “Key of knowledge,” and “Key to Freedom”.

The imaginary object that the rhetorical figure refers to is then transformed into an anamorphic real object. It suggests the possibility of access to different types of desired states: emotional, social, professional and spiritual.

In this work, the theme of immortality is connected to the critical dimension of the RETROFUTURO room with the intention of emphasizing an open question concerning the eternity (or otherwise) of museum collections and consequently the indestructibility and timelessness of ideas.

MACRO Museum Rome



Cabaret Voltaire 1916/2020-2021 2022  
2002/2004







Installation view, **Phoenix Philosophy Café**, Cabaret Voltaire, 2022 - 2022

(Lamps): **When Darkness**, 2022

plexiglass, glass painting, smart led lightbulb, dimensions variable

(Furniture): **Universal Loneliness**, 2022

Second hand furniture, mixed media, dimensions variable

(Pillows): **Wherever you go, there you are**, 2022

sublimation printing on satin , 80 x 40 x 7 cm (big) and 35 x 35 x 7 cm (small)





**Smokey Tear, 2022**

Smoked Bubble, Mezcal, Rye, Triple Sec, Bitters, dimensions variable

View, Anton Ponomarev playing live during **SCACCHINOISE** tournament, 2022







View: **When Darkness**, 7 minutes choreography performed by ‘Stay Kids’ collective



For «Phoenix Philosophy Café» Ilaria Vinci took as her starting point a particular type of fireplace that has its origin in the south of Italy in the beginning of 1900: A kind of living alcove where people gather, share stories, debate, eat, drink, or play together.

The partially burnt furniture, which the artist created through skillful paint effects, underline the reference to the fireplace. Kept in shades of gray, the tables and chairs however seem slightly removed, as if from an old black-and-white film. In complete contrast with the colorful flickering flames in the background - reminiscent of Tiffany lamps and alluding to a grand café atmosphere- and the digital aesthetic of the brick pillows. Both the fireplace and the café are places of encounter and exchange, with fire having a special aesthetic and social power.

In addition to the fact that the exhibition is also a bar, Vinci’s interventions extend into other areas of the operation. The performance «When Darkness», to be understood as part of the exhibition, consists of a live sound piece by Rafal Skoczek and Jamira Estrada, which will remain the soundtrack to the exhibition, together with a dance performance by the amateur teenage dance group “Stay Kids”, with costumes by Ronja Varonier.

The exhibition also includes the cocktail «Smoky Tear», a smoky drink with smoke bubbles, and soirees and various activations.

A recurring event is the SCACCHI NOISE tournament. For SCACCHI NOISE - The Ultimate NOISE CHESS Challenge - the music label CZARNAGORA (Rafal Skoczek) and Ilaria Vinci invite the viewers to a chess tournament with 2 winners. The games are accompanied with live sound interventions by noise musicians. The noise sets aim to challenge the focus of the players.

For the literature soiree Ilaria Vinci invited the writers Allison Grimaldi Donahue, Judith Keller, Maya Holo and Ana Kordzaia-Samadashvili to write a short story with the keywords “rebellion”, “circle”, “curative tears”, “egg” and “Miss Phoenix”. During the event the stories will be read aloud with a fireplace sound.

Salome Hohl







Installation view, Iris IV - Mind Gamer, Longtang, Zurich, 2021







Installation view, **Iris IV - Mind Gamer**, Longtang, Zurich, 2021

Right: **Reveal yourself, release yourself**, 2021  
Wall paint, dimensions variable

(Desserts): **Further and faster through your soul**, 2021  
Mixed media, 23 x 23 x 45 cm

(Curtain, previous page): **“Catch you lucky star!”**, 2021  
Printed fabric, 275 x 450 cm

(Wall painting, previous page): **In my mind, in my head (Klingon)**  
Klingon language from the Star Trek Saga, Metallic paint

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Translation: “Sometimes you win, sometimes you learn”





**A Great Cosmic Joke with No Punchline, 2021**  
inkjet prints on blueback paper, 84,1 x 59,4 cm



Since August 2021, the Italian artist Ilaria Vinci has been occupying the outdoor space of St.Gallen in collaboration with the Kunst Halle. Under the title *A Great Cosmic Joke with No Punchline*, six different, yet coherent pictorial landscapes are continuously installed on the city's cultural advertising columns.

On the one hand, the works occupy advertising space and, on the other, open up insights into individual as well as collective fantasy worlds to passers-by. In the process, the public space as exhibition space takes over the function of the museum and at the same time eludes institutional conditions. The artworks become ephemeral and accessible to all.



A Great Cosmic Joke with No Punchline, 2021  
inkjet prints on blueback paper, 84,1 x 59,4 cm







Installation view, **A Great Cosmic Joke with No Punchline**, 2021-2022, different locations in the city of Sankt Gallen.







Installation view, Kunststipendien der Stadt Zürich, Helmhaus, Zurich, 2021





## Schön ist die Welt (Secret 1: They do it without moving), 2021

C-print on semi-rigid clear plastic, dimensions variable

Previous page: **Schön ist die Welt (Her Old Self)**, 2021

fiberglass and spray paint, 110 x 150 x 35 cm

## Schön ist die Welt (Buried Secrets), 2021

C-print on adhesive PVC, 295 x 72 cm



The installation *Schön ist die Welt (Backbones of Eternity)* springs from the history of the Helmhaus area, which dates back to 1253, and from the fact that today the place is - among other things - a busy passage for tourists.

How many stories have taken place under the portico in front of the Helmhaus entrance? Written from the perspective of the Helmhaus architecture, they were collected by Vinci in a nostalgic fictional diary - it describes the observations from the perspective of the building, including the secrets and experiences of the passers-by. Divided into categories, they are portrayed in the film.

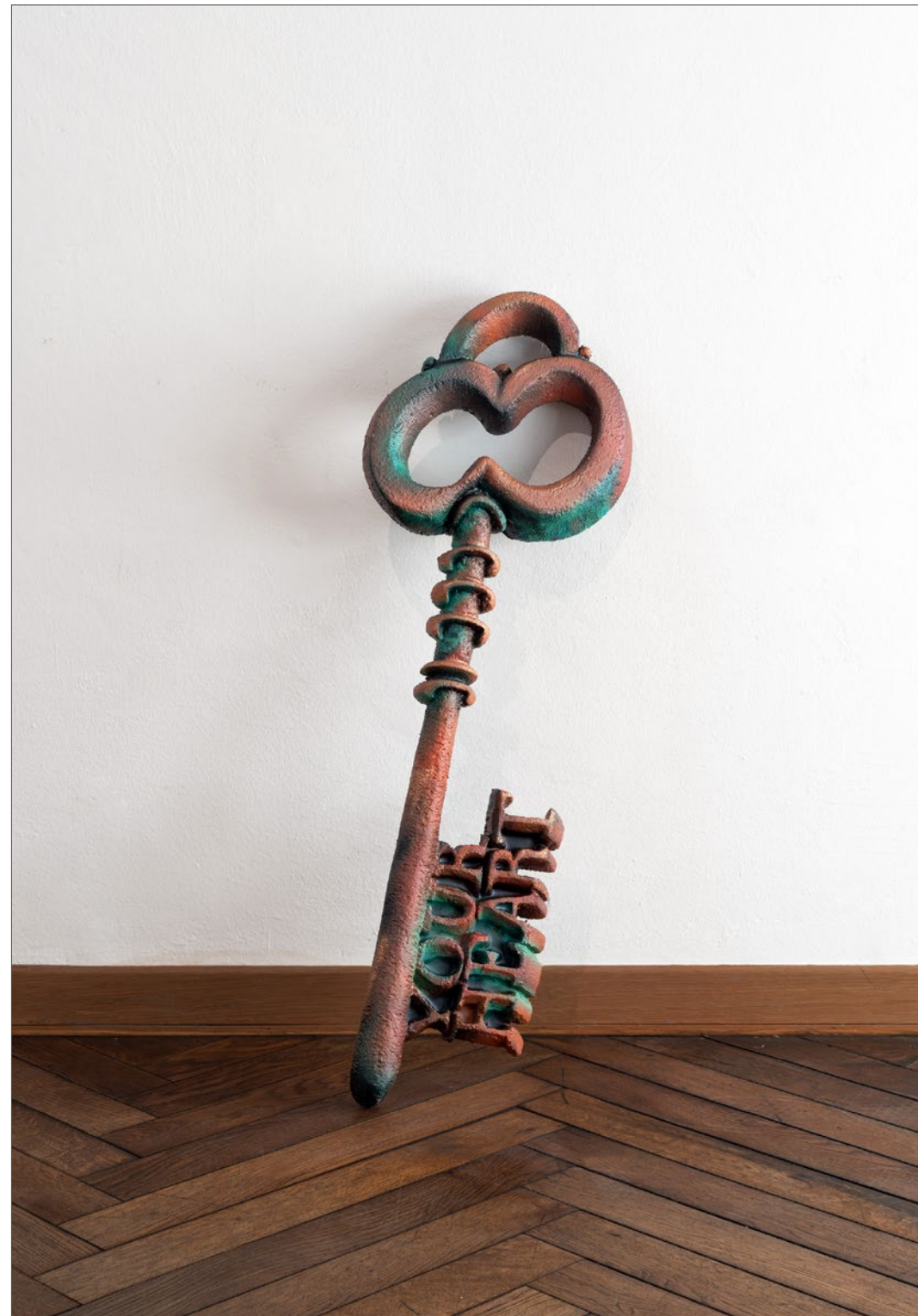
By showing photographic negatives instead of developed images, the film highlights the active role of architecture as observer: the building is no longer passively seen in the background, but is itself photographer, author and narrator.

Eva Vöggtli, Gianna Rovere, Hannah Grüninger

Installation view, **Evidently Chicken Town**, Chickentown, Zurich, 2021

**Key to Your Heart**, 2021

fiberglass and spray paint, 80 x 30 x 5 cm







Installation view, **Period S01E02**, Longtang, Zurich, 2021, work: **And nothing but the truths (130%)**, 2021, plaster, enamel, resin, tea leaves, Ø 34 x 22 cm





Installation view, **Badly Buried**, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Guarene, Italy, 2021

(Footprints:) **Ask me no more if east or west, the phoenix builds her spicy nest**, 2021  
Resin, fertilized soil, Etna ash, dimensions variable



*“[...] And now here I am, in my little house of leaves, preparing my backpack for when I rise in just three hours. They told me to bring two sets of each piece of clothing because, in the cave, you get wet and completely covered in white slime. I undress, clean my wings from the remnants of smelly champagne, and get in my walnut bed, naked. [...]”*

You are invited to the bathroom of a lonely pixie. Her name is Aira. With her melted body and walnut cocoon, she is different from the other pixies. Exhausted by the party crowd of elves and others, Aira goes home to rest, while high on Ecstasy—narratives are rendered subjective, history is man-made.

The ground hides a lot below its surface, including magical stories that are hard to believe. “Ask me no more if east or west, the phoenix builds her spicy nest” (2021) extends to the architectural space of Palazzo Re Rebaudengo. Creating unexpected encounters for the audience in the space, these phoenix footprint bring fantasy into the Palazzo, opening doors between worlds that allow the phoenix to roam freely while remaining out of sight.

Naz Cuguoğlu, Jade Barget, Alice Sarmiento





Knock just in case of good suggestions or real emergency, 2021, fibreglass and spray paint, 120 x 70 x 75 cm



Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a signature or name, written in brown ink on a light-colored, textured surface. The text is oriented vertically and reads "Johannes Baptista".

Elvish language, metallic paint, dimensions variable

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WELCOME  
مرحباً  
добро пожалов  
歡迎  
WILLKOMMEN BIENVENU



A photograph of a two-story building with a light-colored, textured facade. The building features a series of windows and doors, some of which are illuminated from within, casting a warm glow. A dark, leafless branch with small red berries stands in front of the building. The roof is dark and appears to be made of wood or metal. The overall atmosphere is quiet and somewhat somber.

Airbrushing on wood, 90 × 77 × 19 cm







Installation view, **120% Fairy Challenge**, Galeric pcip, Paris, 2020



**We all have a dungeon, 2020**

fibreglass and spray paint, 130 x 120 x 25 (moon); 70x70x 5 (sun)

**Key of Success, 2020**

fibreglass and spray paint, 55 x 25 x 5 cm





**Breaking the habits, 2020**  
fibreglass and spray paint, 59 x 49 x 15 cm

Installation view, **120% Fairy Challenge**, Galerie pcp, Paris, 2020





Installation view, **120% Fairy Challenge**, Galerie pcp, Paris, 2020

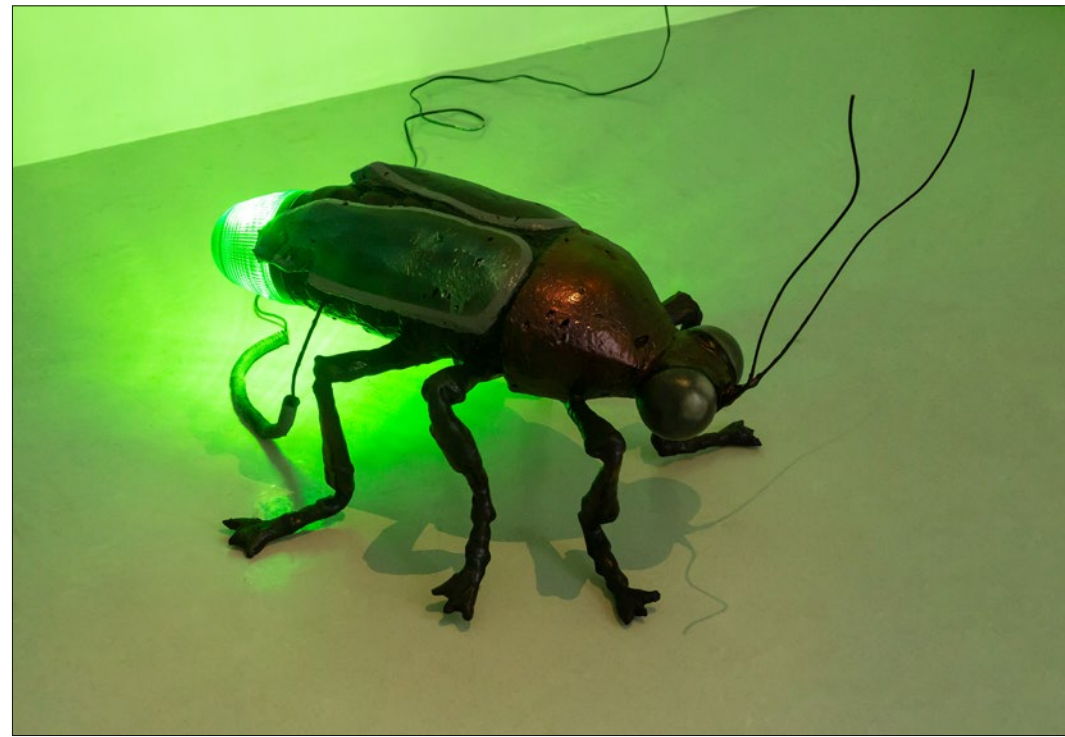
**The firefly**, 2020

fibreglass, steel, led signal beacon and spray paint, 65x 50 x 30 cm

<https://vimeo.com/490825161>

**In one thing you have not change, you still speak in riddles**, 2020,

aluminium and spray paint, 120 x 52 x 32 cm





**She is right, our sister (blueberry)**, 2020, fiberglass resin and spraypaint, 37 × 38 × 7 cm



Installation view of **Sunday Was Already Today**, co-curated by WallStreet & WallRiss, WallStreet, Fribourg, 2020

**She is right, our sister (apricot)**, 2020,  
fiberglass resin and spraypaint, 37 × 38 × 7 cm





Installation view of **Sunday Was Already Today**, co-curated by WallStreet & WallRiss, WallStreet, Fribourg, 2020

Left: **And words. They are not in my dictionary**, 2020

Bamboo, ivy, forged iron nail, 51 x 150 x 10 cm

(Hanging pennant chain): **Just in time to be late**, 2020

paper, ribbon, dimensions variable

(Tea cup ride): **Memory! Free them, free them, free the fireflies**, 2020

mixed media, 115 x 77 x 138 cm





## Who profaned our silent shade?, 2020

daisies, wax, dimensions variable



At WallStreet, the staging freezes a dynamic of repetition. In Ilaria Vinci's work, the carnivalesque and folkloric repertory is turned on its head, taking away all pretensions of procession and rite and turning them as a set of props for operations that require constant reenactments, waiting to be seized or for a customer to enter the carousel. These personal and subversive codes of emancipation therefore demand to be used, but the user guide remains absent: props, a stage and actors, but no script.

In both halls, the environment becomes oppressive, promising symbolic forms of escape that nevertheless never achieve a real flight. The narrative set up at WallStreet explores identity in the face of these environments and the roles of powers within an attitude of voluntary passivity. The characters in these environments create so many images of the self that evades subjective agency, comports body and psyche to the codes of an imposing environment.

How then to turn the self-imposed environment upside down as conditioning? In Ilaria Vinci's work, the staging seeks precisely to make the spectators aware that freedom and self-control is first and foremost a self-projection, a constructed image of oneself. The atmosphere of desire and anxiety that permeates the spaces then makes it possible to insist on forces that creep in and seek to create spaces of dependency, to better propose solutions that do not quite solve them.

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