

LAMPOON

«*Am I dreaming or awake?*» – the schizophrenic work of Cinzia Ruggeri

As we awaken from the daily torpor that tinges our view of the world black and white, Cinzia Ruggeri steps into the shoes of a Morpheus who makes us daydream

To survive is not to have a temporal identity. Who is Cinzia Ruggeri?

It is at the dreamlike gates of Wonderland that we are welcomed by a creature who defies definition: artist, designer, visionary, poetess. Cinzia Ruggeri is a kaleidoscope, an ever-changing juxtaposition of colours whose preciousness lies in remaining faithful to the raw materials of which her personality is made.

Always the same tiles, it is the combination that changes: this is the formula for an artist whose identity is firm and alive at the same time. «*The only way to survive is not to have a temporal identity*», said Ruggeri in a video by Georg Brinturp in 1986. Who is Cinzia Ruggeri? This and that. A figure who escapes a linear system and blows up the grid that forces people into categorisations.

The binary person is comfortable in a channelled system, but it is the all-encompassing one that leaves more space for interaction with the other, allowing a spectator to project oneself into a vagueness that opens up boundaries rather than marking them. A similar structure defines the disease of contemporaneity: the imprisonment of being versus the fluidity of gender. In a Pirandellian way Cinzia Ruggeri is *One, no one and one hundred thousand*.



Cinzia Ruggieri, Guanto Schiaffo, 1983

Cinzia Ruggieri and Dino Buzzati. Creativity dressed in irony

In a reconciliation of art and life, Ruggieri created her own world and immersed herself in it; she carried it forward without compromise. The first words she wrote in the vocabulary she would later use faithfully in all her creations date back to 1960. A young girl -she was 18-, extravagant, feminine, determined, staged her first solo exhibition at the Prisma Gallery in Milan and Dino Buzzati described her energy, concluding writing *«those who know her well say that Cinzia is a little crazy»*.

A madness that is a quality: historically it is recognised in those who do not conform to the rules, in those who decide not to follow convention. A typical virtue of the artists that does not escape Ruggieri, an extreme radical. The context in which she fits in, founding her own line in 1977, corresponds to the birth of Made in Italy with precise dictates of the fashion industry: if Ruggieri had followed them, she could have held the sceptre of greatest success, but she would no longer be Ruggieri.

Ruggieri on fashion. A functional discipline turned into dysfunctional

«Ruggieri's shows featured the craziest things of the fashion season, but it was also difficult for buyers to select them for the shops» says Luca Lo Pinto, creative director of the 'Cinzia says...' exhibition. Her dog Scherzi became a handbag, the silhouette of Italy was translated into a pair of boots and two clutch bags (Stivali Italia, 1986), the pillowy headdress (Bed Dress, 1986) – which later inspired both Viktor & Rolf (F/W 2005-06) and Maison Martin Margiela (S/S 2015) – was a dress in which to accommodate dreams. Ruggieri's approach to creativity is animistic. Fashion is canonically a functional discipline in which Ruggieri intervenes to bring in the concept of dysfunctionality.

Everyone can project something personal onto the garment, creating a fracture on the continuous, monotonous surface of fashion, which has the subtle aim of uniformity and flattening personalities: Cinzia Ruggieri creates with a political and human attitude. The *'Abiti comportamentali'* facilitate or expand an individual's behaviour, triggering a discourse between

person and dress in a certain way. A detail can suggest a narrative and flourish a relationship between the object and the wearer. Subversive of the motto '*form follows function*', Cinzia Ruggeri's figure is closer to an artist: art is not an industry and is not born to be functional, fashion is.



Cinzia Ruggeri, *Cinzia Says...* Exhibition view, MACRO, 2022, Photo Piercarlo Quecchia, DSL Studio, Courtesy Archivio Cinzia Ruggeri Milano



Cinzia Ruggeri in her studio, Milan, 1982

Radical Italian architecture. Alessandro Mendini and Ettore Sottsass

A similar mode of operation was applied to the design projects: her Milanese home had a different look every day, a *mise-en-scène* inspired by the balustrade of Palazzo Farnese with a

lake was set up in her showroom, the cushions changed according to the mood or the guests, the Frau Vanity Gatti armchair was a bright-eyed soft toy. Design was a way of deciphering the world, living a way of fathoming the soul.

The sensory places were filled with anthropomorphic furniture (Rocco, 1989), the gestural mirror offering more hands at disposal (Shatzi, 1995), ornamental 'chandeliers' (Jewel by Bulb, 1978-2018). The natural frequentization of figures who gravitate around the Milanese scene of a

certain period, such as Alessandro Mendini or Ettore Sottsass, produced assonances between the works of the various creatives who founded a reality with a common expressive form.

An architectural sign typical of radical Italian architecture, rooted in an ancient time, is the ziggurat, a basic form of the puerile stroke that Cinzia will make an expression of her contemporaneity: however, the geometry does not remain embedded in absolute rigour; in Ruggeri's works the rigidity is applied in an opposite situation. *«In the software she was very explosive, in the hardware she was much more analytical and refined»* explains Luca Lo Pinto. The key to read Ruggeri's works is always in turning the coin over and noticing how seemingly dissonant elements are combined in a musical way.

Luca Lo Pinto on Ruggeri's work. A recipe for ambiguity

Ruggeri's poetry is imbued with vitality. She has an intellectual and cerebral component that does not want to translate into a 'think and then do' binomial: the statement is 'do and then think'. The artist's energy materialised in all dimensions flowing into one another, from fashion to design, from performance to stage design.

The world in which she found herself growing up was posthumous to the deconstructivism of the 1960s and the road she travelled was a bridge between the questioning of the real and the hyperreal: *«In avant-garde cinema, you can break the idea of the dream and ask the actor to look into the camera, so that the breaking of the rule can become a strong point because the spell is broken. Cinzia somewhat liked to maintain the spell and at the same time strangle, but never by looking so violently into the camera. She was for the softer ways: it is important to make clear that it is a spell, but it is equally important that the spectator remains inside the magic»*, says Luca Lo Pinto.

The walk between dream and reality is possible thanks to irony, a tool that produces disorientation and non-linearity in the way we observe our surroundings, which generates desecration and questioning. The product straddling the two dimensions has a glitch in it, that is the element with which Cinzia Ruggeri manages to create empathy with the viewer. The artist's humanity lies in her accessible complexity, and ambiguity is synonymous with her identity.

Cinzia Ruggeri and the influence in Virgil Abloh's Off-White

Today, being a Janus-faced figure, turned to the right and left, with one foot in and one foot out, is ambiguous, and the fashion system has grasped the need for dualism, paving the way for figures like Virgil Abloh who, like Cinzia Ruggeri, combined extremes and fused them into a single

personality. If Off-White's boots are 'made for walking', Cinzia Ruggeri's can be used or admired as wall-mounted sculptures.

The activism of creative minds comes from a precise vision of things, without becoming slaves to them. «*Artists have antennae*» says Luca Lo Pinto. They build their own philosophy by standing on historicity and, observing the changes, they listen to and integrate the contemporary into their work, but can choose not to submit to it. Cinzia Ruggeri's culture was very much influenced by the historical avant-garde and was also nourished by what was happening around her.

Technology was a consistent ingredient in her work: the LED dress (Light Dress, 1981), the dress that changed colour depending on heat (Liquid Crystal Fabric Dress, 1982), the fashion shows organised for video in times far removed from today's diffusion. «*She had double speed*» Lo Pinto observes. It is a mind pressing on the accelerator and going in reverse at the same time that produces a bipolarity that is estranged from the times. In fashion, what to like changes with the seasons; art is not like that: it is out of time.

Cinzia says..., from a song to an exhibition

To shake Cinzia Ruggeri from the clutches of the past, the retrospective on the artist releases her from the lines of the 1984 song *Elettrochoc* in which Matia Bazar sang: «*Cinzia said, I would like to change my dress that is old by now doesn't fit me anymore*». and leads her into an infinite present. 'Cinzia says...' is an exhibition that erases nostalgia.

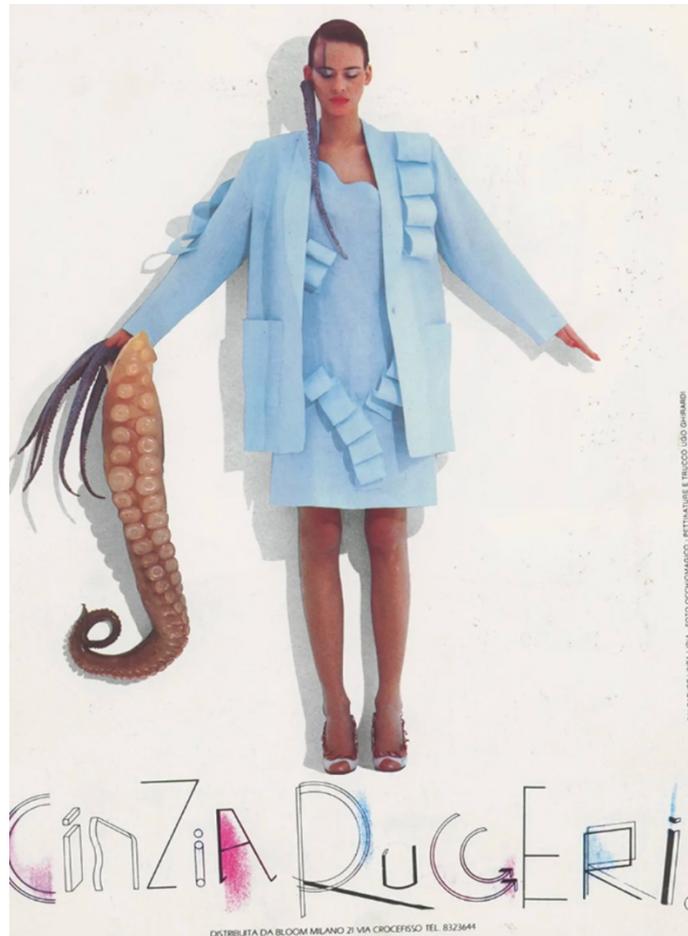
The cataloguing and construction of an archive were contemporaneous with the structuring of the exhibition, and the accompanying monographic volume is a *koinè* between different elements, faithful to Cinzia Ruggeri's free approach to things. The scientific research proposed, according to a chronological iteration, maintains an aspect of improvisation and surprise, culminating in a shooting that brings Ruggeri's creations back to contemporary life.

Cinzia Ruggeri

Cinzia says... is the first major retrospective of artist and fashion designer Cinzia Ruggeri (1942–2019), an Italian figure who worked across artistic disciplines with no boundaries. The exhibition is curated by Luca Lo Pinto, Artistic Director, MACRO, and produced in partnership with the CCA.



Portrait of Cinzia Ruggeri. Photo credits_ Alfa Castaldi. Courtesy_ Archivio _ Archive Alfa



Advertisement for Cinzia Ruggeri's Spring_Summer 1984 collection. From Vanity, April 1984