

THE ACTION OF SURPRISING

Critic text into LIUBA's book *This is the Best Artwork*, Campanotto, 2023

The artist does not shy away from telling her story: in fact, she turns it into a work of art. Never as in *This is the Best Artwork* has LIUBA exposed herself in the first person, showing her greatest love to her public. She does so with the language which has always been unique to her style, namely with her body, a body exposed to the audience and performing in places of art.

This time, the performance piece is staged at the opening of the Venice Biennale, the most sacred event for an artist. Hers is an unexpected action, an irruption that took everyone by surprise, not only the art insiders, but also those who have followed her research over the years, step by step, sharing moments of life. A media appearance that aroused amazement and incredulity thanks to the visually compelling images that LIUBA has cleverly disseminated on social media.

Not unlike her previous works, this performance carries a universal message, but *This is the Best Artwork* is much more intimate and private than her previous ones. This time the art experience is the birth of a child, as much desired as unexpected, a Sun, a sign of hope for everyone as well as the artist's desire to share something personal with the public of art.

LIUBA proudly displays her trophy while wearing a long white dress especially designed for the occasion, a dress with the title of the project written on its circular edge. The focus, however, is on another circle, the one showing her naked belly, the baby bump around which the whole performance revolves. LIUBA is a mother and an artist, the perfect fusion of art and life, but with that special passion for staging, for the coup de théâtre, for the performance, given in the first person and organized to perfection, the fil rouge that holds her research together. The control of the action and the attention to details, however, leave room for the unexpected, that random element which allows openness to the other: the visitor's astonished gaze, the more-or-less appropriate comment, the intervention of the police, the incredulous reaction of those who do not know what to make of such an appearance. Is it a sculpture? Is it a person? Is it a fake belly? Was it authorized? Questions that crossed the minds of all of us, although we were already well familiar with the performance artist. LIUBA's work plays on the edge of ambiguity, enhanced by the use of photographic and video images, amplifying the effects of her performance pieces.

Then there is *Writing*, another of her usual practices, engaging her "art friends" – a further attempt at sharing her persona between the public and the private spheres. With the same friendly style of the newsletters LIUBA usually publishes, here too we come across that informal, journal-like writing, with which the artist takes the reader into her world, longing to share the amazement for such a great joy, that of art, but more than anything the "vertigo", as she herself defines it, of growing a life inside her body. An experience many women share becomes universal by means of the visual language, acquiring new meaning,

turning itself into images, and exercising the power of art to the fullest. Sun is born! Even before he saw the light, he was an artwork. The best one.

Luca Panaro