

MONICA DE CARDENAS

Federico Tosi

Bonsai Riot

Opening

Wednesday 15 May 2024
6 pm

On show

from 15.05.2024
to 31.07.2024

Hours

Tuesday – Saturday
11 – 19

Peaceful and intense forms of rebellion are the subject of *Bonsai Riot*, the new solo exhibition by **Federico Tosi** at Monica De Cardenas gallery in Milano, running from 15 May to 31 July 2024. The show presents sculptures in terracotta, resin and pigments depicting Bonsai trees that expand their roots until they break their pots, while their branches grow wildly upwards or sideways in search of light and freedom, rebelling against the constraints imposed by the centuries-old Japanese cultivation technique.

"Federico Tosi started to imagine this exhibition on 'rebels' while on a tropical island in the Philippines, in search for virtually untouched nature. After this experience, when returning to polluted Manila, the image of a series of *subversive* bonsai trees emerged in his mind: *riot* bonsais that would make of their rebellion *an* attempt at growth and life, the hallmark of their own existence, a *way* of changing their shape, a model of resistance. There is an urgency, a turmoil, a risk of failure; a need to break away from civilized reality to test the untamed, the wild, the spontaneous as well as the color and smell of primordial instinct. At what cost? These bonsai trees sometimes seem to suffer, other times they benefit of their choice, and once freed from any structure and imposition, they raise their voices and make fun of those who until recently controlled their will and postures, emotions, or desires." writes Giovanna Manzotti in the critical text about the exhibition.

Alongside the rebel bonsai sculptures, Tosi presents a series of new modular compositions interpreting our fingers, which according to the artist are "extraordinary tools of personal action and social interrelation, as well as a perfect synthesis of all the actions humans have ever performed". Untied from the body and different from each other in color, gender and style, these single fingers in life-size resin are placed upright on shelves, as if they were characters. They equally stem from the artist's research on the theme of rebellion: "I imagined the fingers as embedded in our bodies, slaves to our wills and whims. I thus thought of freeing them. What resulted is a narrative about love and peace, equality and the peaceful combination of ethnicities and genders".

The exhibition includes some drawings and watercolors made during a recent trip to the Malaysian archipelago, in which plants and animals are center stage. In the series '*Expensive Dogs Lost in the Jungle*', Tosi depicts Pomeranians and other purebred dogs escaped and lost in a tropical forest. After living as pets, these animals go riot and wild in a habitat that is very unfamiliar.

Federico Tosi was born in Milan in 1988 and graduated from Brera Academy of Fine Arts in 2014. His provocative and enigmatic works, often made with unusual materials, have already caused a stir on several occasions: let us recall the carved bovine bones on show at Almanac in Turin in 2017; the two cancer cells tenderly holding hands made of resin in 2014; the carcasses of downed birds in multi-colored resin (*Rotten Bullshit*, 2014-16); the jaws of a shark in marble (*Make New Friends #3*, 2012), the bronze sculpture of a cat with aculeiform hair (*Untitled Cat*, 2018). With an apparently simple and straightforward visual language, Tosi creates apocalyptic and at times comical visions of dramatic events that suddenly affect everyday life as, for instance, in *Vento Forte* (2021 – Zuoz, Monica De Cardenas gallery) or in the solo exhibition *The same worms that eat me will someday eat you too* (2023 - Manila, Pablo Gallery).