

In Andi Kacziba's works are condensed her peculiar life experiences and her world views, towards which she never misses the chance to take a stance with the self-confidence of someone who never gives in nor backs down.

In this regard her distinctive approach to femininity is significant: she does not accept the gender role designed by contemporary society and culture, nor any ideological denial of differences. Her work rather aims to show how historically "feminine" features, activities, actions – even alienations – can become the basis for development and growth.

The artist, her body and her "action" are the subject of her art pieces, and ultimately the terms of comparison for everything; she is the starting point of her study, in the place she's been given, in the world surrounding her, with her own way of facing it and dealing with it. A way of gentleness and strictness at the same time, a way of both gracefulness and resolution. These aspects are studied in depth in her recent works, forming the core of the *Mirrors and Highlights* exhibition at Palazzo Borgata in Rocca Grimalda (Alessandria, Italy), held from September 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018. The central subject is a thorough analysis of physical appearance and its role in our society. The artist's own face, its transformations and her "degeneration" over time examine and denounce the position of women in a society that wants their role reduced to that of perishable goods. It is depicted, broken up, painted again and highlighted through various media and meanings in order to emphasize the contrast between a person and his/her image which are, in the modern world, increasingly separated from each other. Eventually the person ends up being degraded, almost offended by the image enforced by society.

Andi Kacziba tries to reconnect to her past, to her experiences in the World of Fashion. Using her creativity – the artist's ability to come up with new images – she criticizes these mortifying mechanisms. When introducing her *Santa Chiara* creation at "OLTRE" group exhibition held in March 2016 at the Museo Civico Pier Alessandro Garda in Ivrea, she explained that, "a model must satisfy a standard of beauty set by others; an educated woman, an artist, has the unique opportunity to create her own standards, and not just of beauty". In these new researches the current standards of women's image are drastically capsized through a series of works highlighting imperfections, signs of time, wrinkles, and by claiming their real importance and value. Thus, in the "Polaroid" series, on the frontal picture of an emotionless static face, the signs of time (wrinkles, precisely) are emphasized, repainted with pure gold lines instead of being removed or softened. Those wrinkles become a material in a series of works called "*Bivium*", tapestries made of hemp weavings mounted on wooden frames, thus creating a rough, uneven surface that calls to mind shrivelled and blemished skin. In the "*Vultus*" works, the artist replicates parts of her face with resin impressions, creating masks where, again, marks and imperfections are stressed through the use of gold. In the "*Speculum*" creations, those same gold marks are transferred, reshaped and put together on old mirrors, and the observer can see his/her own reflected image with the overlaid details and the "golden" imperfections of the artist's face. The works exhibited are a recent result of already experimented lines of research, in which components and meanings complement and chase each other at various levels. First of all gold, which has always been a benchmark of economic value, a symbol and component of market exchange. Its use is rooted in the past, when Andi Kacziba, at the time a young increasingly successful model, was once told that her face "was gold": inspired by that event, she now uses that precious metal to reject the importance of an image that is abstract, inorganic and separate from life, claiming instead

the changes caused by the passage of time, the signs of transformation of a person as a dynamic and vital being. Similarly, the use of tapestry has been a symbol of female labour since the ancient times, from the myth of Arachne to Penelope's idiomatic web. The same can be said for the several significances of the mirror and the reflected image, instrument and criteria of vanity as well as harsh judge of one's body perception and self-awareness. In these works the mirror becomes a tool for both studying self-image and subverting and rejecting the hierarchy of values. On the other hand, to play on words, the Latin word *speculum*, mirror, or "specchio" in Italian, in medieval times meant "encyclopaedic treatise", while nowadays it is a medical device employed to examine internal genitals; many derivatives (*specular*, *speculation*, *speculative*) may have a meaning related to the reflection of images, but others also to observation, cognitive analysis, and even to the economic operations aimed at profiting from increases in market exchange value. The same applies to words deriving from *reflectere*, "fold up, turn back", like *reflect*, *reflection*, related both to mirrored images and weighted analysis of facts and ideas.