

Virginia Mori

A garden has begun, the other no longer exists

curated by Alex Urso

Have you ever found yourself in a dream that wasn't yours? This question isn't meant to be a riddle, but it's inspiration to imagine the works of Virginia Mori as pieces of dreams you've been invited to enter into for a few seconds. You decide whether they are dreams or nightmares...

Born in 1981, the artist is known for her elegant and grotesque black-and-white illustrations. These are drawings with gentle, minimalist lines that tap into the emotions of the observer. "*I am interested in the subconscious, how our brain works and why it produces certain images*", she says. Over the years, she's done illustrations for some of the most important publications and publishing houses on the international scene (*Einaudi, Feltrinelli, la Repubblica, and The Washington Post*). Conceived as a "window" unto the artist's works, with pieces that touch on some of the themes and techniques she holds dear, the *A garden has begun, the other no longer exists* exhibition presents a selection of prints and pen drawings – some shown now for the first time.

VIRGINIA MORI'S DARK FAIRY TALES

The various works feature human and animal creatures imprisoned in an attractive noir dimension. In many of these scenes, we pick up on a sense of doubt, perhaps even melancholy, and yet we can't help but look at them a bit longer, like a reader engrossed in a macabre story he can't put down if only to find out the ending. This double-edged sense of attraction and intimidation is the common thread that runs through all of the artist's works, with each drawing like the fragment of a fairy tale. Actually, if we think of many traditional stories from childhood, there's almost always a subtle tension of conflicting emotions that drives the plot. In other words, the impalpable anxiety that dominates Virginia Mori's works is the same as in many fairy tales, suspended between the ordinary and extraordinary, between the hope for a happy ending and the unspeakable thrill of peering over a precipice.

DRAWING AS A FORM OF STORYTELLING

The use of a "humble" medium like the ballpoint pen is quite important in terms of this disorienting coexistence of opposites. Could anyone imagine a better tool for recreating the surreal atmospheres evoked by the artist? "*The pen is a medium that we all have in our hands from the time we start school,*" she says. "*I then continued to learn more about its capabilities and realized that it can be very versatile. It can be used for techniques like hatching, and it's a middle ground between India ink and pencil. I like this feeling of being in between.*"

Though she's been experimenting for years in other graphic and digital disciplines (animation, for example, where Virginia Mori has even gained international recognition), the black Bic pen is still her favorite medium. This ultra-light, everyday tool is used to bring to life the artist's silent allegories: ambiguous scenes that are often humorous, made up of rabbits, black cats, naughty children, and female figures straight out of a David Lynch film. Elements that have to do with the sphere of the subconscious and psychoanalysis are heavily, repeatedly referenced: broken mirrors, labyrinths, Baroque chairs and beds where lovers are splayed out like wrestlers exhausted after battle. This is Virginia Mori's drawing are all about: fragments of stories that have no beginning or end, and we are catapulted into their midst with nothing to grasp on to in order to make sense of them. But are we sure we'd want to? Sometimes we enter into paths uncertain if we will come out unscathed.