

HYPERMAREMMA

IS HYPER—
COMMUNICATIVE

Claire Fontaine
Left & Right

Infrathin is something barely perceivable. According to Duchamp, it is the potential of any object that allows the artist to transform it into a ready-made. According to Perec, the infraordinary is instead what makes the everyday wonderful, it is also the banal, the opposite of the exceptional. To prove his point, Perec collected and transcribed the texts of postcards bought at the flea market. However singular and different everyone's holidays were, the words used to describe them, in the small space of the card, were practically always the same. If we collected messages on our cell phones today, we would probably have a very similar experience. Words still seem equally unsuitable, now as much as in the past, to faithfully describe our emotions in the absence of the body and the voice. Partly for the love of concision and partly out of shyness, we prefer now to use prefabricated images (literally ready-made, ready for use): the emojis.

Vladimir Nabokov, in 1969 declared in an interview to the New York Times: «I often think that there should be a special typographical sign to indicate a smile, perhaps a sort of concave sign, a supine round bracket». On September 19, 1982, Dr. Scott Fahlman, professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, officially created it. «I propose – he wrote – the following sequence of characters to highlight the joke :-)». The first set of emojis, 176 smileys and objects, ancestors of the ones we use today, was created in Japan in 1999 by Shigetaka Kurita (since 2016 it has become part of the Moma collection).

We have learned to appropriate these metonymies of ready-made emotions, the same for everyone but unique for each life, exactly as we did for language. The words to express ourselves are identical for everyone and the reason why we understand them is precisely that they belong to each of us, they are common heritage and the object of continuous exchange between anyone who shares the use of a language. Our simplest and most immediate experience of the common as a vital resource now extends for the first time to ready-to-use drawings: emojis are our hieroglyphics, pictograms to describe the spiritual and the trivial. In her research on the transubstantiation of the digital, through the materialization of virtual forms (anti-nft), Claire Fontaine transforms the emoji of the raised hands into a luminous sculpture.

Left and Right (2023) reproduces the two hands raised in sign of approval or surrender. It's an ambiguous gesture often used in the digital comments to say "this can't be topped up", in material life instead it might signal the intention of extracting oneself from a discussion, from a struggle or the desire to stop

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someone. During war times this form, as familiar on the telephone screen as it is mysterious in the physical space – leads us to inevitably question ourselves about surrender.

If war is nothing but a cycle of potentially infinite revenge, surrender – far from being an act of cowardice, is the only way to stop violence.

Claire Fontaine