

HYPERMAREMMA

IS HYPER—
COMMUNICATIVE

Giulia Mangoni
Tramonto con galline

Coriaceous microcosms

Sunsets, lithographs, endangered chickens, gum Arabic and other things we are not used to

Which comes first, the lathe or the chicken?

Let's set aside the rhetoric, as the former has been around for about 3300 years since its first technical formulation in ancient Egypt, while the latter has been part of human domestic life for over 9000 years. Instead, let's delve into the specifics of the lithographic lathes from the Bulla studio and the Ancona breed chickens painted by Giulia Mangoni, worlds so distant yet contemporaneous, coming together here, two hundred years apart, after traversing analogous paths.

If we rewind the clock to the late 18th and early 19th centuries, we might 'observe' them aboard the large cargo ships docked in the main Italian ports: the chickens are about to depart for the United Kingdom¹ and the Americas, places of fortune where their iconic speckled plumage will be further perfected morphologically; the lithographic equipment, on the other hand, is engaged in the opposite route, reaching Italy after its successful debut in early 19th-century Paris².

Driven by the vitality that characterizes new enterprises, both carry with them a bubbling expression of freedom.

A precursor to modern typography, lithography allowed art, from the very beginning of the medium, to use its own tools directly on stone—here, grease pencil and ink—without the imposition of specialized techniques as in engraving or woodcut; the artist can use the support of the stone and 'attack' it with their usual tools, liberated in their creativity free from medial barriers. The insight into this technical emancipation in the serial production of works has been the cornerstone of the centuries-old relationship maintained by the Bulla Lithography with artists from every corner of the world.

¹ The first trip to Great Britain in 1848 bestowed upon this breed its name. Improved through morphological selections, the first Ancona breed with perfectly defined characteristics can be traced back to the breeder M. Cobb in 1880. Evidence of this laying breed can be found in the book "History of Anconas," authored by the American breeder R. W. Van Hoesen in 1915.

² Lithography, an invention of Prague-born Giovanni Alois Senefelder (1771-1834), was an immediate European success. By 1802, some painters in London and Paris were already creating lithographic works, while the technique was introduced in Rome as early as 1805.

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Giulia Mangoni appropriates this *modus operandi* to tell the incredible uniqueness of an animal deprived, in its place of origin, of the favorable conditions achieved—in antithesis—beyond the ocean; the Ancona breed Chicken³, in Italy, is threatened by the biodiversity wipeout caused by industrial monocultures. Entering the 'Passages' rooms of the Bulla Lithography, we are immediately inserted into this perceptual *unicum* of ancient and rural.

On the marvelous walls adorned with geometric frescoes of lithography, within a backdrop of hemp draperies painted by the artist, emerges this heterogeneous theory of the same animal, now drawn, now lithographed, then watercolored. Against a dry background interrupted only by the intense setting sun, a barren post-winter landscape hosts the scratching of chickens, stoic and hieratic in their having endured yet another season. The amusing chromatic balance of pastel tones typical of the artist abruptly halts in the sharpness of detailed silhouettes in black watercolor, emitting gentle azure shadings capable of replacing the subject itself in symbolizing the transience of the species, the precariousness of their existence *hic et nunc*. The white speckling blends with the ethereal harshness of the surrounding landscape, a place that—lithographed "dry," thus black and white—appears in becoming, an allegorical backdrop of scratching that becomes persistence.

Thus, before our eyes, the encounter of two different realities, both mothers of our modernity, finally occurs, boldly pursued by a century of technical and biological standardization; two worlds that could give way to an ungrateful time but instead stand out in all their innovative charge, now arrived at the end of the circle, that is, the beginning. Two monads that, in a flattening world, resist, resilient microcosms.

Massimo Belli

³ The Ancona hen, originating from central Italy, is a resilient breed capable of adapting to various climates without affecting its egg production. Characteristically, the Ancona hen is robust and lively, preferring outdoor living and foraging for its own food. This temperament leads it to disdain feeders, preferring to obtain food independently, to blend in among bushes due to its plumage, and to roost on tree branches.

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