

SECRETS

Chiara Camoni
with Francesca Cerfeda,
Patricia Rodrigues, Elisa Zaninoni,
Caterina Avataneo, Francesca Bertolini

Glazed Terracotta and other materials
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At the beginning of the year, I asked a group of young friends to work with me and build a small army of animals.

Couples.

Each the keeper of a secret.

To be sent around the world.



1.

"On November 26, 1922, one of the most memorable days, Howard Carter found himself in front of the treasure of Tutankhamun. A guardian was protecting him: a black resin jackal dressed in linen. The body was wrapped in a thin muslin shawl, tied at the throat, adorned with blue lotuses and sunflowers. A bow closed it behind the neck, which was golden. The eyes, set with gold, calcite and obsidian. The nails, silver. This is how the god Anubis, «Master of Secrets», presented himself. And the first of the secrets, for the Egyptians, were the animals themselves. [...]

For the Egyptians, animals are not qualities, they are not metaphors. What is worshiped is "the animal as such". [...]

In animals - in all animals - the Egyptians would have venerated their inarticulate wisdom, their certainty, their way of acting without hesitation, and above all their static reality. A reality that is finally unchanging: perhaps this was what the Egyptians first of all yearned for. It was their way of reacting to a very acute sense of precariousness."

Roberto Calasso, *The Celestial Hunter*, 2016



2.

"Human paleontology has exorcised the monkey-ancestor only in the last few years, when, by dint of finding increasingly ancient and better preserved fossils, it was inevitable to surrender to the evidence. The venerable ancestor did have a small brain and a large face, but he walked upright and his limbs had the proportions known to us in man."

André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture & Speech*, 1964

In other words, man does not descend from apes, but men and apes are two parallel branches, developed from the same stock, from a common ancestor. Cousins, or even brothers.



3.

"But I haven't told everything yet. [...]"

I did not mention that there, sitting and motionless, I had not yet stopped looking with deep disgust, yes, always with disgust, at the yellowed white paste on the back of the cockroach. [...]"

The fact is that the redemption had to be in the thing itself. And the redemption in the thing itself would have been putting the white paste of the cockroach in my mouth. [...]"

What I feel now is a joy. Through the living cockroach I understand that I too am what is alive. Being alive is a very high level, it is something that I have only now reached. It is an unstable equilibrium so high that I know that I will not be able to remain aware of it for very long - the grace of passion is short.

Who knows, maybe being a man, like us, it is just a special awareness that we call "having humanity". Oh, I too, am afraid of losing this awareness. Until now I had called my sensitivity to life life. But being alive is very different. Being alive is a compact indifference that radiates. Being alive is inaccessible to the most acute sensitivity. Being alive is inhuman."

Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.* 1964

4.

I had a dog called James.

I was convinced he could talk if he wanted to. Dogs can produce a variety of sounds, just think about when they bark or yawn, when they growl or moan. It amused me to imagine that, starting from those few sounds, we could put together some simple words.

I played with him vocalizing, in front of his face, the mmm, the iiiis, the auuu. We could easily have said goodbye by saying... iaoo. James lived sixteen years. He knew so many things about me. Perhaps more than any other friend or confidant.





5.

I have been working on a series of ceramic butterfly vases for some months. Butterflies-flowers-monsters.

The butterflies, seemingly so beautiful and delicate, have a disturbing side: they are ambiguous, they dress themselves of threatening images, they are dedicated to transformation. Antennae, hair, trunks, eyes, lots of eyes everywhere.

One of these summer evenings the "Sphinx of the Convolvo" showed up, a giant moth with reddish-brown shades. It is more than ten centimeters long, it looks like a little bird. It carefully scans the flowers next to the table where we have dinner, it quickly sucks the nectar and then it disappears into the darkness of the garden.



6.

Francesca gifted me two pets. A dog-cat and a rabbit. I like them very much. Clearly they are the keepers of a secret. They want to tell it to me but they don't want to tell it to me.



7.

If we cannot cross the space with horizontal movements, if we cannot go far with the body and with the gaze, then we will sharpen our intent, we will sharpen our gaze and we will enter deeply into the things that we have in front of our eyes.



8.

This summer a cat appeared, with two little ones. She is very thin, I started calling her Mammina. Her eyes are dismayed. I gave her something to eat and she immediately became the mistress of the garden. Last night I heard a baby scream, those human screams that cats make when they fight or are in love. I went out and Mammina was on the threshold of the front door, trying to stop another cat, much bigger and healthier, from entering.

I frightened the cat from behind; she, who did not see me, continued to meow with her ears down and her hair straight, convinced that it was her who chased him away.

Well, maybe that's what happens to me too. I think I can decide things, I can manage them, but in reality, behind, or deep down, other forces act.



9.

I am grateful to some authors because they take on what I, with my strength alone, cannot face. I am grateful to the animals because they have chosen not to speak, because ultimately they remain enclosed on themselves, guardians of their mysteries.





