

**ELISABETTA DI MAGGIO**

**Elective Affinities**

Viktor Misiano, 2015

*Elective Affinities*, curated by Viktor Misiano

National Center for Contemporary Art (NCCA)

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Venice, the town where Elisabetta di Maggio lives, being deprived of ground, traditional streets, public gardens and parks, is an example of pure urbanism, of an architectural artifact. But at the same time, encapsulated by water, this town, more than any other place, is in constant contact with nature. It depends on its whims and menaces – from tides, moisture and heat. This is why, on the one hand, Venice lives in harmony with the rhythms of nature, and on the other, it emerged and survived thanks to the human capacity to force the laws of nature. It is no coincidence that the first European botanical garden opened in Veneto, in Padua. It is from there that di Maggio took three giant water lilies for her composition 'Victory'.

With meticulous scalpel work she removed the flesh of its leaf, leaving only the water supplying veins, thus highlighting its life supporting structure. It is fascinating however, that developed in this and other works ("Ivy"), the life support structure of plants appears to be visually close to the urban structure of a city (Untitled, 2007). It turns out that the social and the natural are guided by common laws of life and elements. Something new is discovered here: di Maggio's para-scientific studies are characterized by a delicate and glamorous beauty. The beauty of what is always facing us and yet is not intentionally beautiful. It becomes possible to distinguish aesthetic perfection in the world if you stop inescapable dynamics. Thus whimsical butterfly flight calligraphy becomes obvious if we lay out her path with pins ("Butterfly flight path"). However, di Maggio's paused life is not death. It is a moment where present opens to the eternity. Therefore, di Maggio's work requires months and even years of a painstaking effort. It is enough to have a look at her multi-meter man-made cut lace boot (Untitled, 2007) to see that the ornamental beauty of di Maggio's works is imprescriptible from those life forms that developed during the process of creating this work.