

Emma Talbot: meet the artist who won the Max Mara Art Prize for Women

The British artist opens the exhibition 'The Age' in Italy, the result of six months of artistic residency in the country with works that discuss fundamental themes such as female aging and the future of the planet

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Emma Talbot in her studio in Reggio Emilia, Italy - Photo: Bruno Cattani / Disclosure

Emma Talbot is in a vibrant phase. The artist, known for her work that questions the position of women in society and our relationship with the environment, couldn't be at a better time. Winner of the Max Mara Art Prize for Women, a biannual award held by Max

Mara in collaboration with the Collezione Maramotti and the Whitechapel Gallery, in London, she premiered *The Age*, her first institutional solo show, at the Collezione Maramotti, in Reggio Emilia and her monumental painting *Where Do We Come From, What Are We, Where Are We Going?* (2021) is installed in the Arsenale at **the Venice Biennale**, which ends at the end of the month.

The artist chose Gustav Klimt's work Three Ages of Woman (1905) as a starting point for the creation of her exhibition . In the painting, three phases of the woman are portrayed: childhood, adulthood and old age. The elderly figure caught Talbot's attention, who on the one hand identified with the long platinum hair portrayed by Klimt, on the other aroused unpleasant feelings, as if the woman in the painting was ashamed of the appearance of her aged nude body highlighted on the canvas. From this mixture of antagonistic sensations, the artist reformulated the constrained character to create a heroine with gray hair like hers, protected by her knowledge and experience, far removed from the physical frailty commonly associated with elderly people.



The Lernaean Hydra, Emma Talbot, 2022 — Photo: Carlo Vannini / Courtesy of the artist

The heroine's saga was portrayed in two gigantic painted silk panels entitled *Ruins and Volcanic Landscapes* (both 2022) and an animated film, *The Trials* (2022), where the character faces a series of challenges in the mold of the classic of Greek mythology *The 12 Labors of Hercules*, but unlike the original version, the obstacles have to do with the impact of the destruction of the environment versus human ambition, processes of personal transformation, diversity and resilience. A clear reflection of the struggles waged by the artist herself throughout her career.



'The Seas of Diomedes', Emma Talbot, 2022 — Photo: Carlo Vannini / Courtesy of the artist

Rome, Catania and Reggio Emilia were the cities chosen by Talbot to develop the works presented in the exhibition, his research included the study of textiles, permaculture, classical mythology and visits to historic places. The artist says that she started learning Italian online before the trip because she wanted to interact with the locals without needing intermediaries, once there, she continued with her studies, something fundamental since she went to places where English was not spoken "I fell in love through Italy, I created deep connections with people, being here changed my life, opened a door to something I had never experienced before", said the artist in an interview with *Vogue* .

In the six months of artistic residency on Italian soil, Emma Talbot found the focus she needed and the time she wanted to develop her work. She also found what she wasn't looking for, a more humane way of living. As a result, the London-based artist has already applied for a visa and, as soon as Brexit allows it, she will live in Italy.

The Age exhibition can be visited until February 19, 2023 at the **Collezione Maramotti** .