JUNGLE

# BATO



*Cover artwork*
Bato, Mandrills, detail.

*Design*
Bato

*Translation*
Luisa Grigoletto

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BATO
JUNGLE

*Bestiarum vocabulum proprie convenit leonibus, pardis, tigribus, lupis et vulpibus canibusque et simiis ac ceteris, quae vel ore vel unguibus saeviunt, exceptis serpentibus. Bestiae dictae a vi, qua saeviunt.*

*The term 'beast,' properly speaking, includes lions, panthers, tigers, wolves, foxes, dogs, apes, and other animals that attack either with their mouth or their claws,*
*excepting serpents. They are called beasts from the force with which they attack.*
*Isidore of Seville (560 ca.- 636), Etymologies*

In the Middle Ages, bestiaries were didactic-educational works of a symbolic, allegorical and moralizing nature, which collected and mixed scientific and naturalistic knowledge with religious and popular beliefs, along with fabulous and fantastic creations on the animal world. Descendant of the zoological treaties from antiquity and late antiquity (including the Etymologies by Isidore of Seville), they became a proper literary genre between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: such Christian encyclopedias allowed one to interpret the wonders of creation through an edifying perspective.
In *Jungle*, Bato takes his cue from this tradition to investigate the structural affinities that bind man and animal. Focusing his research on the jungle's inhabitants, Bato creates his own personal contemporary bestiary, which feeds on suggestions absorbed from reading numerous scientific sources and the works of some adventure writers, including Rudyard Kipling, Emilio Salgari, and Herman Melville.
His taxonomy of beasts – which includes bears, monkeys, tigers, marabous, lions, gorillas, mandrills, and crocodiles – trail almost literally the definition of Isidore of Seville, according to whom the mouth is the creatures' hallmark of aggression and ferocity. And it is precisely this feature that is always present in Bato's works: with a flickering and sinuous trait, he links the animal world to the human world in an indissoluble way, under the sign of instinct and ruthlessness, moving from analogy to homology, thanks to the free association of forms. Even the plants – innocuous spectators only in appearance – reveal thorny pitfalls. The elegance of the sign and the color scheme, rarefied in warm and brilliant hues and used in an unrealistic way, spread over vast white backgrounds, and accentuate the violence of the subject matter. Despite the sense of apparent immediacy that the paintings communicate,
Bato's creative process includes elaborate studies, sketches and drafts, which allow him to create a balanced, harmonious, and essential composition, as if it were a calculated improvisation that leaves no room to afterthoughts.
If the works on canvas aim at simplifying and emptying the form, until it is reduced to its outline, the sculptures – a new chapter in Bato's artistic research – represent its volumetric counterpart, with obvious cross references.
By comparing the versions of the same animal made with different materials, such as wax, white acrylic resin, bronze, and wrought iron, we discover new and different cues upon multiple viewings, as if we were investigating a subject through different lenses. Here the sign seems to abandon the ethereal nature of the paintings and become concrete and three-dimensional, while maintaining the same flexibility and impressionistic character. With Jungle, Bato draws on a surreal imaginarium to create a microcosm inhabited by a nebula of creatures: in this stratification of shapes and images, we oscillate between the animal and the human, on the traces of a footprint and the arc of a mouth.

*Luisa Grigoletto, RvB Arts, March 2018*

*about Jungle: Bato's solo exhibition*

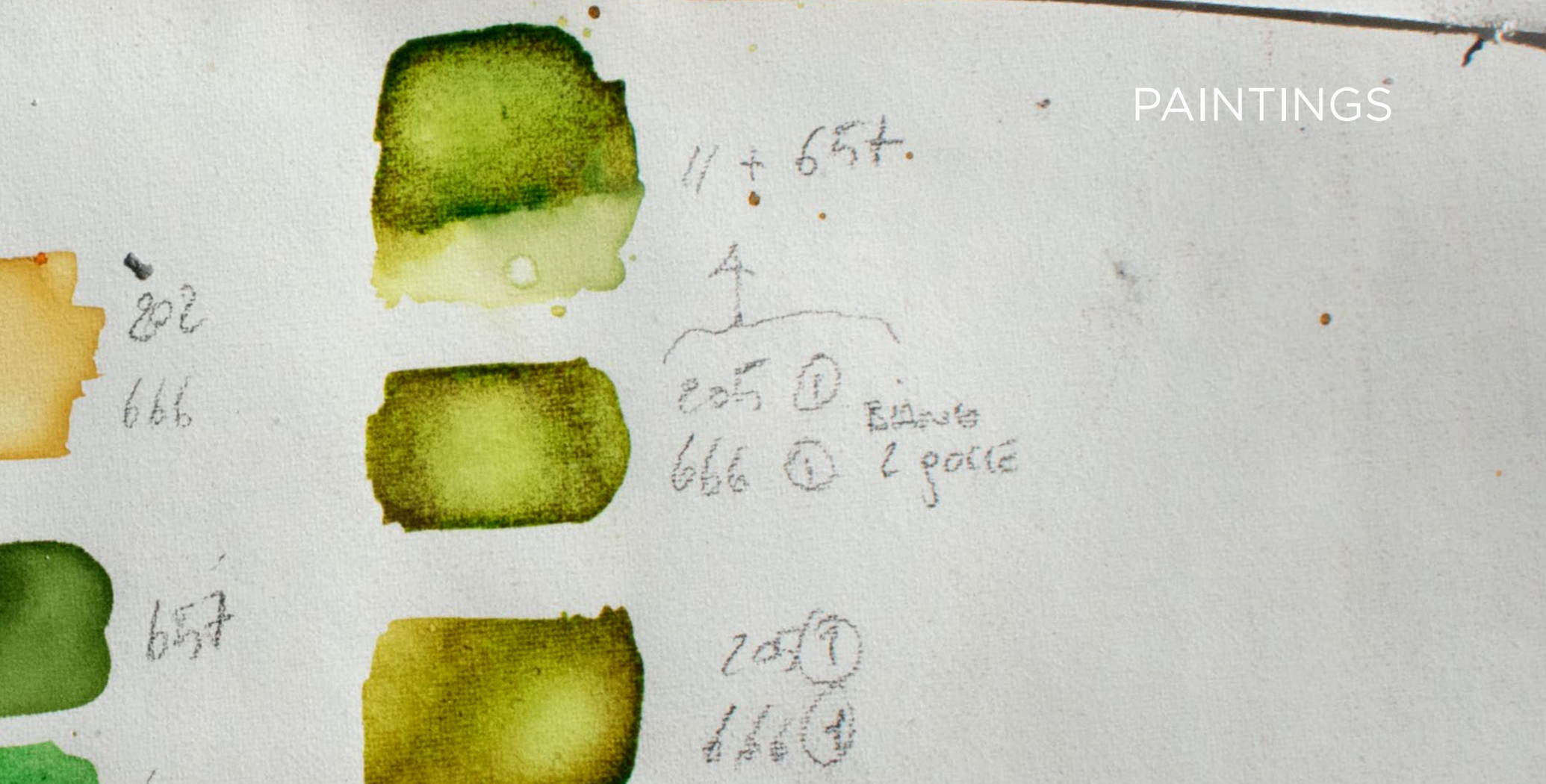
When I think of something jungly, I think of Salgari.
Basically, here's how it works: you take one thing, anything, and then you "salgarize" it, and it immediately turns jungly. You hear the roar of burnished tigers, tree fronds become congested with birds and primates, sunny beaches, thundering drums, vines and ambushes.
And then a bright green that drips everywhere and swallows everything.
Hence my amazement in having learned that Bato has disappeared right in the jungle!
But what the hell is Bato doing? In the last episode he laying low,
among claws and wings, the creeping snares and the improbable escapes, the pointed horns and the opposable fingers, and all that intricate and infesting green?
Does he wish to swap drinks?
From the brown coffee concoctions to those tea-based?
Just to start priming with a coat of green?
Bato, however, seems to laugh at what we expect from Bato; he takes a sleeping bag and a machete, and on the threshold of the forest he exclaims:
"I'm going back to the figure."
Kaboom.
Lenzi told me, desperate, over the phone:
"That's exactly what he said, go get him back, Frà!!"
"Is there a bounty?"
"Fifteen guineas".
Good, I could dig that...
So first I'll take a nice ride around, then I'll call Sciarelli a couple of times, then I'll hear what the latest is in the darkest alleys of filthy Rome.
I wake up the umpteenth morning and I'm still in Pietralata, and the more time I spend here, the more I grow weak, while Bato becomes stronger every minute he spends crouched in the jungle.
I could see him, among the vines and the beasts and all the other creatures.
I would have found him, he or some rare, unspeakable, mysterious beast.
I finally hitch a ride with a motorized raft that goes upstream the Aniene and along the Tiber river; and I finally get to Ponte Sisto, and reach via delle Zoccolette, where he was seen the last time.
I set foot inside, and two wild beasts cast in iron warn me to carefully watch my step, once I'm in.
Among all the beasts, the most implacable and exceptional are a tiger and a lion.

The tiger is a gurgling C, with its slim back made of wrought and welded iron leaf.
She just landed and is ready to strike.
The lion is a large carnivorous plant corolla on a powerful curving back.
Nobody, not even at night, would dare to challenge him.
And that was just the threshold of the jungle...
I push aside the wide leaf of a giant plant that alone was blocking my view,
as if it were a diaphanous and photosynthetic curtain.
And then: kaboom.
Bato's Jungle as far as the eye can see.
Everything speaks of his passage, as with Kurtz; however, he passed through as merrily as Mowgli, as well-adjusted as Tarzan.
But what am I saying? Rather: he's an Adam, authorized to give shape to things, instead of names! And this is really a comeback to the figure, gentlemen!
Everything in the intricate forest is a figure, but a figure that refers to Bato.
To his curves, his ripples, those colors of his and his charcoal marks.
Bato gave it, the jungle, the shapes that refer to him the most, to the point of modeling it on him.
And he had lots of fun, believe me...
Just to make it clear that this is not a joke at all, he has split himself into three:
Paintings, sketches and sculptures.
A trinity, with a triple effect, like god and certain toothpastes.
One yet triune...but what did he set his mind on?
Bato has become like those deltas that flow, enormous, at the surrender of the Congo, he put himself to the test, he is a Bato being a Ganges.
He reiterates the concept of shapes, which, also in different styles, resonate with each other.
There is no Voodoo here.
There's Technicolor!!
There's a tiger jumping fiercely in black and brown triangles, and its long jump is tinged with the color of the plants it moves, and it slowly turns into a beautiful green. And the tiger has the same expression of a nervous C that the one at the entrance has.
A caiman with graphite teeth and gold Egyptian armor emerges from the water, and emerges from the supreme lands of foamed color, to which Bato has already accustomed us. And the same caiman is sketched as in four moments of the day, and while it always reappears, it's as if it's always on its way back.
Marabous rise in black spots that become wings and tails in the explosion, and red are the carrions' beaks. And then a severe din, a
Rumble into the Jungle, the meeting at the top of two gorillas that kick and bite, painted by a confident Bato, with superb stains that, surely, will provide the shapes, but also add something else. And along the back of one of them, the charcoal draws a spinal tract, then triangular, which ends up resembling those leaves hatched between the Sketches of plants and flowers, Bato's Flora.
Again incarnated, in toothed mouths, inflamed mucous membranes and trees like mountains.
And in the meantime, the Parade of the Vigorous Mandrills; triptych of Scarlet Ibis; snakes in cahoots against a Hornbeard, who quickly wanders away; an emerald boa that swallows the monkey; a fishing bear; a handsome babirusa resting near a tree (it's like a super wild-boar, and therefore also 'boar resting near a tree' is fine); a stick insect peeling from the green blanket of a military moss; a lion colliding with a boa, and at the end they mix together, such was the impetus of excelling.
And the sketches are the ingredients of the paintings, scattered along the paving by the thousands, they still outline those elusive, round and watered down shapes, half mixed together, partly broken up and then packed down.
The game of Bato.
The Kingdom of Cong.
There is no Voodoo here, just the fun of enclosing everything in a few precise and definitive shapes.
Bato is behind this jungle, he concocted everything himself.
Basically, he pops up everywhere.
He has made a vegetable cathedral out of himself and a self-referential faun.
To him his gorilla statues with arms of bridges, poignant lions blooming in April and roaring, bronzes, resins, and waxes; the pencils, the Indian ink and the mixed techniques.
It's all an intricate chaos of heads shaped like "C"s (as in life, don't you think?): tigers, snakes, bears, lions; and then all the bodies in strong colors, which are rendered with quick gestures that resize them to leaves and light steps.
When I returned, I realized that there was no need to look for Bato, because I had been with him in the last hours.
Lost in there, among his solutions and his conclusions.
Eventually I entered the jungle and found a rare beast.
It's the Bato.
(needless to say, I haven't seen the fifteen guineas yet, right?)

*Danilo Pette, The Rare Beast, March 2018*




- ECO 506
- ECO 506 - $H_2O$


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666
657
805 ①
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*Tiger in the Jungle* (2018), mixed techniques on canvas, cm 110x150. Priv. coll.



*Lion of Ishtar* (2016), mixed techniques on canvas, cm 120x150. Priv. coll.







*Mandrills,* (2018), mixed techniques on canvas, cm 130x130.



*Gorilla vs Gorilla* (2018), mixed techniques on canvas, cm 150x160.







*Gorilla* (2018), mixed techniques on canvas, cm 121x150



*Marabous* (2018), mixed techniques on canvas, cm 120x150. Priv. coll







*Bucero* (2018), mixed techniques on canvas, cm 110x150. Priv. coll.



*Crocodile* (2018), mixed techniques on canvas, cm 97x147. Priv. coll.







*Bear fishing* (2018), mixed techniques on canvas, cm 120x150.





# SCULPTURES





*Gorilla* (2018), bronze, cm 20x9x13.



*Bear* (2018), bronze, cm 20x9x13. Priv. coll.







*Lion* (2018), wrought iron, cm 58x120x68.

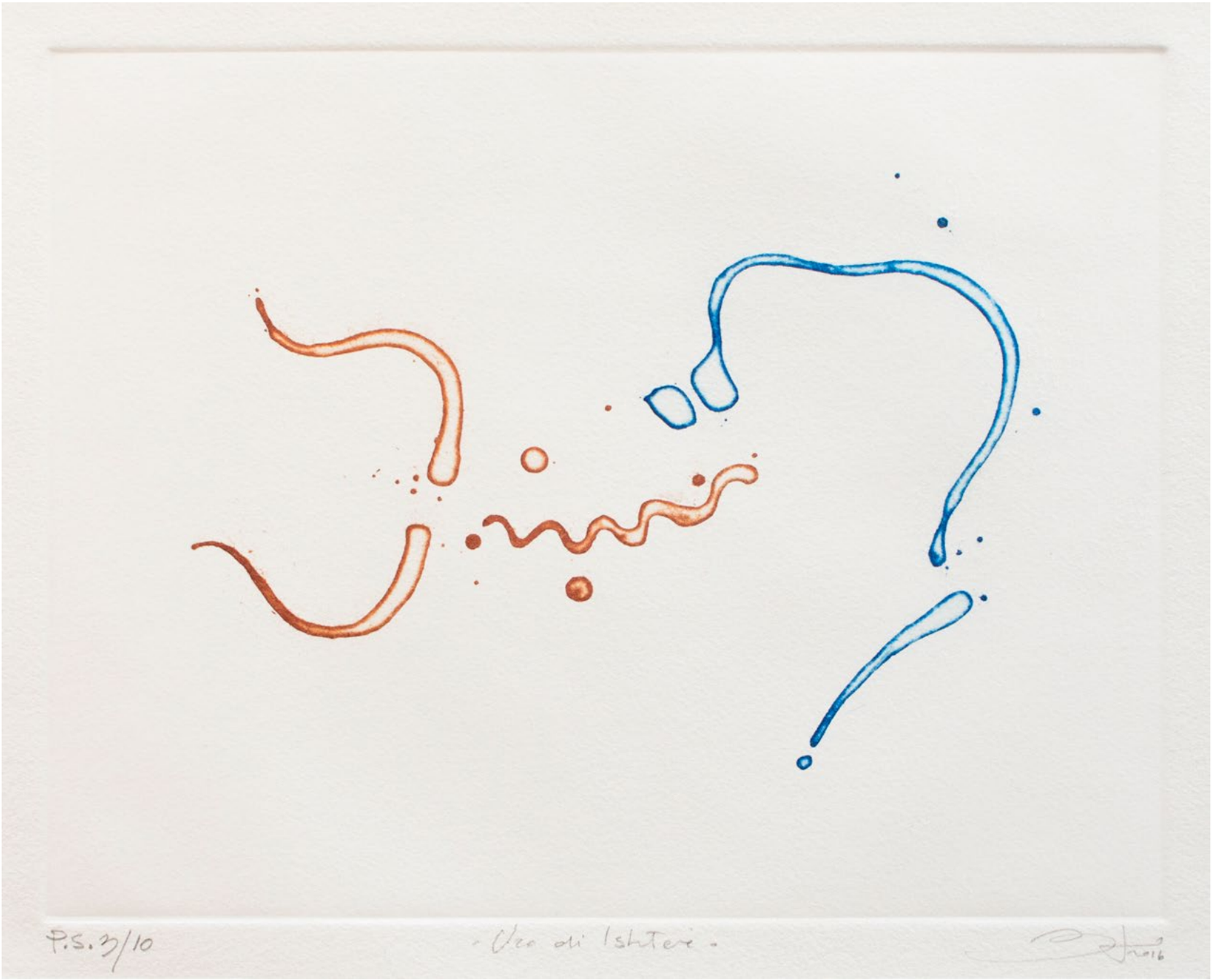


*Sharekhan* (2018), molded iron, cm 57x118x62.

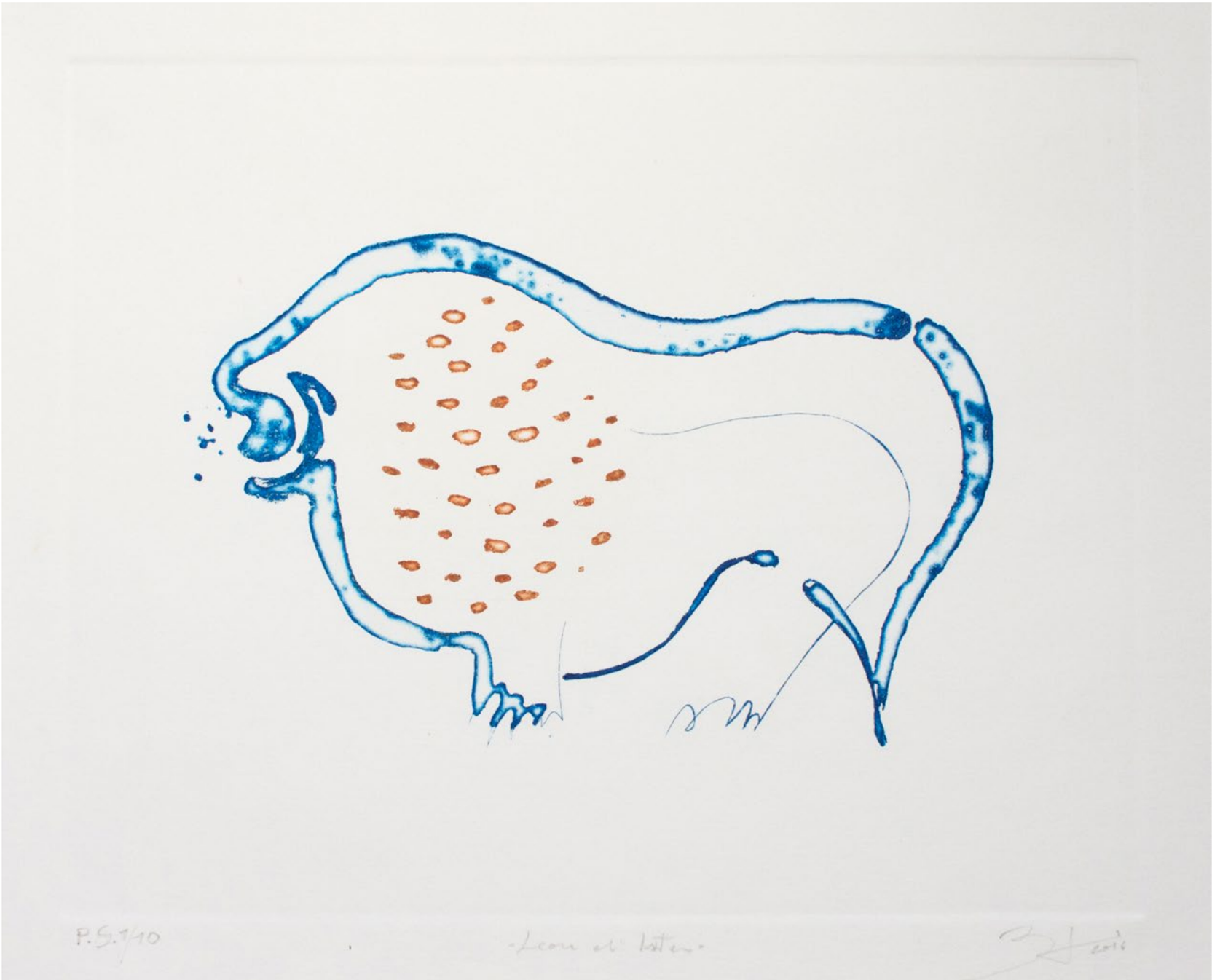




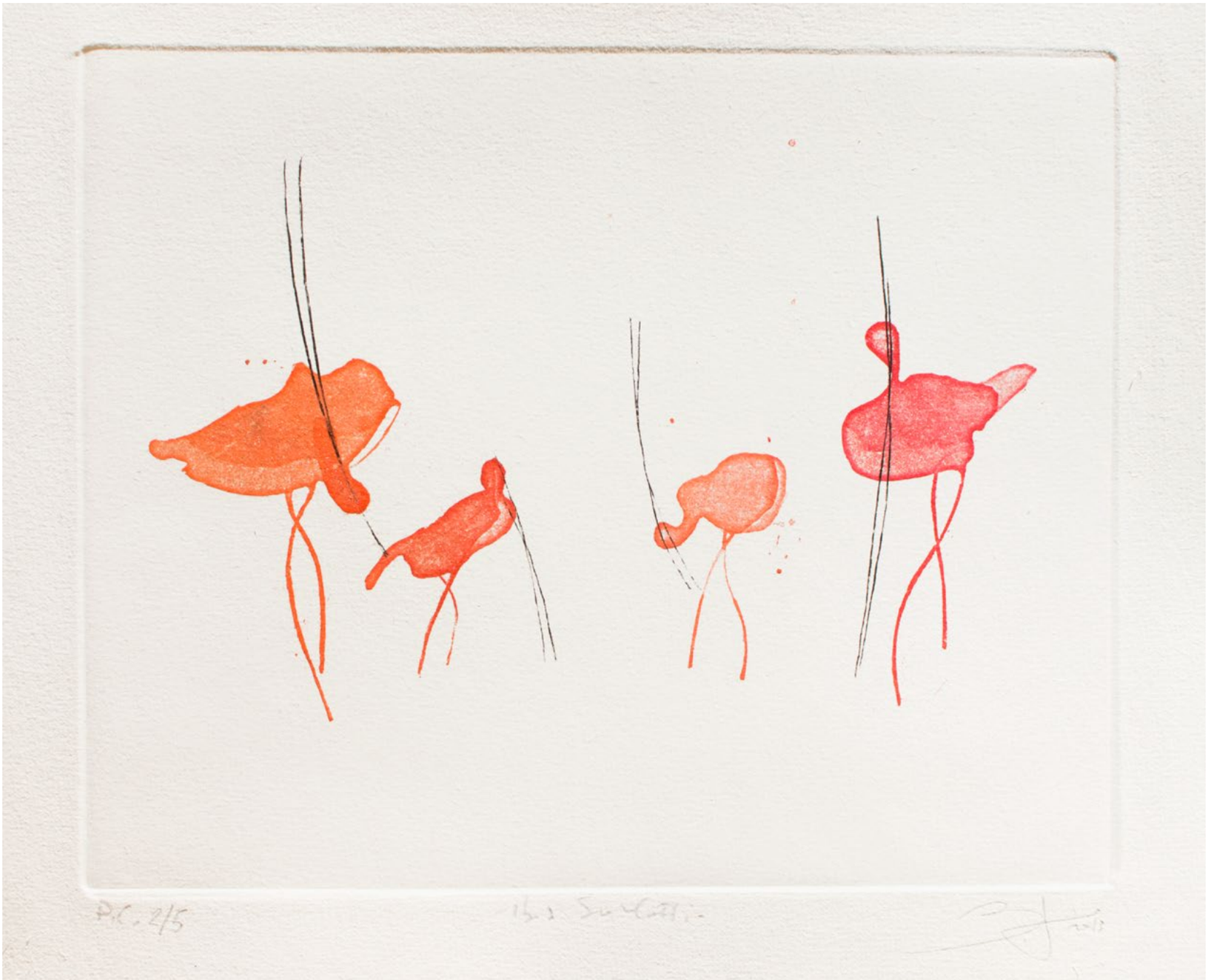

PRINTS




*Uro of Ishtar* (2016), sugar lift etching process, cm 20x24, p.s. 3/10, edition 30.



*Lion of Ishtar* (2016), sugar lift etching process, cm 20x24, p.s. 1/10, edition 50.



*Scarlet Ibis* (2018), sugar lift etching process, cm 20x24, p.c. 2/5, edition 15. Priv. coll..



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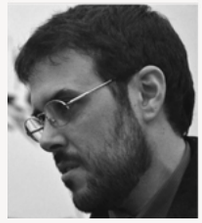
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BATO was born in 1977 in Rome, where he currently lives and works.
He lived in the Trieste district until he was 9. There he met Prof. Ferruccio Ulivi, a well-known and distinguished Italian literary critic, who considerably inspired Bato's love for art.
In fact, in Prof. Ulivi's studio, Bato made his first drawings.
While attending the Liceo Artistico Alberto Savinio in Rome, he was lucky enough to have sculptor Alfiero Nena as his teacher, who welcomed him in his workshop and introduced him to the techniques of sculpting iron.
After high school, he enrolled in the humanities program at the University of Roma Tre. Together with other young artists, he created the painters group Calaveras, with whom he organized numerous exhibitions in the Rome area, including *Il Bestiario Umano* (The Human Bestiary).
In 2001 Bato participated in a large collective show, *The Beatles: La Giovinezza. La Follia*, by the Antinoo International Center for Art, at the Scuderie Aldobrandini in Frascati.
Between 2002 and 2005 Bato took several trips to Europe and South America, portraying places and people he met in the various cities that hosted him. These experiences led him, in 2006, to start making portraits in real time of the many jazz musicians that performed at the Smoker'S Hot Club. Real live painting performances were born and Bato is hosted in several jazz bars of the capital. In 2013, from this experience, will born B L A C - Bato Live Art Connection, a theater show staged at the Teatro Trastevere in Rome receiving a large public consensus.
In 2008 Bato obtained a degree in literature and philosophy.
In February 2009, he began collaborating with the Special Superintendency of the City of Rome, until December 2010. He worked as an art historian in organizing and producing various exhibitions. In that period he also partook in the group show Le *Luci Italiane di Marguerite Yourcenar,* curated by the Antinoo International Center for Art, at Villa Adriana in Tivoli. In 2011 he won first prize in the painting section at the *Second National Exhibition of Contemporary Arts*, held at the Orsini Castle of Soriano nel Cimino. This period of intense activity took him to Palazzo Valentini, with an exhibition dedicated to the Italian Risorgimento, *Geography of the Risorgimento*, curated by Claudio Cremonesi.
Between 2012 and 2015 Bato started collaborating with the theater world, creating set designs for numerous shows. Among the most important collaborations was one with Filippo Bartolini, and with Emiliano Pellisari's dance company, with which he still works today.
In 2016 he encountered RvB Arts gallery, where he's been part of group exhibitions and had personal shows, all curated by gallerist Michel Von Buren, including *Jungle*.