



CAMERA DOPPIA

Birds with a Broken Heart
Roberta Marrero with Jermaine Gallacher

April 11 to May 17, 2026

For the first solo exhibition in Italy by poet and artist Roberta Marrero (1972–2024), Camera Doppia has invited London-based interior designer Jermaine Gallacher to create a site-specific exhibition design that mimics a domestic space, one that enhances both the fragility and the political commitment of Marrero's work, following a methodology that echoes her artistic journey through literature, poetic composition, drawing, and collage.

Over a period spanning almost two decades, Roberta Marrero has created an extensive body of work on paper that moves between visual poetry, sketches, and introspective annotations. She started as a performer and recognizable figure of the nightlife scene in Madrid, addressing her trans identity through music and live acts. Later, Marrero continued to use identity politics and her biographical experience, both in her poetry and artistic practice, as raw material from which to begin an exploration of desire, religion, political resistance, and the iconography of power. She employs a form of bricolage in which the various elements she chooses, coming from different sources, confuse the plane of signification and make space for her attempt (at once a personal urgency) to sabotage the capitalist bourgeois order of things.

In her work, Marrero uses confessional poetics as a method of social and political inquiry, filtered through pop culture, punk iconography, and the appropriation and re-signification of the term “travesti” (trans). Over time, she developed a clear critique of the ideological function of language, embracing the refusal to be called upon any pre-constituted identity, artistic language, or stylistic category.

This methodological interference is evident both in her visual practice and in her career as a writer and poet. The books she authored—*Dictatore* (2015), *El bebé verde* (2016, with a prologue by Virginie Despentes), *We Can Be Heroes* (2018), and, more recently, *Todo era por ser fuego: poemas de chulos, trans y travestis* (2022) and *Derecho a cita* (2024)—are all constructed according to a logic shaped by polymorphism and re-signification.

While the act of both writing and drawing rests on the plane of introspection, in the form of a conversation with the self, it nevertheless exists both as a personal impulse and as an invocation, in which, for instance, error and mistake (the glitch) are kept visible as a form of political resistance. At the same time, the representation of self-destruction is very present in her visual work, an unavoidable creative impulse that, in Marrero's

perspective, is needed to acknowledge the pulsion, as well as the risk, of the different forms that human desire can take.

The exhibition *Birds with a Broken Heart* brings together twenty collages produced between 2014 and 2023, the year before the artist took her own life. This small selection of works aims to highlight some of the key conceptual aspects on which her artistic practice is built, offering visitors a heterogeneous universe of visual references that together form a portrait of the artist's diverse body of work, her recurring obsessions, and her emotional landscape.

The drawings and collages on display unfold through complex layers of meaning-making, merging the autobiographical with the imaginary, and the real world with fantasy, to address themes of self-definition as a queer and trans subject, homoeroticism, religious belief, desire, and the social structures through which gender has historically been constructed and transmitted.

The selection includes a series of symbolic self-portraits in which the representation of the self is often projected outside itself and re-invested, and re-assembled in and through others. These others are iconic pop figures such as Britney Spears, the image of Christ, Elizabeth Taylor, or James Dean, in whom dimensions of chaos, life, death, pain, and love all coexist. Marrero's iconographic montage is, on the one hand, a form of expressive freedom and sabotage, but above all a semantic gesture that, in the artist's intention, empties out the oppressive symbols and demands of a patriarchal and coercive culture (not only that of the Spain of the 1980s and 1990s in which she grew up and lived) and re-codifies them within a queer, trans, dark, anti-perfectionist, and iconoclastic aesthetic and imaginary.

In this sense, an iconic photograph shot by Milton H. Greene in 1954 of Marilyn Monroe in her favorite car, a Cadillac convertible, holding a portrait of Abraham Lincoln, is transformed into a sarcastic and gloomy vignette of the misery of life. In an act of *détournement*, Marrero replaces the image of Lincoln with a portrait of Charles Manson. In doing so, she introduces a conceptual clash within a cultural clash already present in the photograph: the tension between capitalism, society's demands, political authority, and people's moral stature. By replacing Lincoln with Charles Manson, Marrero reveals the darker side of human nature and mimics the logic of a capitalist society in which the public surface always conceals a hidden, and for some people, miserable underside.

Responding to both the aesthetic and emotional landscape of the exhibited works, Jermaine Gallacher adopts and reworks Marrero's artistic method. Using the figure of the "bricoleur" as a starting point, he constructs an exhibition environment shaped by the same tensions that define her symbolic and affective terrain. Merging a selection of design elements and props collected over the years with everyday objects sourced in Milan, the installation unfolds as a layered composition in which a disordered assemblage of heterogeneous materials becomes the backdrop for the intimate texture, the intentional roughness, and the expressive power of Marrero's work. As Gallacher notes: "What drew me to Marrero's work is how it is so instinctive, and made of the things that you can find around you. I connect with the shared set of values and a feeling of otherness, the underground, the outsider nature of the work, and how those feelings and experiences can be represented through objects and artistic expression. When I make a room, it's like a collage, bringing things together to express yourself."

As part of *Birds with a Broken Heart*, on April 29 at 6 pm, Camera Doppia will host *Todo era por ser fuego*, a choral, multi-voiced poetry reading performance curated by Daria Persia and Sandra Cane. The event gives voice to a selection of queer and trans readings drawn from Roberta Marrero's *Todo era por ser fuego: poemas de chulos, trans y travestis (Everything Was for Being Fire: Poems of Pimps, Trans, and Travestis)*.

Giovanni De Francesco, Tommaso Speretta, and Edoardo Ferrari wish to thank Inés Plasencia and Víctor Mora Gaspar for the opportunity to present Roberta Marrero's work at CC, Milan. Special thanks to Guglielmo Benassi for the curatorial assistance as well as for the photographic documentation of Marrero's work, and to Gabriella Massey, Ben Burgis, Thomas Britain McGovern, and Massimo Faion for assisting Jermaine Gallacher with the exhibition design and installation.

CC is an independent exhibition project conceived by artist Giovanni De Francesco, curator Tommaso Speretta, and art director Edoardo Ferrari. It periodically appears and disappears within De Francesco's studio in Milan. CC serves as a dynamic platform where dialogue is central to each exhibition. Two authors or distinct practices enter into relation, echoing the collaborative approach of the founders in shaping each project. Grounded in a multidisciplinary approach, it places a strong emphasis on exploring queer perspectives and identities. Each exhibition is structured as a dialogue between an artist and a creative practitioner from a different field.

Camera Doppia is located at Via Francesco Ingegnoli 13, Milan. To arrange a visit or learn more about our projects, please visit our website cameradoppia.cc, contact us at info@cameradoppia.cc, or on Instagram at [@cameradoppia.cc](https://www.instagram.com/cameradoppia.cc).

ROBERTA MARRERO'S WORKS

1.
Lo religioso del deseo, 2021
Collage and pen on paper,
210 × 297 mm
2.
I Am a Woman, 2017
Print and pen on paper, 210 × 297 mm
3.
Self-Portrait with 10 Elements, 2017
Collage and pen on paper, 210 × 297 mm
4.
7 Times Elizabeth Taylor, 2014
Collage and pen on paper, 210 × 297 mm
5.
Travestí, 2023
Collage, pen, and marker on paper,
210 × 297 mm
6.
Everybody Has the Heart Broken, 2017
Print, pen, and whiteout pen on paper,
210 × 297 mm
7.
Todos los corazones rotos, 2023
Collage, pen, and marker on paper,
210 × 297 mm
8.
Vanitas Featuring Jeff Stryker, 2023
Mixed media: collage, pen, and
whiteout pen on paper, 210 × 297 mm
9.
Lo de dentro para fuera, 2022
Drawing in pencil with pen on paper,
210 × 297 mm
10.
Sin mapas, 2022
Print, collage, and whiteout pen on
paper, 210 × 297 mm
11.
De pluma y piedra, 2021
Collage and pen on paper, 210 × 297 mm
12.
Autorretrato, 2023
Collage, pen, and marker on paper,
210 × 297 mm
13.
Sylvester se aparece a los chulos, 2022
Collage and whiteout pen on paper,
210 × 297 mm
14.
La mujer marica, 2021
Collage and pen on paper, 210 × 297 mm
15.
Sin título, 2018
Collage and whiteout pen on paper,
210 × 297 mm
16.
I Am Still Empty Black, 2021
Print and marker on paper, 210 × 297 mm
17.
*Self-Portrait as a Hooker (Artist) Other
Hookers (Artists)*, 2017
Collage, pen, and whiteout pen on
paper, 210 × 297 mm
18.
Britney, 2021
Collage and marker on paper,
210 × 297 mm
19.
El homoerotismo es un valor cristiano,
2021
Collage and pen on paper, 210 × 297 mm
20.
El amor no te hará libre, 2021
Collage, 210 × 297 mm