



León Ferrari

León Ferrari

Buenos Aires, 1920

One of the most important artists of the 20th century, Ferrari developed a provocative, singular body of work structured on experimentation with supports and materials, bearing strong political content. Akin to a surrealist imagination, his oeuvre, pioneered Latin-American conceptualism and established dialogs with abstraction and pop art.

Constantly questioning Latin American authoritarianism, Ferrari is a reference in the art of contestation. His anticlericalism subverts sacred figures to denounce the Catholic Church's role in the systematic political violence carried out in the name of religious dogmatism. His vehement defense of human rights led the artist to be persecuted by the Argentine military dictatorship. Seeking exile in Brazil in the 1970s, he established intense and prolific relationships with Brazilian artists and intellectuals.

Ferrari referred to his wire sculptures of the 1960s as "cages for capturing generals". These intricate structures laid the foundation for his calligraphic works, in which he took written texts to a radical graphic illegibility. In 1965 he produced one of his most notorious pieces, *La Civilización Occidental y Cristiana*, nailing Christ to a U.S. Air Force fighter jet. During his years in São Paulo (1976-1984) he experimented with print-based works, labyrinthine urban grids and swarms of anonymous figures, a phase he later called "architecture of madness". In the 1980s, he intervened in classical Renaissance paintings with pigeon droppings and composed collages juxtaposing sacred images to photographs of military equipment and war-time destruction. Based on the heretical appropriation of religious imagery, Ferrari continued to produce assemblages, incorporating materials such as polyurethane bones, making collages and sculptures throughout his later years.

La Aimable Cruauté, a wide-ranging retrospective exhibition dedicated to the work of León Ferrari, was presented at Centre Pompidou (Paris, 2022), Reina Sofia (Madrid, 2021) and the Van AbbeMuseum (Eindhoven, 2022). In Brazil, Museu de Arte de São Paulo hosted *León Ferrari: Entre Duas Ditaduras* in 2016. In 2009, the NY MoMA dedicated an exhibition to the works of Ferrari and Mira Schendel later shown at Reina Sofia (Madrid, 2013) and Fundação Iberê Camargo (Porto Alegre, 2010). Between 2004 and 2005, Centro Cultural Recoleta exhibited *Retrospectiva León Ferrari* in Buenos Aires, also shown at Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo in 2009. The artist was awarded the Golden Lion at the 2007 edition of the Venice Biennale.

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Cuando leo la Nación las noticias con las palabras de Johnson o las reuniones de la OEA o escuchó el discurso de Zavala Ortiz orillando penosamente en el centro de la Cámara de Diputados entre el micrófono y el respaldo del sillón junto al andar de sus palabras imagino que todo eso no es mas que una extendida misa con muchos sacerdotes ayudantes en torno al obispo principal con músicas y una sola hostia. Libertad sostenida reverente sobre sus cabezas por los cinco monaguillos que la cruzan a Santo Domingo como un milagro como un milagro de la Santa Libertad como un milagro como un milagro como un milagro como un milagro como una misa como un milagro como una misa como aquel milagro como aquella misa que cuenta Sade que contaba Justine sucediera en el convento milagroso de los Benedictinos "Sainte-Marie-des-Bois" en el medio de un bosque a unas leguas de Auxerre el día de la fiesta de la Santísima Virgen ella arriva cette fameuse fête... pourriez vous croire a quelle impiété monstrueuse se portèrent les moines a cet événement! Ils imaginèrent qu'un miracle visible doublerait l'éclat de leur réputation; en conséquence ils revêtirent Florette, la plus jeune des filles, de tous les ornements de la Vierge; par de cordons qui ne se voyaient pas, ils la lièrent au mur de la niche, et lui ordonnèrent de lever tout a coup les bras avec componction vers le ciel, quand on y élèverait l'hostie. Comme cette petite créature était menacée des plus cruels châtimens, si elle venait à dire un seul mot ou à manquer son rôle, elle s'en tira a merveille, et la fraude eut tout le succès qu'on pouvait en attendre. Le peuple cria au miracle, laissa de riches offrandes à la Vierge, et s'en retourna plus convaincu que jamais d'efficacité des grâces de cette mère céleste. Nos libertins voulurent pour doubler leurs impiétés, que Florette parût aux orgies du soir dans les mêmes vêtements qui lui avaient attiré tant des hommages et chacun d'eux enflamma ses odieux desirs à la soumettre, sous ce costume, a l'irregularité de ses caprices. Irrités de ses premier crime, les sacrilèges ne s'en tiennent point là: ils font mettre nue cette enfant, ils la couchent à plat ventre sur une grande table; ils allument des cierges, ils placent l'image de notre Sauver au milieu des reins de la jeune fille et osent consommer sur ce fessier le plus redoutable de nos mystères. Je m'évanouis a ce spectacle horrible, il me fut impossible de le soutenir. Severino me voyant en cet état, dit que pour m'y appriivoirier il fallait que je servisse d'hôtel a mon tour. On me saisit; on me place au même lieu que Florette; le sacrifice se consomme, et l'hostie... ce symbole sacré de notre auguste religion... Severino s'en saisit, il l'enfonce au local obscène de ses sodomites jouissances... la foule avec ignominie sous les coups redoublés de son dard monstrueux, et lance, en blasphémant, sur le corps même de son Sauver, les flots impurs du torrent de sa lubricité, como la misa como el milagro como la misa que regaran en la catedral milagrosa de la OEA.

"MILAGRO EN LA OEA"

León Ferrari 9/5/65

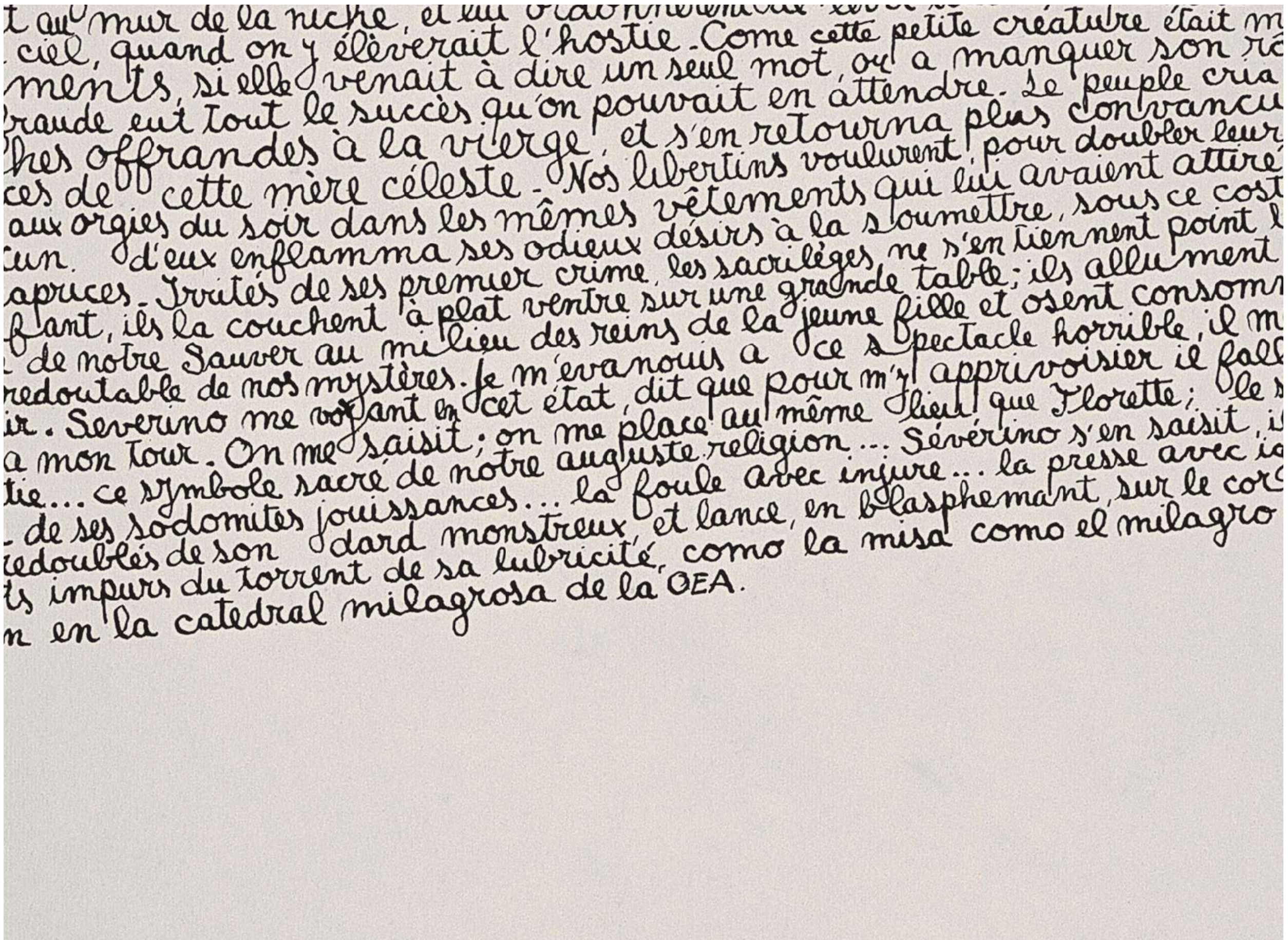
LEÓN FERRARI

Milagro en la OEA, de la serie Tintas Sesentas, 1965

China ink on paper]

50 x 35 cm [19.6 x 13.7 in]

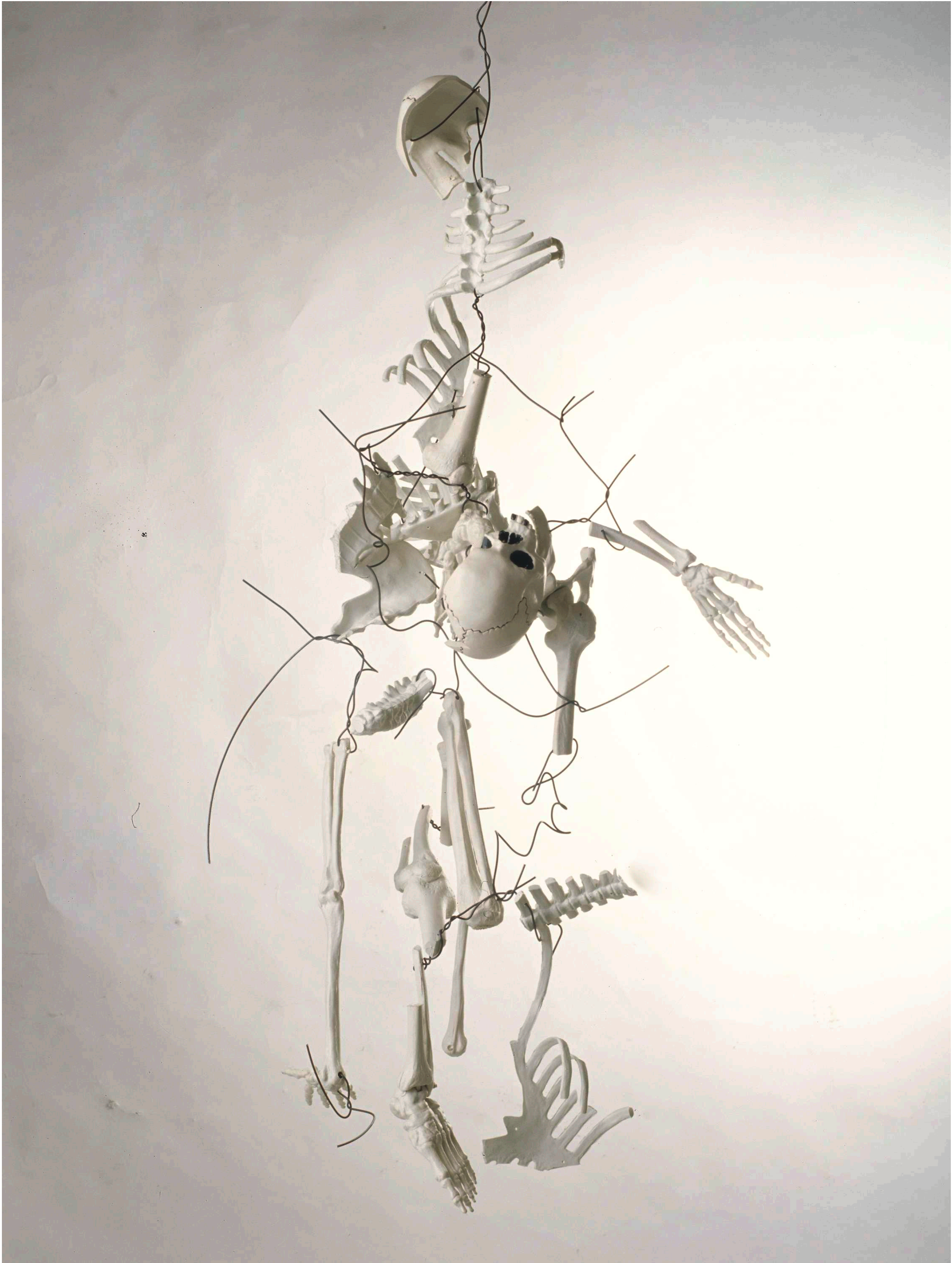
In 1964, Ferrari begins his manuscript drawings, where the abstract graphics are replaced by texts, hand-written by the artist himself. *Milagro en la OEA* (1965) is a work of historical importance. It signals the end of the abstract drawings, and a conceptual shift marked by growing political implications.



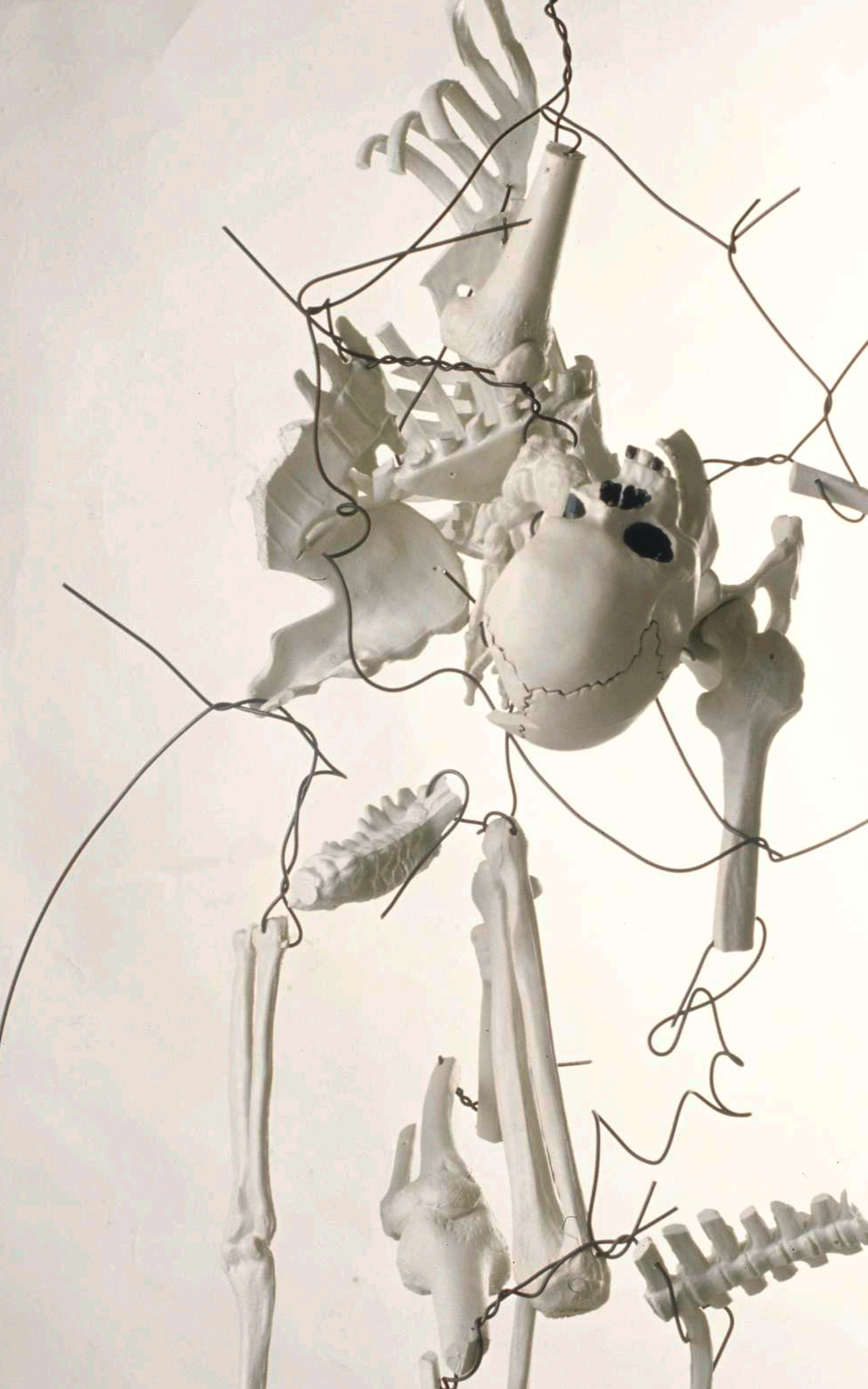
LEÓN FERRARI
Milagro en la OEA, de la serie Tintas Sesentas, 1965
Detail



LEÓN FERRARI
Milagro en la OEA, de la serie Tintas Sesentas, 1965



LEÓN FERRARI
Esqueleto, de la serie Huesos, 2006
Polyurethane bones and wire
85 x 40 x 35 cm [33.4 x 15.7 x 13.7 in]





LEÓN FERRARI

Sin Título, 2006

Poliurethane and bones

62 x 62 x 45 cm [24.409 x 24.409 x 17.717 in]



In the early XXI century, Ferrari produced sculptures in which elements previously foreign to his work were tied in twisted arrangements. Sculptures included polyurethane bones, plastic animals, tree branches and polystyrene foam. In these works, the artist lent figurative and symbolic meaning to the metallic wire arrangements he had been making since 1961.



LEÓN FERRARI
Sin Título, 2006
Detail



LEÓN FERRARI

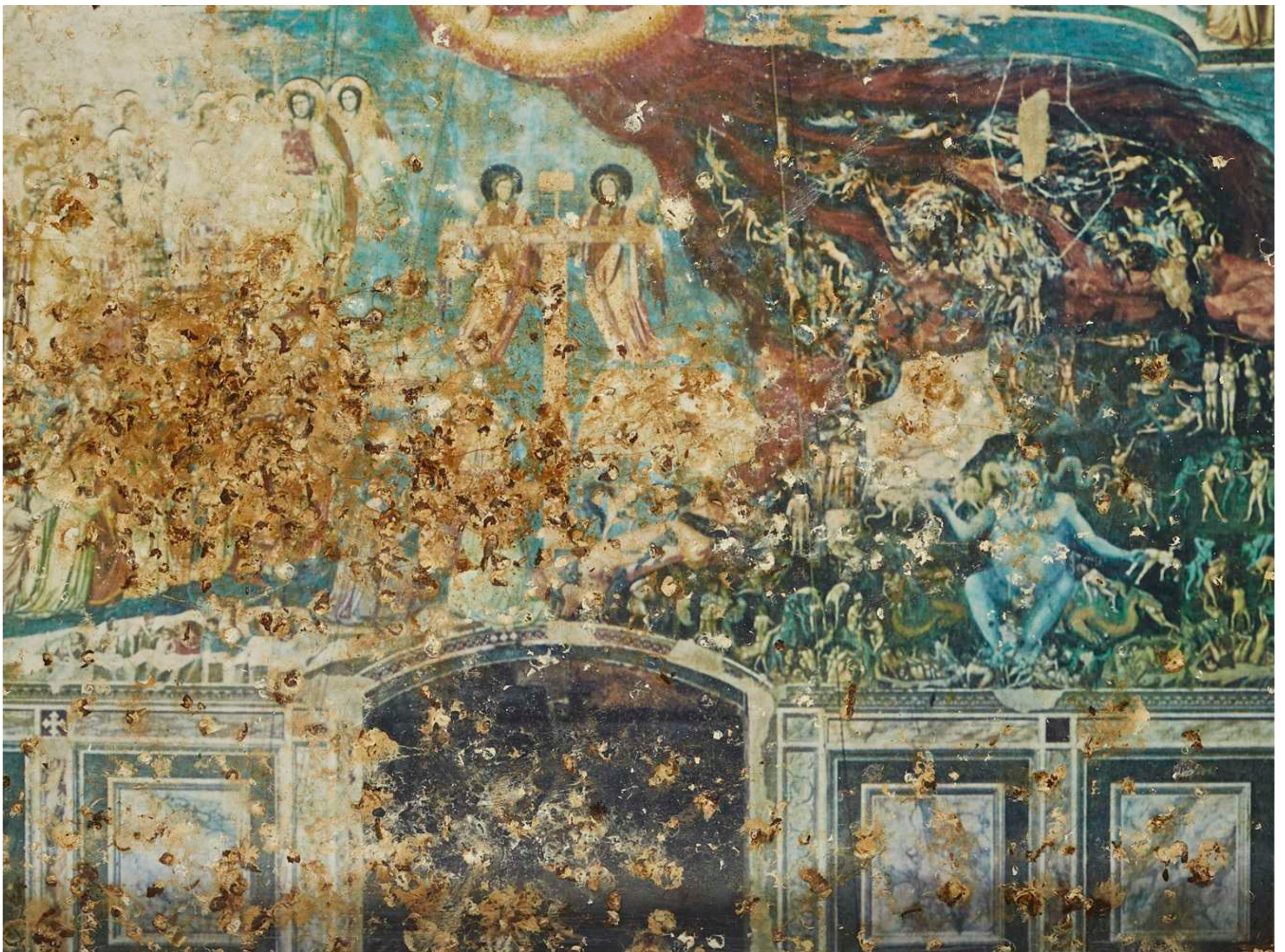
Juicio final de Giotto, 2006

Colored printed sheet and pigeon excrements

Framed: 92 x 70 x 8 cm [36.2 x 27.5 x 3.1 in]



In 1985, immersed in the sarcastic parodies of Christian iconography, León Ferrari produced a series of cages in which pigeons defecated on reproductions of classic images of the final judgment. The images, covered in excrement, are thought of as collages, within his irreverent commentary on religious eschatology.



LEON FERRARI

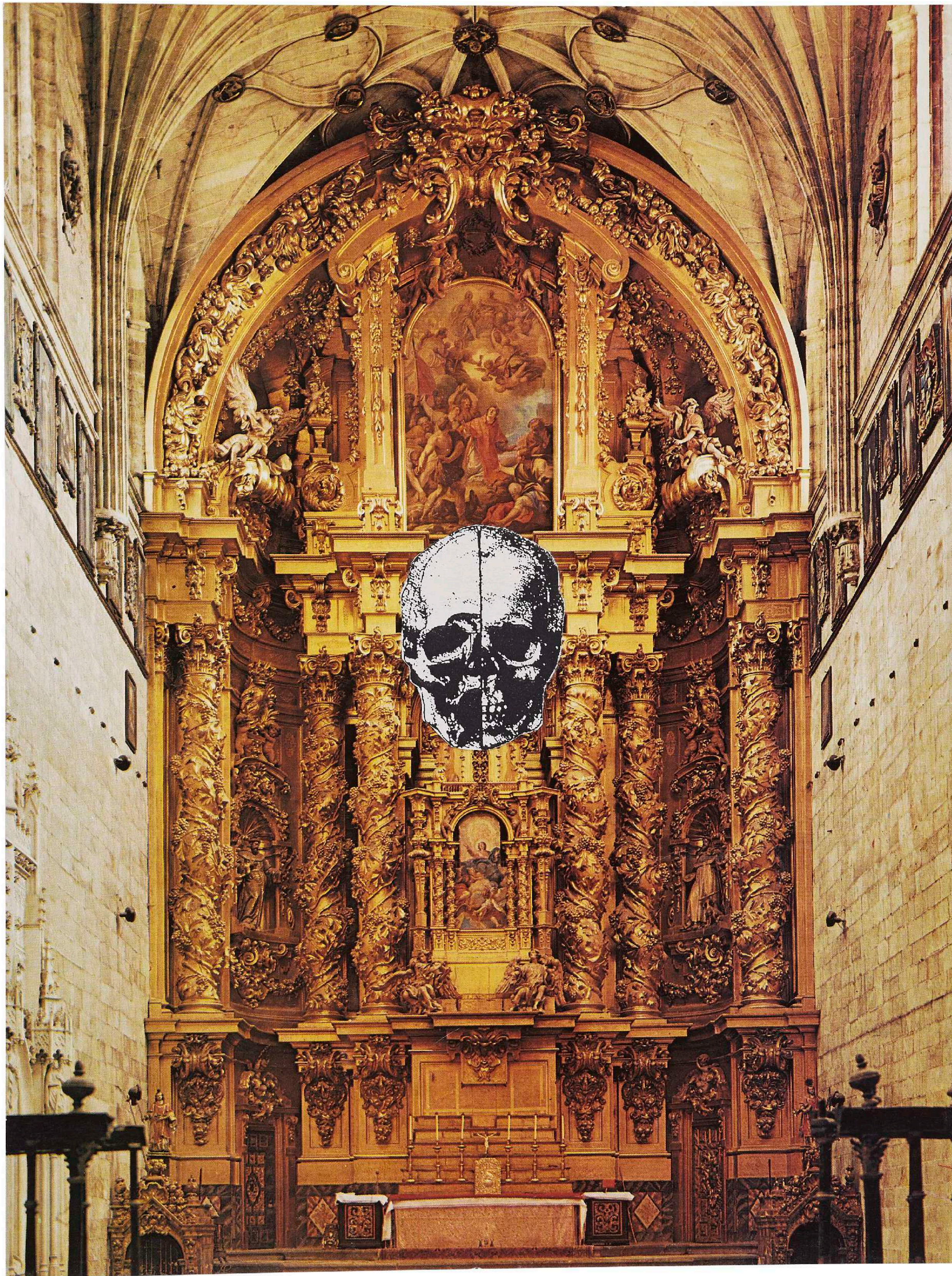
Juicio final de Giotto, 2006

Detail



LEON FERRARI
Juicio final de Giotto, 2006

In the 1980s and 90s, León Ferrari produced a series of collages dedicated to Christianity and the violent conversion efforts of European Christian nations over the last centuries. In these works, religious figures from the history of sacred art are superimposed over images of military destruction. In the 1990s, these parodies intend to pair the heretical with the erotic.



LEÓN FERRARI
Sin Título, c. 1994

Collage
29.3 x 22.2 cm [11.5 x 8.7 in]



LEÓN FERRARI
Sin Título, c. 1994



LEÓN FERRARI

Sin Título, de la serie A Madonna con devoción, 1994

Collage

Image: 28.9 x 19.4 cm [11.3 x 7.6 in] | Paper: 59,2 x 41.8 cm [23.3 x 16.4 in]



LEÓN FERRARI
Sin Título, de la serie Relectura de la Biblia. Cohetes, Bombas y Aviones de Guerra, 1987
Collage
Framed: 42 x 32 3.4 cm [16.5 x 12.5 x 1.3 in]
33 .2 x 21.2 cm [13 x 8.3 in]





LEÓN FERRARI
Sin Título, de la serie Relectura de la Biblia. Cohetes, Bombas y Aviones de Guerra, 1987

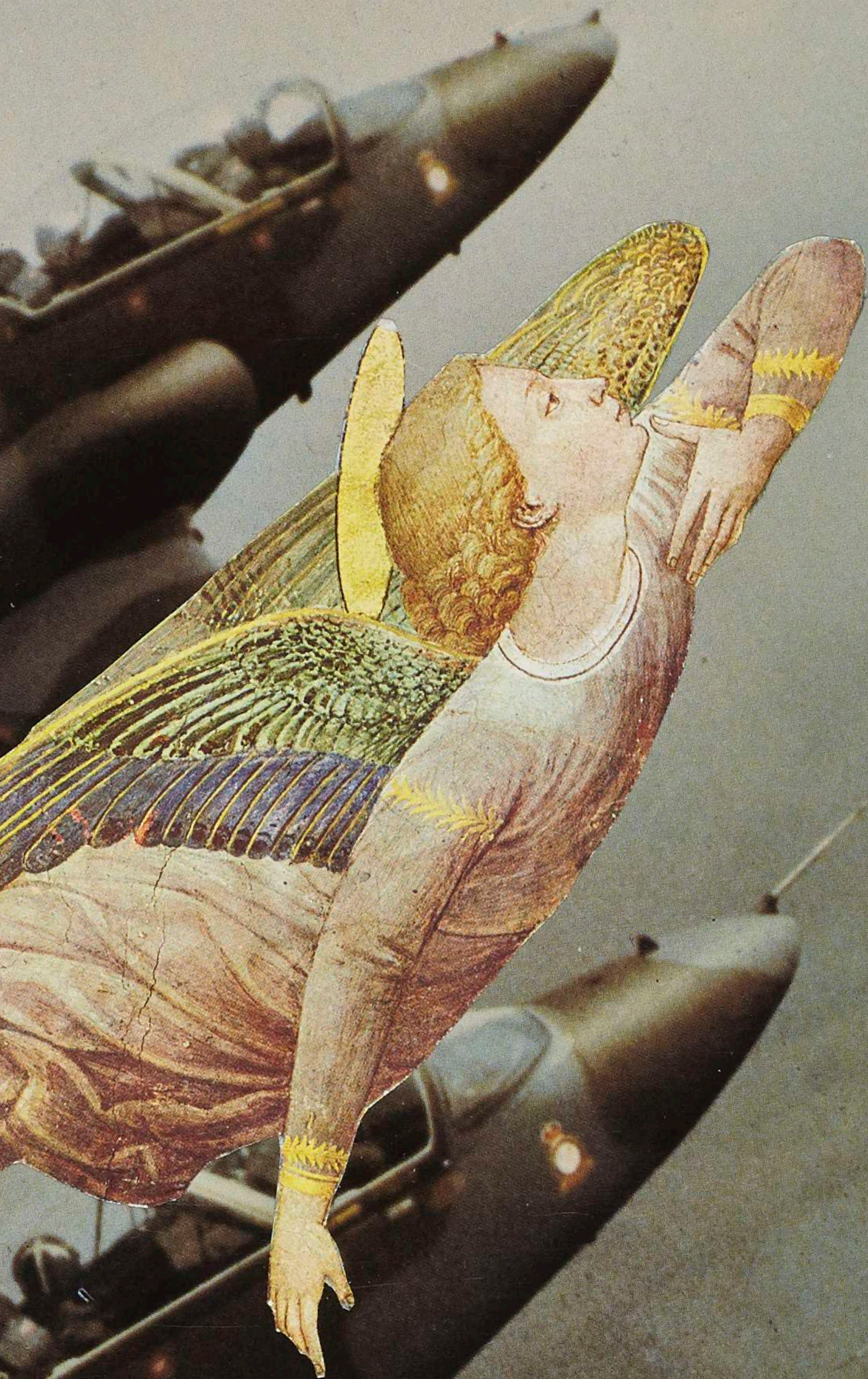


LEÓN FERRARI

Sin Título, de la serie Relectura de la Biblia. Cohetes, Bombas y Aviones de Guerra, 1986

Collage

12.7 x 9.1 in [32.4 x 23.3 cm]





LEÓN FERRARI

Lanzamiento, de la serie Relectura de la Biblia. Cohetes, Bombas y Aviones de Guerra, 1987

Collage

20 x 26 cm [7.8 x 10.2 in]





LEÓN FERRARI

Sin título, de la serie Relectura de la Biblia. Cohetes, Bombas y Aviones, 1987

Collage

27.6 x 20.8 cm [10.8 x 8.1 in]





LEÓN FERRARI
Sin Título, de la serie Relectura de la Biblia. Cohetes, Bombas y Aviones de Guerra, c. 1980
Collage
29.8 x 19.2 cm [11.7 x 7.5 in]



LEÓN FERRARI
Sin Título, de la serie Relectura de la Biblia. Cohetes, Bombas y Aviones de Guerra, c.1980
Collage
Image: 25.3 x 14.3 cm [9.8 x 5.5 in] | Paper: 43.3 x 28 cm [17 x 11 in]

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