

THE ARTIST ROOM

HAUNTED GARDEN

CURATED BY LEONARDO DEVITO

18 January – 17 February 2024

Private view: Wednesday 17 January 2024

Opening times: Tuesday–Friday, 11am–6pm and Saturday, 12–5pm

'Haunted Garden' offers a wide-ranging look at emerging Italian painters trained mainly between Venice and Florence. Living in cities such as these, it is inevitable to be influenced by the rich historical and artistic heritage. I'm not only referring to the abundant museums, churches or monuments, but – more importantly – the mysterious nostalgia and sentimental longing that these cities embody. Streets, squares and social settings allude to stories never experienced or witnessed – both real and imaginary visions hide and settle within their walls. It is this air of mystery which informs the group of paintings on view, with each artist creating new paths and suggestions linked to a physical and at the same time invisible memory of place.

Albeit from very different backgrounds, all of the included artists transpire this inclination towards a certain reminiscence in their work: constructing images that attempt to connect to the memory of both a near present and a remote, imaginary past. The artists source and research their subjects from distant travels to intimate social circles to understand how the past conditions the present. The title of the exhibition, 'Haunted Garden', evokes this: a garden in which a multiplicity of plants and species manage to grow among haunting ghosts and plaintive apparitions all descendants of our past memories.

For instance, themes and iconographies of paintings from fourteenth century Italy are subverted by Luca Ceccherini who tests, to the limit, the relationship between painting and subject.

Michele Cesaratto's work depicts her friends and acquaintances who are portrayed in settings and landscapes familiar to the artist's childhood with a likeness similar to paintings from early-fifteenth century Italy.

Cities are the starting point for Miriam Marafioti who explores the shifting sedimentations of the urban realm: her landscapes investigate the physical memory of specific places.

Delicate details of gestures and objects belonging to Sofia Massalongo's friends assume the appearance of distant memories in her paintings. Simple and indelible.

Alessandro Miotti's practice looks to his childhood memories. Figures are presented as archetypes with simple, ostensible representations that recall the presence of symbols or icons.

In the practice of Oxana Tregubova a sacred and primordial relationship with nature is suggested through a language that is reminiscent of the artist's intimacy and personal memories.

Differently, Francesco Zanatta examines our emotional relationship with vernacular objects; he elaborates on their features to reveal how they can have ambiguous – and perhaps surprising – meanings.

What unites these artists is the distillation of images that ultimately always remains ambiguous. Meaning is never anything explicitly revealed. They are all real visions that try to smoke out something remote: the memory of a gesture, nostalgia of a particular day, or a distant world just barely perceived. We might even lose sight of that thin line between what's real and what's not.

– Leonardo Devito, 2024

NOTES TO EDITORS

Living and working in Turin, Italy, Leonardo Devito's (b.1997, Florence) narrative based painting practice is derived from autobiographical memories that recount moments of intimacy, adolescence, and historical influence.

Leonardo studied at the Academy of Fine Arts of Florence (BFA, 2020), the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna and an MFA in painting at the Albertina Academy of Fine Arts of Turin.

His works range from solemn oil painting, delicate, mythological etchings, to carved terracotta reliefs all possessing a distinctly subtle aesthetic reminiscent of Renaissance painting. Works also adopt a fascination with the Italian landscapes he knows so fondly from his adolescence in Florence to his current residing in Turin. Current personal affairs combine with more historicised influences to culminate narratives dealing with maturation from childhood, adolescence, to adulthood.

With a neutral, earthy palette the works are often allegorised as moments of trauma or even pre-trauma, perhaps reminiscent of psychoanalytic development. The sinister pondering that echoes through each work, a certain awkwardness in freeze-framed compositions, continue to set the tone for Leonardo's practice.

Devito's recent solo exhibitions include *My Favourite Things*, Galleria Acappella, Naples (2023); and *Leonardo Devito*, Era Gallery, Milan (2022). Recent group exhibitions include *After Reminiscence*, Casino Projects, Milan (2024); *Unity Wanted Volume 2*, Street Levels Gallery, Florence (2021); *Urban Art City*, curated by Street Levels Gallery, Civic Art Gallery of Follonica, Follonica; and *XI Biennale di Incisione*, as part of the exhibition *Jean Dubuffet – Mimmo Paladino*, Mac, n, Monsummano Terme, Italy (both 2019).

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