

Adelaide Cioni (1976, Bologna, Italy)

Adelaide Cioni works in a variety of media, and the slippage between language, visual referents and their sources is always present. These necessarily include interconnection of layers of time, historical, present suggesting an implicit inclusion of its durational aspect within the work.

Transcultural imagery and patterns across millennia repeat and echo in artifacts and in architecture. The universality of these patterns hold fascination for Cioni. These patterns and shapes are either organic forms drawn from nature or geometric systems. The motifs are a resource, and they come from ancient sites, museums and botanical gardens such as Kew Gardens in London. *Ab Ovo* is a Latin expression that literally means ‘from the egg’ and indicates the moment ‘from the beginning’, or origin. This is seen as very ancient, the origin of all history and records or traces the evolution of language. In particular, the egg referred to, is the one from which Helen of Troy was born, the egg laid by Leda after the intercourse with Zeus, who had taken on the guise of a swan.

Isabella Ducrot (1931, Naples, Italy)

Isabella Ducrot has lived in Rome for many years. Only beginning her artistic career later in life, her approach is extremely sensitive; the initial moment in the creation process of the works is tactile. Ducrot uses textiles and paper both as an artistic medium and as an artistic thread.

She allows the material to become part of the image and so drains the fabric of its historical content treating it as pure matter. This exposes the materials’ hidden elements and its composition.

Repetition is the subject and primary theme in many of her artworks. For Ducrot, this repetitive element becomes the object of representation.

La Bella Terra repeats and emphasises life’s beauty, of the things, which disappear; nature, love, but also what surrounds us, like a piece of fabric, its colours and shapes. In a poetic and playful way, Ducrot’s work draws our attention to the significance of these subjects. Their existence is as fragile as the works themselves appear to be, but at the same time there is a sense of inherent energy, warmth and joy.

David Kakabadze (1889, Tbilisi, Georgia - 1952, Tbilisi, Georgia)

David Kakabadze was one of the leading Georgian avant-garde painter, graphic artist and scenic designer. A polymath, he was also an art scholar, a cinematographic innovator and an amateur photographer. In 1929, during expeditions to various parts of Georgia, Kakabadze conceived the idea of making a film about the ancient monuments of his native land. He wrote a screenplay, which was approved by Goskineprom (the State Committee of Cinema) in Georgia. His intention was to show Georgia’s monuments, dating back from ancient times through to the 18th century. While writing the script, Kakabadze referred to historical essays and archaeological findings. He was interested not only in architecture, but also in sculpture and painting (mosaics, frescoes and reliefs). Over the course of 300 days, together with his camera crew, he walked across the various provinces of Georgia. The film was constructed as a journey with a camera to the historic places and architectural monuments of Georgia and comprised 1,800 metres of film.

The film’s first screening took place on July 8, 1931. Members of the Soviet regime were present at the screening. According to them, the film did not properly carry out its propaganda function and was therefore unsuitable for mass distribution. The film later disappeared. All that remain are several hundred photographs, fragments of film, digitised images of a large notebook with sketches, and the script. The Georgian public first saw this material in 1983 at an exhibition at the Tbilisi State University. The original film is considered to be lost and only recently, after David Kakabadze Foundation began gathering materials for *PAINTING STONE*, did they discover these negatives (also presumed lost since 1983) which scanned and mounted are presented to the public after many years as a slide show for this exhibition at Villa Lontana.

Lucy McKenzie (1977, Glasgow, UK)

Lucy McKenzie's approach to installation embraces an expansive idea of painting. She utilises hybrid assemblages to combine painting and sculpture by focusing on painting's different ways of functioning. The objects and spaces between them connect through an indexical set of references, applicable to the way the genre of painting's function and its history has been deconstructed through the last century. Increasingly, this exploration has focused on unravelling underlying histories, of cultural appropriation and imperialism.

McKenzie often employs methods and thought processes from the applied arts, exploring them as an alternative history to the dominant narratives of fine art. In her painting practice this is seen in the use of commercial techniques such as trompe l'œil, stenciling and sign writing. Seashells, copper and faux marble (all prized natural materials) are used as stand-ins for cultural value with which to critique conventions of exploitation within contemporary art. In *Shell Lamp*, again, seashells are surrogates, but perhaps suggest something vaguer and more open-ended, like a connection to place, a yearning for somewhere or something.

Anne Minich (1932, Philadelphia, United States)

Anne Minich's highly idiosyncratic, exquisitely constructed works often incorporate religious iconography and employ colloquial humour to explore her preoccupying concerns of gender, sexuality, friendship, and mortality. Much of her practice involves painting and her works have specific haptic and sculptural quality due to their inclusion of found objects such as stones, sticks, shells, and remnants of discarded metal. That use of found material extends to reusing the supports and the frames she has produced by using these as 'ready-mades'.

Minich often works on birch ply allowing formations in the surface of the wood to suggest different designs, letting the material suggest the subject matter. The painting methods are relatively self-taught and are prompted, in part by working in an art supply store, selling faux finishing materials and instructing customers how to use them. She often applies this methodology when developing her work.

Francis Offman (1987, Rwanda, East Africa)

Francis Offman lives and works in Bologna. His canvases are not mounted on stretchers. The irregular shape of the surface reflects his engagement with processes, using scrap materials, such as restaurants' paper place mats and discarded cardboard pulped into a thick medium, used as the base for the coloured and juxtaposed collaged fragments that comprise his work. Offman recycles coffee dregs to give bulk to the surface. The sense mixture holds and absorbs ground pigments, it retains colour and its textural bulk gives an extra dimension. The surfaces take on a somewhat rigid form that contrasts with their appearance. Although essentially abstract in form, his work suggests fragmentary landscapes, and recalls the strong light and colours of Rwanda. The use of coffee refers to its commodification as a primary export from much of Africa and as such it stands both as a memorial and a bittersweet reminder of the effects of colonisation on land, traditions and peoples.

Christopher Page (1984, London, UK)

Christopher Page's analytic approach to painting asks questions about how we look at, or through, surfaces. His canvases and wall-paintings draw on a long history of painting—from ancient Roman frescoes to 20th century Minimalism. In his work Page creates subtle spaces within frames which are not actually frames but paintings, raising doubts about depth, light gradation, reflection of colour and shadow. Often his work is site specific, and this too refers back to painting's function as an integral element of architectural purpose.

Page's paintings open up the space of surface, proposing depths to be entered. He reintroduces cloud as the threshold of a new pictorial space that collapses Renaissance depth and Modernist flatness: like a screensaver, Page's cloud is spatially ambiguous, neither close nor distant. His use of trompe l'œil references paintings' construction of the 'real'.

Delfina Scarpa (1993, Rome, Italy)

Delfina Scarpa's canvases are fragments of landscapes, memories, emotions, filtered by the blurred and dreamlike lens of a colourful world. Her works are built up in layers of different consistencies of paint, some are very thin and some much thicker. They reveal geographies and portraits of landscapes, 'non-places' which seem to be generic. Their shapes and forms are embedded in our cultural memories, seemingly they echo the way landscape evolves into a phantasmic terrain before our eyes. They are the nuanced and evanescent traces of intimate and personal paths. Scarpa spreads layers of acrylic, different varnishes and water to give shape to habitual paths, to the evocative and timeless imagery, without trying to repeat the visible but making the invisible visible.

Mario Schifano (1934, Khoms, Libya - 1998, Rome, Italy)

In 1963 Mario Schifano began the series *Paesaggi Anemici*. These aimed to deconstruct the tradition of landscape painting isolating terrestrial elements, zooming and magnifying them as if looking through the lens of a camera.

This *Paesaggio Anemico* focuses on the sky and the earth, framing and enlarging a single detail above the horizon: a solitary cloud that occupies much of the composition. The landscape is synthesised and reduced, dissolving into pure form. The surface is revealing through painted fragments, leaving both the brushstrokes suspended and the white canvas visible. The landscape becomes a passage (*paesaggio-passaggio*) traced by its perimeter which recalls the window of a car—or a train—or a screen.

Jeffrey Stuker (1979, Colorado, United States)

A central focus of Jeffrey Stuker's work is mimicry—both in nature, where it provides a strategy for the survival of certain species, and in digital imaging, which can manifest hyper-lifelike representations of reality. His practice is concerned with the synthetic characteristics of seemingly organic processes. Stuker creates carefully rendered computer-generated images, planting coded historical, scientific, and industrial references within. These images exist as part simulation and part documentation; their factualness remains elusive or, rather, allegorical.

In *Dupes* (2021) the artist showcases the *Papilio clytia* butterfly, also known as 'common mime', which imitates the markings of the *Euploea core*, exploring the butterfly's mimetic qualities.

For Villa Lontana's iteration, the artist has produced a new set of transparencies made for a Rolleivision 66 medium format slide projector, showing the butterflies both in nature and pinned and labeled as specimens. The images unveil an entirely manufactured process, since both subject and context are wholly computer-generated. This emphasises the role of mimicry as an aesthetic practice which finds parallels in the artifice of making art.

Vivian Suter (1949, Buenos Aires, Argentina)

For over thirty years Vivian Suter has been living and working on a former coffee plantation in the remote village of Panajachel, Guatemala. Painted en plein air, Suter's sprawling abstract paintings capture the pulsating lush garden and the landscapes surrounding it. Her works are exhibited unstretched. Traces of rain, mud, leaves and paw prints add to the organic, lively quality of the paintings which are quietly yet

relentlessly documenting ephemeral moments of energy in nature. These ideas are intensified in the presentation of the works, often overlapping, suspended and moving in the wind Suter's installations capture the ecosystem and spirit of her surroundings. Her work is naturally attuned to our ever-intensifying ecological crisis, often using house paint and fish glue on cheap local fabric, which she then leaves outside for the weather to 'finish off.'