

Paolo Chiasera

*Pollai Volanti & Glory Holes*

Text by Lorenzo Benedetti

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SPS - Via Seneca 4/6



In a large studio inside an ancient abbey in northern France, Paolo Chiasera created a series of works on canvas in which the presence of the body and space become a dominant feature. The studio and the artist are two coordinates present in these large-format paintings that refer to a metaphysical stage that harks back to fifteenth-century Italian painting, yet in the three works in this exhibition, there is no trace of them.

This absence plays on a biographical aspect of the artist himself, having retired some years ago in search of a new artistic vein that would provide a segue from the conceptual elaborations of his work over the past decades.

Themes such as the elaboration process of the work, its metamorphoses and the invisible are always key to his production.



Paolo Chiasera, Pollai Volanti & Glory Holes  
Installation view, SPS Milano

With these three canvases, Chiasera exhibits in Italy after a period of reflection and concentration, during which the artist made a further foray into painting. A synthesis of the works the artist created over recent decades, with a focus on the quality of his paint material. Looking at one of Chiasera's paintings places the observer before a temporal dogma: one that links painting to its origins, to its development and diffusion.

Paolo Chiasera, *Glory hole*, 2024  
oil and egg tempera on canvas  
210 x 160 cm





The three works in this exhibition dialectically highlight the theme of absence. *Glory Hole*, a repainted canvas, affords a glimpse of a helmeted figure in a garden; a hole appears at eye level. Along with the diaphanous presence of the previous portrait, the figure –almost completely removed – displays this detail.

This generates a three-dimensionality of the work and its relationship to space. Of the silhouette, only his gaze remains, piercing the surface. Like a gaze in reverse, the work looks at us from within the painting itself.

Paolo Chiasera, *Glory hole*, 2024 (detail)  
oil and egg tempera on canvas  
210 x 160 cm

In Pollai volanti, a tent suspended in mid-air evokes a transitory space, a passage, a nomadic element. Eggs descend from the tent, offering a clear reference to Piero della Francesca's altarpiece in Montefeltro del Brera and his Constantine's Dream in Arezzo. Eggs are also at the heart of the painting that Chiasera produces with such methodological care.

Paolo Chiasera, *Pollaio Volante*, 2021  
Oil and egg tempera on canvas  
200 × 160 cm





Looking at these canvases means entering a different time generated by ancient pictorial materials. In fact, the choice of colours is closely linked to the early Renaissance period that inspired Chiasera. A philological journey in search of the original colours made by studying reports published by the National Gallery in London during major restoration work, as well as ancient medieval manuscripts written by monks. There is no single book, but several long-lost documents, troves of knowledge. Colours such as azurite obtained from copper residue from bronze smelting; malachite from copper ores; copper resin to provide the same green as Paolo Veronese; bone black, obtained from cooking animal bones for twenty hours, aloe from Mossel Bay South Africa, cinnabar obtained from mercury extracted from Mount Amiata, an ancient dormant volcano. And indeed, sulphur from mercury was one of the main ingredients in alchemy. Lake madder from the roots of the *rubia tinctorum* plant. Poppy oil, walnut oil, linseed oil, egg and dammar, all used as colour binders.

Paolo Chiasera, *Pollai Volanti & Glory Holes*  
Installation view, SPS Milano

The third painting shows a feather 'coming out' of the frame. The colour seems to retrace a gust of wind carrying a feather from the henhouse to the very edge of the image.

Paolo Chiasera, *Pollajo Volante*, 2024  
Oil and egg tempera on canvas  
61 x 48 cm





Paolo Chiasera, *Pollaio Volante*, 2022  
Oil and egg tempera on canvas  
190 × 170 cm



Paolo Chiasera, *Glory hole*, 2024  
Oil and egg tempera on canvas  
210 × 160 cm

Paolo Chiasera, *Glory hole (detail)*, 2024  
Oil and egg tempera on canvas  
210 × 160 cm





Paolo Chiasera, *Pollaio Volante*, 2024  
Oil and egg tempera on canvas  
61 × 48 cm



Paolo Chiasera at MARTa Herford

Paolo Chiasera's multi-disciplinary work involves installation, video, painting, performance, architecture, curating and writing. These mediums often overlap in Chiasera's analysis and staging of collective myths, cultural symbols and icons. Through manifold narratives the artist retraces the interactions between history and power, social groups, and the loss of control. For years Chiasera has addressed the complex relationship which connects people to their role models and traditions, as in the Tupac Project 2007, a monument dedicated to Tupac Amaru Shakur, the Black Panther rapper who died in '96 in a Las Vegas. More recently, while the relationship between the body and architecture has remained central, his practice has focused on the medium of painting in its expanded field of appearance and use.

Solo presentations of Paolo Chiasera at international institutions include Museum of Contemporary Art Sion, Museum d'Iserables, Museum de Lostschental, Museum Olsson, Museum valaisan de la Vigne et du Vin, Valais, Switzerland (2019), Villa Medici Rome, Italy (2016), Vleeshal Center for Contemporary Art, Middelburg, The Netherlands (2014), MAN Museo Arte Nuoro, Nuoro, Italy (2014), SMAK Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent, Belgium (2010), MARTa Herford, Germany (2009), MACRO, Museo Arte Contemporanea Roma, Rome, Italy (2008), MAMBO, Museo d'Arte Moderna Bologna, Bologna Italy (2006), GAM, Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna Torino, Turin, Italy (2002).

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