

# VIN VIN

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## *Madrigale*

Guendalina Cerruti

Cecilia De Nisco

Viola Leddi

Edoardo Manzoni

Group exhibition

Text by Caterina Molteni

Duration: 12 March - 16 April 2022

### *Madrigal: four voices together*

*Madrigal* is a show without a theme, it is an exhibition project in which the works of four Italian artists all born in the 1990s coexist.

In this text, geographic belonging will not be assumed as a possible common element, any question about a presumed shared poetic will be suspended, to speak instead of the singularities of each artist and to enhance their differences.

For each artist a voice was imagined, a description of vocal performance that could somehow resonate with their work by looking to the madrigal, the polyphonic choir that emerged in Italy in the 1300s that found its greatest diffusion throughout Europe during the sixteenth century. The voice will open a short text that links my experience and some questions about the present to an analysis of each work. As the exhibition seems to suggest, writing took shape following the personal conviction of how exciting it is to be guided within a thematic framework by the works and not the other way around, leaving them the freedom to suggest new paths for reflection.

### *Sweet and melodious, at times motionless and even noisy*

I have always thought Guendalina Cerruti's works capable of generating a particular emotional atmosphere. They create a rift and take me back to experiences of my childhood and adolescence, when I was trying to adjust my shyness and hesitation to step into a conversation, forcing a smile and a fake confidence. With Guendalina, I go back to the courtyards of the massive Milanese public schools, amid small groups of children talking to each other, excited and enthusiastic, while wearing their favorite shirts, with shiny braces on their teeth and necklaces of colored beads.

Born and raised in Milan, she has lived for several years in London where, after attending the Royal College of Art, she embarked on her artistic career. Working mainly with sculpture and painting, the artist re-elaborates objects and imaginaries related to the most intimate everyday life of each of us,

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opening up to a reflection on the representation of the self and on self-narrative strategies. Faced with a trans-media society that demands a highly detailed construction of personal identity, Guendalina seems to play with the tools of self-narration, which exasperates, letting insecurities, fragility, as well as great passions and feelings leak out.

Her characters, in the form of sculptures or paintings dressed in wigs, inhabit an imaginary metaverse in which they abandon human features to transform into new entities. Protagonists of a different narrative device, they reveal those expectations and desires that resist a homogeneous and uniform collective choreography. They are avatars of feelings, *sweet and melodious, at times immobile and even noisy.*

*Brutus*, 2022, looks like a pet trapped in the features of a toy dog. Like a contemporary Pinocchio, it is built by the artist in papier mache, dressed in a sweatshirt—also fictitious—hand-painted, deliberately with an almost amateurish rendering, as if to underline the game of imaginative construction in which all are committed to defining themselves. The animal's muzzle, on the other hand is realistic and facing upwards, and appears under glass: like a trapped emotion, it seeks space in this meticulous fabrication of the self.

## *Opaque and ironic*

What would happen if we put aside the figurative priority in painting for a moment? What if we suspend the vision of new worlds, of other creatures or interrupt the chronicle commitment of our days? Perhaps the surface would become more opaque and the pictorial artifice would accompany us in the fabric of the construction of an image, just a step away from figurative construction.

Painting is one of the tools in our possession to think about an image right from its core, to put our hands on possible re-signification strategies that pass from the form even before the conceptual frame.

In Cecilia De Nisco's most recent works, the vision of the image is rarefied, as if filtered by an opaque film that softens the grain of the main subject or part of it. The artist re-elaborates an archive of personal, analog and digital images, from which she isolates details and alters colors, trying to distance herself from naturalistic or autobiographical references. De Nisco tells us, "The more the lyrical element of the image is purified and vanishes, the more the frivolous side can emerge." The manipulation of the image thus tends to the loss of a realistic point of view and a dominant emotional timbre, to suggest a more inclusive dimension, according to the artist: an irony that arises from superfluous detail.

The paintings often appear as very close-ups, following the procedure visible in *Soft Corn*, 2022, or *L'insaziabile la notte* [The insatiable night], 2021, in which the subjects are cut out, isolating—in this case—glances. By decontextualizing the detail, the image becomes a pretext to test the possibility of painting to generate tension. The painted canvas intrudes our universe of images, proposing misunderstanding as a source of curiosity and estrangement as the result of the vision.

## *Graceful, acute, at times threatening*

My first meeting with Viola Leddi dates back to about four years ago. I had visited her studio to invite her to a group exhibition which was to open a few months later in Rome in a small gallery near the park at Villa Ada. I was

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impressed with some ceramic works. I remember a white jug, whose rounded and paunchy shape and curved handle had been used to outline the body of a creature with feline features, probably a sphinx, which alternated with a floral decoration reduced to simple lines. As in popular or ancient ceramics, these vessels, used for offering gestures and relationship vectors (the work is entitled *Sphinxie makes new friends*, 2017), are reworked in mimesis with animals (roosters, fish, birds) or to bring back stories and tales about themselves.

The mimesis process seems to be at the center of the work *I Dreamed of A Dark Night*, 2016, a series of six glazed ceramic tiles. Some of them show silhouettes of female bodies, of which legs, bellies and pubes are visible, arranged in harmony together with other natural shapes and simple graphic signs. The pose, a trapping condition typical of the female subject in Western historical-artistic representations, becomes form between forms: an evident 'construction' of the body on the one hand, while on the other, as in dance, it presents itself as a liberating transformation found in natural mimesis as the possibility of freeing oneself from centuries of reification and desiring eyes. Finally, the work refers to a nocturnal dimension, opening to dreams as the realm in which the characters are rarefied in a fusion of foreground and background, creating perceptual jumps and formal alterations in scenography.

The night frames *M*, 2022, a painting inspired by medieval and renaissance miniatures, in which the subject—a metaphysical still life—develops along a parchment unrolled and burned at the edges. The work takes up some details of Albrecht Dürer's *Melancholia I*, such as the compass resting on the surface, the typeface of the "M," but it also reworks the emotional atmosphere, charging it with an enigmatic suspense.

As in many of the artist's works, the reading of the painting becomes an operation in decoding quotations, continuous references to a history of art that becomes living material to be cut and glued (the cutting motif was already present in the *Creature adorabili* [Adorable creatures] series, 2019, here instead some elements are actually 'glued') as if to weaken the dynamics of power that support the representation of a subject in a specific historical period.

## *Sensual and vibrant, cutting and broken*

Bird calls are small objects of different shape and make, they have the structure of whistles, some are simple to blow into, while others that more elaborate are sewn to a small leather bag, to be pressed at precise intervals. They are tools of rare beauty, used above all in hunting to approach the prey, seducing it with its own language.

It is precisely this system of seduction that fascinates Edoardo Manzoni, who has long been engaged in research about the rural world and in particular about hunting—its tools and its visual imagery. A knowledge developed from direct experience, in an atmosphere—I imagine—similar to when you open a creaking barn door and find tools, equipment and old dusty magazines.

Observing this human 'technology' leads us to a direct relationship with the animal, a primitive interspecies relationship, aimed at trapping, which modifies its shape according to the prey, following a careful and calibrated ethological knowledge: a model relationship between being human and animal, between artifice and the natural world.

As an artist, Manzoni has observed above all the aesthetic-visual language of this world, from the shapes of traps and calls, to photographic

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documentation of hunting itself. The latter is the subject reworked in the series *Senza titolo (scena)* [Untitled (scene)], 2021-2022, in which images from magazines and sectorial encyclopedias, close-ups of birds of different species and of hunting dogs in proud and majestic poses are selected. In the work, the main subject is digitally processed and removed, leaving the surrounding landscape unchanged. Printed on a plain or mirrored plexiglass surface, the series stages a disappearance: where the animal gets lost in a void, we can catch a reflection of the position of the human being. Latent, hidden behind a sound, infrared cameras or through the training of other creatures, inevitably reaching the prey.

Caterina Molteni

**Guendalina Cerruti** (b. 1992, Milan, IT) completed her postgraduate in 2017 at the Royal College of Art, London. Her recent solo presentations include: *People Watching*, New Low (Los Angeles, 2022), *Wasted Dreams*, Public Gallery (London, 2021) and *Love You Bye*, Studiolo (Milan, 2018). She has participated in group exhibitions at Ordet (Milan, 2021); Rolando Anselmi Galerie (Atina, 2020); Greengrassi (London, 2019); MAMBO - Museum of Modern Art Bologna (Bologna, 2018).

**Cecilia de Nisco** (b. 1997, Parma, IT), studied at the Academy of Fine Arts, Urbino. She has been part of group exhibitions at Pescheria, Contemporary Visual Arts Center and TAM Center, Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro.

**Viola Leddi** (b. 1993, Milan, IT), lives and works between Milan and Geneva. She studied at the Brera Academy and is currently enrolled in the Work.master at HEAD - Genève. Her work has been featured on Flash Art Italia and Mousse. She is also co-founder of Altalena, a research project active since 2017.

**Edoardo Manzoni** (b. 1993, Crema, IT) lives and works in Milano, Italy. His works have been exhibited in various venues including: PAV, Turin; The Address, Brescia; State Of, Milan; Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como; Triennale, Milan; Sonnenstube, Lugano; Fondazione Pini, Milano. Since 2017 he is a member of Altalena, an independent curatorial project. In 2018 Edoardo founded Residenza La Fornace.