

GIANGIACOMO ROSSETTI  
APRIL 19 - JULY 1, 2023  
OPENING APRIL 19, 2023 5-8PM

The Power Station is pleased to present *Giangiacomo Rossetti*, the artist's first institutional exhibition in the United States featuring work from 2016 to the present. Rossetti (b. 1989, Milan) lives and works in New York.

Rather than a survey, Rossetti imagines the exhibition as “a remix or a mash-up.” For the occasion he has invited the architect Alessandro Bava (and studio partner, Fabrizio Ballabio) with whom he previously collaborated to create a large-scale intervention for the industrial space of the Power Station: a thin blue wall made of wool cloth that splits the space in two.

Rossetti's work outlines the implications of feverishly looking at, studying, and absorbing painting, while retracing the imprint it makes consciously and subconsciously on his production. Borrowing from Realism, High Renaissance, Mannerism, and Futurism, Rossetti makes use of style and painterly tropes to filter the compositional strategies in his own work. This impulse, uniquely woven through the fabric of Western art history, entangles subjects taken directly from the artist's personal life and surrounding orbit—sometimes, the subject is the artist himself.

Rossetti's technique can vary considerably from one painting to the next, as if reworking or sampling from an historical tableaux. The friction in his work is realized at the breaking point of a weighty art historical precedent. This valence of tradition and its visual residues shape the symbolic and psychic contours of his painting. It's an effort that makes productive use of struggle, holding out for the pleasure of experimentation—an elusive ebullience—against the equally forceful seduction of a virtuosic past.

*Crepuscular Harvest*, 2019, borrows from the composition of Bronzino's fresco altarpiece in the Chapel of Eleonora da Toledo in the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (1540–1545). Among several themes represented in the immersive multi-panel work, the scene of the gathering of Manna from heaven is loosely quoted by Rossetti. A cherubic central figure shouldering an orange amphora is the primary focus. Rossetti's smaller panel also reduces the composition to its figures, abandoning the original's classical raiments and accoutrements to depict a group of vicenarian vintners that he met at his neighborhood shop in Brooklyn shortly after moving to America. The characters have lost their religious attributes, but their graceful, heavenward posture suggests escape into a delirious fugue, the euphoria of abundance, and the return to nature.

Another chance meeting instigated a recent body of work exhibited in São Paulo at Mendes Wood DM. After a friend introduced Rossetti to a couple in their early twenties from Tbilisi, the recent New York residents became perfect models for *Mysteries of America*, *Everyone* has their own strange ideas, and *Variations in Pink and Blue* (all 2022). Rossetti describes the pair as full of life, ripe with potential, and completely open to the possibilities of what may come. This latency prompted Rossetti to articulate a set of realistic and fantastical scenes elaborating dreams for their future. “What I portray is my fantasy,” he insists, “the characters are close to the real ones but don't exist in this world.”

Rossetti's self-portraits register a tension absent in his works with external subjects. Painting himself in vulnerable states, these pictures bring to mind the psychologically charged self-portraits of Gustave Courbet from the 1840s. Here, Courbet assumes a range of personae, posing as a musician, a wounded lover, and most dramatically, as a man driven to the edge of sanity in *Le Désespéré* (1843–1845) and *Le Fou de peur* (1844). *Through a Thin Wall*, 2021, depicts Rossetti stepping out from a slender black void onto a colorfully patterned tiled floor. The sartorial figure is dressed in a suit jacket and leather shoes, though his downward gaze expresses uncertainty and unknowing. With palms down, his open hands appear to steady the atmosphere as he walks into yet unfamiliar space.

*Untitled after Balla's Scena spirituale, uomo e donna nel fluido compenetrato di luce*, 2018, is an approximation of the Italian Futurist Giacomo Balla's *Scena spirituale (uomo e donna nel fluido*

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*compenetrato di luce*), c. 1925–30. Energetic movement is captured in a radial pinwheel of pure color, emanating from a point at which Rossetti replaces the head of Balla’s figure with his own. In translation, the work’s title: “Spiritual Scene (man and woman in the fluid penetrated by light)” names an intense metaphysical experience otherwise left open to interpretation.

Rossetti’s paintings often avoid precise meaning. They participate in the same vicissitudes as their subjects, casting social attachments and relationships into an anachronistic push and pull between the past and present. They reference known visual and artistic forms while generating new ones. But there are also intimations and counter-proposals to throw things off-balance, though on close inspection these deviations, too, seem to evoke a broader schema that subtends them--like the air that defines itself in smoke or a new saying made from old words.

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Recent solo exhibitions include Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo (2022); Galleria Federico Vavassori, Milan (2021, 2017); Fiorucci Art Trust, London (2021); Greene Naftali, New York (2020); Mendes Wood DM, Brussels (2019); Riverside, Bern (2018); Warm, São Paulo (2016); and GRGLT, Turin (2015). Notable group exhibitions include Drawing Together, 201 Exquisite Corpses, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Museum Im Ballpark Kriens (2022); Castello di Rivoli Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli (2022); Aspen Art Museum (2020); Stuart Shave Modern Art, London (2020); Greene Naftali, New York (2019); Braunsfelder Family Collection, Cologne (2018); and the MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles (2017).

The Power Station would like to give a special thank you to Nicoletta Fiorucci and Manteco S.p.A. for their assistance in making the exhibition possible.

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