

Dossier

Grappling with Gestures, the Gaze Wanders

Gizela Mickiewicz
Alessandro Teoldi

21 June – 16 September 2023
Curated by Giovanna Manzotti

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Opening Hours
Monday - Friday
3.30pm – 7.30pm
Saturday by appointment

Renata Fabbri

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Renata Fabbri is pleased to announce *Grappling with Gestures, the Gaze Wanders*, the two-person exhibition by Gizela Mickiewicz and Alessandro Teoldi articulated across the gallery's main floor. The project brings together a selection of pre-existing works, along with new productions, in the intention, for the first time, to compare the practices of these two artists who – through the use of heterogeneous languages and visual vocabularies – both investigate the concepts of intimacy, memory and bodily tension, shifting between figurative and abstract approaches.

Teoldi's textile compositions, made largely from fragments of airline blankets (often combined with cotton, linen and other materials), are animated by silhouettes caught in the act of hiding and seeking in situations of physical contact, shyness or desire: that moment of 'quasi'-suspension that invites the onlooker to retrace connections and imagine possible ties. Also alluding to the human figure and the plasticity of meanings the latter may carry, Mickiewicz's sculptural production explores bodily orientation in the world and the manifold ways inner experiences may be reflected in gesture and movement. Her work also emphasises the role negative and empty spaces establish within memory, often conceived as cognitive tools to mentally 'complete' an abstract form.

Although distinctive in their languages, the works on view highlight a dialogue marked by formal assonances and divergences, transitional forms and materiality, seeking to give tangible expression to the ephemeral conditions that recur with a certain repetitiveness in our daily lives. As the title suggests, the project points out the rhythmic nature of the gaze, which, observing the gestures and potential actions crystallised on the surfaces of the works, cannot help but wander, becoming an accomplice to the evocation of shared memories and emotional spheres that lead to *other* places.

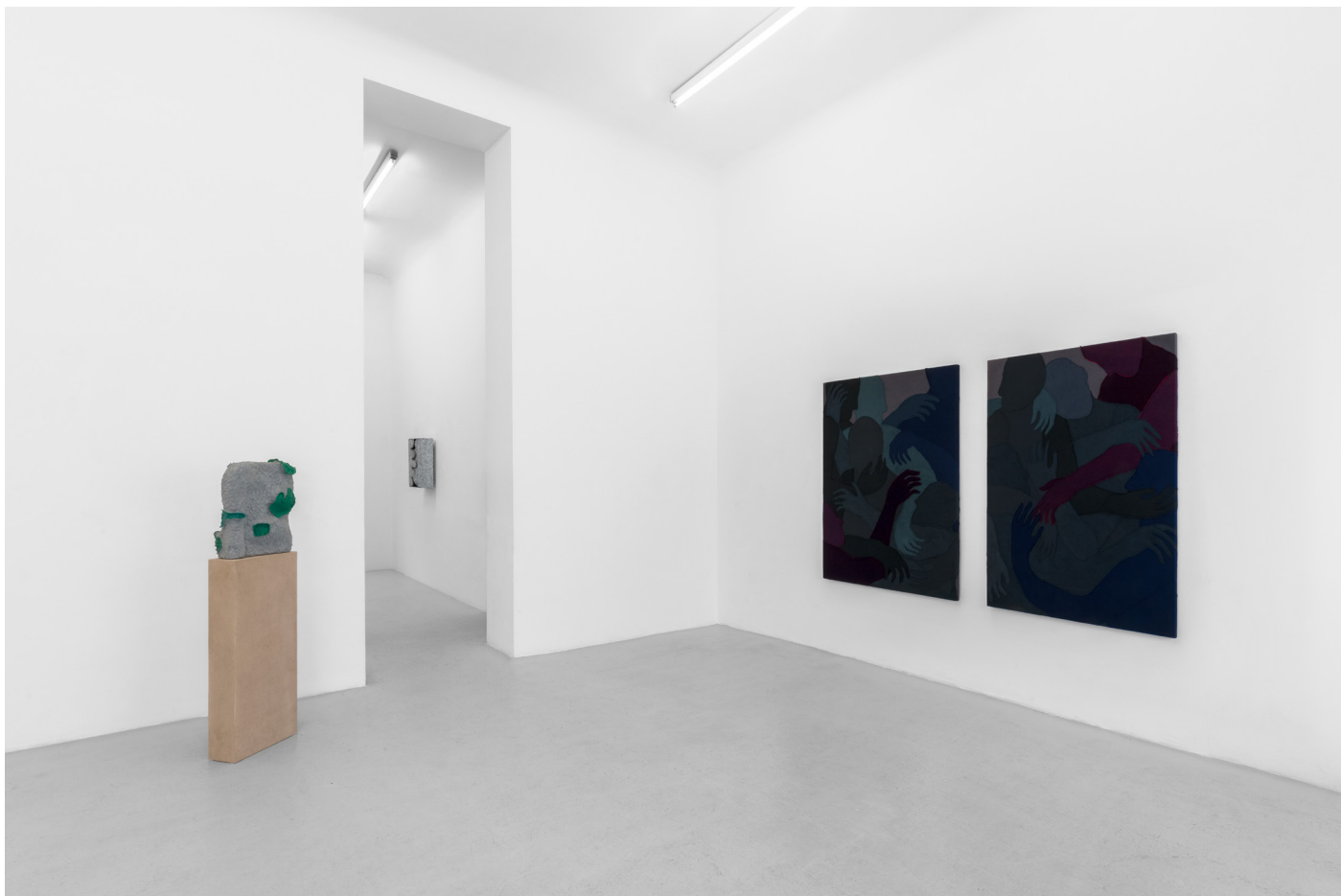
Gizela Mickiewicz (b. 1984, Poland) lives and works in Warsaw. She received an MFA from the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań, Poland. Solo shows include: L21, Palma de Mallorca (2023); Stereo, Warsaw (2022, 2020, 2017, 2015 and, 2011); Lucas Hirsch, Dusseldorf (2017); Arsenal, Białystok (2016); Frutta, Rome (2013) and, BWA Zielona Góra (2013). Group exhibitions include: Lovay Fine Arts, Geneva (2023); ASP Gallery, Kraków (2023); Pamoja Foundation, Warsaw (2023); Museum of Textiles, Łódź (2022); ECHO Cologne (2022); Art Encounters Biennial, Public Transport Museum, Timisoara (2021); Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne (2022); CAC, Vilnius (2020); Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Warsaw (2019); BOZAR, Brussels (2018); Bureau, New York (2015); Bunkier Sztuki, Cracow (2015); Kunsthalle Bratislava (2015) and Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (2014). Mickiewicz completed a residency at Gasworks, London (2014) and Triangle, New York (2016). She was shortlisted for the VIEWS – Deutsche Bank Award (2019).

Alessandro Teoldi is a New York-based artist born in Milan, Italy in 1987. He received his MFA from ICP-Bard College, New York and a BA in Photography from Istituto Europeo di Design, Milan. His work has been exhibited in public and private spaces. Solo shows include: Capsule, Shanghai (2023 and 2021); Marinaro, New York (2022 and 2020); Suprainfinit Gallery, Bucharest (2018); Viasaterna, Milan (2018); The Cabin, Los Angeles (2018) and 11 Rivington, New York (2017). His collective projects include: Taymour Grahne Projects, London (2022); FLAG Art Foundation, New York (2021); Magazzino Italian Art, Cold Springs, New York (2020); Klaus von Nichtssagend, New York (2017); The Camera Club of New York (2016) and International Center of Photography, New York (2013). He was one of the 2018 residents at La Brea Artist Residency, Los Angeles, CA and a 2015 Workspace Baxter St resident at the Camera Club in New York.

Installation views



Grappling the Gestures, the Gaze Wanders, 2023.
Installation views at Renata Fabbri, Milan. Ph. Mattia Mognetti



Grappling the Gestures, the Gaze Wanders, 2023.
Installation views at Renata Fabbri, Milan. Ph. Mattia Mognetti



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Exhibited works



Gizela Mickiewicz, *Gestures from afar*, 2021
Polymorph plastic, perlite, pigment, 70 x 165 x 62 cm
Courtesy the artist and Galeria Stereo, Warsaw

In a posture resembling a resting body, an unnaturally elongated arm meanders across the gallery floor, tangled into a position of caring or falling. At its end, a hand evokes an actual gesture or an imaginative one, probably performed from afar, as the title suggests. Captured as if in a specific series of frozen movements, the tubular sections (or multiple arms) of this sculpture toy with the notions of emptiness and dynamism, constantly grappling with the idea of emotional tension and its release. For Mickiewicz, the bodies are in fact signifiers of affective needs: they become a non-verbal message, a symbol whose forms and materials contain and convey thoughts, experiences, intentions, memories and relationships, prolonging over time and space the gesture they express and becoming its carrier. Like in another work on view entitled *Traces of People*, polymorph plastic is the dominant material of this work. The properties of this matter, which can easily be heated, liquefied, modelled, transformed and set in a given form – “like a gesture that appears, fades away and transforms into another,” says Mickiewicz – allow the artist to give the impression that both form and materiality harmonise with the same content.



Gizela Mickiewicz, *Traces of people*, 2022
Polymorph plastic, pigment, cellulose, styrodur, glue, 52 x 36 x 20 cm
Courtesy the artist and Galeria Stereo, Warsaw
Image: courtesy Galeria Stereo, Warsaw

The sphere of possible gestures that connote this torso-shaped sculpture are reminiscent of a series of imprints that nourish a narrative framework around the work. By imaginatively 'inviting' the viewer by placing a hand (or part of it) in the traces on the surface – or simply staring at them – *Traces of People* evokes a series of hints as places for a possible encounter, conveying a sense of caring, sensuality, interaction and haptic expectation. Emphasising the materiality of the marks and their ability to carry plasticity of meaning, the artist "draws a kind of map of the zones of bodily relations and indicates their intimate or public affiliation." The body is meant as a translator, a carrier and a receiver at the same time, both in intimate and interpersonal spheres. Like *Gestures from Afar*, this sculpture crystallises a wandering approach floating between figuration and abstraction, and vice-versa, a posture that deprives the work of literality, once again giving "the impression that both the clear form and the magma-like, ambiguous matter belong to similar realms."



Gizela Mickiewicz, *Traces of people*, 2022 (detail). Ph. Mattia Mognetti



Gizela Mickiewicz, *The Shape of Doubt*, 2023
Felt, aluminium, wadding, thread, 38 x 51 x 44 cm
Courtesy the artist and Galeria Stereo, Warsaw

“Memories are usually perceived as constant and permanent, but they are instead dynamically changing forms, fragile and error-prone. Far from being a verbatim record of the past, memory is rather a reconstructive process full of distortions and inaccuracies,” explains Mickiewicz. In these newly commissioned works, the artist explores the role of memory and the capacities of the gaze in their attempt (and ability) to reimagine forms from a negative space, re-examining the mental and physical possibility of a shape emerging and being completed. Like in language, the viewer is confronted with a riddle in a sculptural structure, in which irregular oval outlines and precarious shapes seek each other and intertwine. Like the gaps in memory, their form remains suspended in a state of constant updating, decomposing and recomposing.



Gizela Mickiewicz, *Repetition Paths*, 2023
Felt, steel, wadding, 67 x 50 x 54 cm
Courtesy the artist and Galeria Stereo, Warsaw

The ovals and the shapes collapse into each other, above and below, finding a support in touching and modelling each other like a chain or a path. The appearance and the interpretation of *Repetition Paths* and *The Shape of Doubt* depend on the angle from which they are viewed and the surrounding circumstances. They reveal different perspectives of the same face: there is no front, back or sides, no beginning and no end. There is no hierarchy of sightlines. What is triggered is a 'disintegration of the gaze', the experience of a reconstructive process more related to the mind than to the eye. The gaze wanders, as do the eye and the mind.



Gizela Mickiewicz, *Blocking the View*, 2023
Aluminium steel, cellulose, adhesive mortar, pigment,
paint, glue, graphite, 59 x 45 x 25 cm
Courtesy the artist and Galeria Stereo, Warsaw

The interaction between a more hidden and a more visible part shifting and stretching between figuration and abstraction, like in the two felt sculptures, is also the thrust of another piece conceived specifically in dialogue with Teoldi's work. In a fairly regular-shaped wall-mounted sculpture titled *Blocking the View* and produced with a material treatment similar to that of *Traces of People* (but without using polymorph plastic), the artist reproduces a series of forms whose 'matrices' are repeated in the interplay between large fingers (or portions of bodies) that meet, combine and incorporate into the surface. Similar to a rigid torso seen from the back and formally 'completed' by two hands reaching out to each other, this work opens up to an emotional space so as to re-engage with a forgotten physicality.



Alessandro Teoldi, *Untitled (United, Austrian Airlines, Emirates and American Airlines)*, 2019, inflight airline blankets, 152.4 x 121.9 cm (left) | *Untitled (Northwest Airlines, Austrian Airlines, Avianca, Emirates and American Airlines)*, 2019, inflight airline blankets, 152.4 x 121.9 cm (right).
Courtesy the artist and Marinaro, New York

Alessandro Teoldi's work explores the intimacy of the domestic environment and interpersonal relationships, the sense of belonging and detachment, but also the memory of private and collective experiences, arising from the encounter with objects, forms and specific materials. Either isolated or grouped figures, tangles of hands, arms, backs and glimpses of natural elements are the artist's main subjects, often yielded in formal terms midway between figuration and abstraction, in a moment of 'quasi'-suspension. In the two textile collages *Untitled (United, Austrian Airlines, Emirates and American Airlines)* and *Untitled (Northwest Airlines, Austrian Airlines, Avianca, Emirates and American Airlines)*, purple, blue and grey close-ups of intertwined portions of bodies fill the space in an ideally endless rhythmic sequence of gestures, echoing the dynamism of Mickiewicz's sculpture *Gestures from Afar*. Teoldi creates these compositions by cutting out and sewing together fragments of inflight airplane blankets – ones he found himself, bought online or which were collected by friends and acquaintances during flights. By selecting and using a number of international new and used covers, Teoldi's visual vocabulary becomes hybrid and layered both formally (he cuts, joins, overlaps and sews), spatially and temporally.



Alessandro Teoldi, *Untitled (Alitalia, Qantas, Iberia, Delta, Air France)*, 2019, in-flight airline blankets, 152.4 x 213.4 cm
Courtesy the artist and Marinaro, New York

By wrapping together different stories and bodies, these blankets redefine and organise spaces and relationships within specific frameworks, becoming meta-objects, literally passing from hand to hand between passengers, and triggering a chain of emotional, bodily and postural traces. Caught in the act of showing and hiding, seeking and finding themselves in situations of physical contact, shyness or desire, these silhouettes converse, touch and caress each other, drawing a subtle and often poetic connection that invites the onlooker to retrace relationships and imagine possible ties and gestures. “What body am I now in the arms of?”, one of these figures might ask. Teoldi’s work, created in various scales and using humble yet highly evocative materials, thus seeks to make permanent what is usually transient, such as touches, embraces and whispers. In *Untitled (Alitalia, Qantas, Iberia, Delta, Air Frances)* a head is held by two hands in various shades of red and orange that outline a kind of circular movement, toying with the notion of dynamism and almost dissolving the levels of interpretation of the image. In the centre, a portion of the body, perhaps a torso, seems to merge into a single embrace, suggesting contact between the various parts. As in Mickiewicz’s felt works, the form remains suspended in a constant state of updating, recomposing before our eyes.



Alessandro Teoldi, *Dietro*, 2023
Fabric and watercolor, 91.4 x 121.9 cm
Courtesy the artist and Marinaro, New York

Two figures portrayed from behind embrace and hold each other. Their gesture is simple, sincere and genuine. For this work, Teoldi experimented the use of fabric (canvas and wool) treated with watercolour, introducing painting technique into his working process. Thinking of Mickiewicz's work *Blocking the View* or *Traces of People*, the backs and torsos of these figures can but evoke an interaction between the parts, their physicality – desired, needed or simply occurring by chance – and the space between them, here revealed by the strip of brown fabric that at the same time connects and separates them from a longer-lasting encounter.



Alessandro Teoldi, *Untitled (Emirates and Air France)*, 2023
Inflight blankets, cotton and linen, 40.6 x 50.8 cm
Courtesy the artist and Marinaro, New York

This work is revealed to the eye as a delicate composition derived from carefully combined materials: inflight blankets, cotton and linen. Continuing his exploration of the relationship between figuration and abstraction, the visual vocabulary used by the artist in *Untitled (Emirates and Air France)* abandons the close-ups and intertwined bodies of the earlier larger blanket collages in favour of a more linear and smaller composition, in which whole figures embrace in sleep, are lost in thought or tangled in dances of love or struggle, opening up the space to multiple perspectives. Like in previous works, these silhouettes in shades of grey and beige deal with the ongoing investigation of the relationship with the other and the desire for togetherness and community, proposing the encounter as a form of caring and mutual sharing.

Biographies

Gizela Mickiewicz

b. 1984, Poland

Lives and works in Warsaw

Selected solo exhibitions

- 2023 *The Right To Be Forgotten*, L21 Gallery, Palma, Es
- 2022 *Interior Blackout*, Stereo, Warsaw, PL
Art Basel Statements, w/ Stereo, Basel, CH
- 2020 *Internal Lighting*, Stereo, Warsaw, PL
- 2017 *The Decay of a Day*, Karlin Studio, Prague, CZ
Almost Together, Almost Alone, Lucas Hirsch, Dusseldorf, DE
To Give, to Take Back, to Leave a Sense of Lack, Stereo, Warsaw, PL
solo presentation (w/ Stereo), LISTE Art Fair, Basel, CH
- 2016 *The Next Now*, Galeria Arsenal, Białystok, PL
Falling Before a Fall, Artists Colony, Gdansk, PL
The Time of Entry, DSP Warsaw, PL
- 2015 *Mass and Mood*, Stereo, Warsaw, PL
Backs and Backgrounds, BWA Katowice, PL
- 2014 *Background Time*, Frieze Art Fair, London, GB
Whole Segment, ROD, Warsaw, PL
- 2013 *Persistent Front*, Frutta, Rome, IT
The Show of Strenght, BWA Zielona Gora, PL
- 2011 *Hauled Bolt*, Stereo, Poznan, PL

Selected group exhibitions

- 2023 *I Tried Being Myself, I Ended Being Others*, Lovay Fine Arts, Geneva, CH
Tender Revolution, Metropolitan, Warsaw, PL
Warsaw-Kin-Berlin, Milchhof Pavillon, Berlin, DE
Gypsum Flesh Story, ASP Gallery, Krakow, PL
Domestication, Busk City Gallery, Busko-Zdrój, PL
- 2022 *Broken Piñata*, L21 Gallery, Palma, ES
Material Fatigue, 17th International Triennial of Tapestry, The Museum of Textiles, Lodz, PL
New Memories, Echo, Cologne, DE
Shirt Skirt Skin Kin, Center for Contemporary Arts, Prague, CZ
Art HERstory - Female Perspectives in the European Parliament's Contemporary Art Collection, Parlamentarium, Brussels, BE
- 2021 *How to Be Together*, Art Encounters Biennial, Timisoara, RO
Guilty Curtain, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, DE
From A to Z and Back Again, Stereo, Warsaw, PL
Ghosts and Bones, Stereo, Warsaw, PL
Not Fair, Fort Mokotów, Warsaw, PL
- 2020 *Head With Many Thoughts*, CAC, Vilnius, LT
The Spirit of Nature and Other Fairy Tales, Silesian Museum, Katowice, PL
- 2019 *IEWS - Deutsche Bank Prize*, Zachęta - National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, PL
Friend of a Friend Prague, SVIT, Prague, CZ
Monumentomania, 11th Warsaw Under Construction Festival, Zodiak
Pavilion of Architecture, Warsaw, PL
Friend of a Friend Warsaw, Stereo, Warsaw, PL
Dreams of Others, INNI Project, Prague, CZ
- 2018 *Orient, Kim?*, Riga, LV
Canti Espositi, Contemporary Art Gallery, Opole, PL

- 2017 *Orient*, BOZAR, Brussels, BE
It Is As You Think It Is, Dom umenia, Brno, CZ
Temporary Store-room – Sculpture: Case Study 1, Plato Ostrava, CZ
Equators to Bi-Polar, Sereo, Warsaw, PL
Lea Porsager, Gizela Mickiewicz, Nicola Marin, Rolando Anselmi, Berlin, DE
It Is As You Think It Is, Galeria Arsenal, Bialystok, PL
The Volume of Effort, Polonez, Poznan, PL
Beyond the Desk, PKiN, Warsaw, PL
- 2016 *XII Baltic Triennale, Kim?*, Riga, LV
Szalona Galeria, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, PL
How rare is rare, project at fifteen, Tel Awiw, IL
Lives and Works, Zona Sztuki Aktualnej, Szczecin, PL
Clean music, Kunstbunker, Norymberga, DE
January blues, Frutta, Rome, IT
- 2015 *Feet, 4 Walls & Head*, Bureau Gallery, Nowy York, USA
Gizela Mickiewicz & Jaromir Novotny, GGM, Gdansk, PL
XII Baltic Triennial, CAC, Vilno, LT
Keep Both Feet on the Ground, BWA, Tarnow, PL
Keep Both Feet on the Ground, BWA, Katowice, PL
Minimal Forms of Reality, Bunker of Art, Krakow, PL
Procedures For the Head, Kunsthalle Bratislava, SK
- 2014 *What You Can See. Polish Art Today*, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, PL
- 2013 *Things in Common*, Art Stations Foundation, Poznan, PL
The New Morals, Stereo, Warsaw, PL
- 2012 *Makeshift*, BWA, Katowice, PL
Makeshift, Arsenal Gallery, Poznan, PL
The Museum Problem, Frutta Gallery, Rome, IT
- 2011 *6 Triennale of Youth*, The Centre of Polish Sculpture, Oronsko, PL
Wind in my heart dust in my head, UAM Villa, Poznan, PL
- 2010 *Every Step is Moving Me Up*, Stereo, Poznan, PL
Gestures, BWA Bielsko-Biala, PL
- 2009 *Samsung Art Master 6*, CCA Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, PL

Residencies

- 2017 Futura, Prague
2016 Triangle, New York
2014 Gasworks, London

Alessandro Teoldi

b. 1987, Milan

Lives and works in New York

Education

2013 MFA Photographic Studies, Bard College – ICP, New York
2009 BFA Photography, IED – Istituto Europeo di Design, Milan

Solo exhibitions

2023 *Looking Back*, Capsule Shanghai, Shanghai, China (upcoming)
Variazioni, Acappella, Naples, Italy
2022 *Duet*, Marinaro, New York, NY
2021 *Sole negli Occhi*, Capsule Shanghai, Shanghai, China
Venti Giorni, Acappella, Naples, Italy
2020 *The Armory Show*, New York, NY
Your Distant Voices, Marinaro, New York, NY
2018 *Rare Finds*, The Cabin, Los Angeles, CA
In Parts, Suprainfinit Gallery, Bucharest, Romania
Alessandro Teoldi and Marion Baruch, Viasaterna, Milano
2017 *New Conditions*, 11R, New York, NY
2016 *Far From Now*, Baxter St at The Camera Club of New York, New York, NY

Group exhibitions

2023 *Unrequited Love*, Nathalie Karg Gallery, New York, NY
Grappling with Gestures, the Gaze Wanders, with Gizela Mickiewicz
curated by Giovanna Manzotti, Renata Fabbri, Milano
2022 *Among Flowers*, TURN Gallery, New York, NY
Still Going curated by Ridley Howard and Holly Coulis, Taymour Grahne Projects, London, UK
2021 *Indoor Dining*, Marinaro, NY
La Banda, TVprojects, Brooklyn, NY
Intertwined, curated by Alex Allenchey, 1969 Gallery, New York
and I will wear you in my heart of heart, FLAG Art Foundation, New York, NY
2020 *All of a Sudden*, Galeria Mascota, Aspen, CO
A Fractured Sigh, BravinLee Gallery, New York, NY
Homemade, Magazzino Italian Art Museum, Cold Spring, NY
Surely Some Revelation is at Hand, Marinaro, New York, NY
2019 NADA, Miami, FL
XX Premio Cairo, Palazzo Reale, Milano
Upstairs Art Fair, Amagansett, NY
Interior Landscapes, Assembly Room, New York, NY
2018 *New Vision: Virtual Reality*, Jerome L. Green Science Center, New York, NY
Crack a Cold One, Galerie Derouillon, Paris
Broadway, Newburgh Community Land Bank, Newburgh, NY
Unveil curated by Marie-Salomé Peyronnel,
SPRING/BREAK Art Show, New York, NY
2017 *Roll Call*, Missouri State University, Springfield, MO
Baggage Claim, Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery, New York, NY
2015 *Family and Friends* curated by Paola Gallio, Chrystie St Studio, New York, NY
NURTUREart Benefit, The Boiler, Pierogi Gallery, New York, NY
2014 *The Future Needs No Permission*, Foundational Sharing, New York, NY

- 2013 *Collected Goods*, Sylvia Hardy Studio, Queens, NY
Each Evening We See The Sunset, Spazio Morris, Milano
I Can No Longer Recognize My Voice, ICP-Bard, New York, NY
Enter from Above, International Center of Photography, New York, NY
- 2012 *Disappearance* curated by Angela Madesani, Art Verona, Verona
Meli – Melo, The Gallery in Redchurch Street, London

Curatorial

- 2014 *Collected Goods*, Sylvia Hardy Studio, Queens, NY
Driveway, 431 Washington Avenue, Brooklyn, NY
- 2013 *Each Evening We See The Sunset* (curated with Micola Brambilla), Spazio Morris, Milan

Residencies/awards

- 2019 Finalist, Premio Cairo, Milan
- 2018 La Brea Studio Residency / The Cabin, Los Angeles, CA
- 2015 Workspace Residency Program, The Camera Club of New York City at Baxter St, New York, NY