

VIN VIN

Cecilia De Nisco

Schwache Lichter

Inauguration: Friday, December 1, 6 - 8 p.m.

Duration: December 2, 2023 - February 3, 2024

Painting Parkour

I wake up, stretched across the bed. I reach for my phone, open the email, scroll through notifications, and open Instagram. The first post that pops up is from Cecilia. The photo is a bit grainy and out of focus, like the ones of her paintings that she takes with her phone. It depicts Cecilia balancing on one hand in front of one of her large paintings, *The Dance of the Nocturnal Butterflies* (2023). She told me that, to fix the composition of her paintings, she often transfers to the canvas screenshots from short videos she records on purpose. The post reminds me of one of those frames I have never seen, “balky, stolen shots”¹, or the well-known photograph of Pino Pascali doing a cartwheel in front of an Alberto Burri painting. I scroll down to read the caption. It opens with a link to the 2016 video *All Star by Smashmouth but every word is someBODY*. It then goes on like this, “Painting parkour / See you soon / Bussi ❤️❤️.” A mention and three hashtags follow, “#contemporarypainting #oilonlinen #paintings”.

The post encapsulates many aspects of Cecilia’s recent painting. There is a jump, there is intimacy, it is out of focus, there is the texture and density of her sweater, there is irony, there is relationship building, there is mid-air suspension, there is dense light, there is stillness, there is a present, but there is also a past and a future (will she hit the easel with her foot?), there is the song from *Shrek*, there is oil on linen(s?), there is, above all, #paintingparkour.

¹ Valentina Bartalesi: ‘Cecilia De Nisco: Una pittura dagli occhi lunghi, anzi lunghissimi’, *Flash Art Italia*, 362, Fall 2023 (my translation).

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As Michael Scott in the meme,² Cecilia wraps up her painting, performs a half flip, and shouts “Parkour!” with an amusing combination of pride and awkwardness. For a young painter like her, “parkour” must represent what *bravura* was to the old masters.³

Schwache Lichter is an exhibition of dim lights and subdued atmospheres. It includes intimate images staged in cozy rooms: “chamber paintings” remote from the street and parkour. Through their titles, Cecilia initiates a distance dialogue: she always addresses a “you” present in her paintings, an emotional interlocutor different from the viewer. The largest one is *Me and you on the bed, doing nothing at all (see you tomorrow?)*. It consists of two canvases. The structure of the diptych reflects its subject, introducing the protagonists of the dialogue that shapes the exhibition. The two figures lying in bed, each belonging to a different half of the painting, meet, touching each other, on the left canvas. Cecilia charged the scene with an idle intimacy that de-escalates any erotic overtones: “Let’s see each other tonight, but let’s not do anything.” The moment of tranquility, a second before falling asleep or a few minutes after waking up, is tainted by three disturbing presences: the shadow of a long arm stretching across the bed, a profile with an elongated nose plummeting from the ceiling, and a figure entering the room, reflected in the mirror hanging high above the bed. Also, looking more closely, the face that collides with the margin between the two canvases is loose in paint, almost unreadable. The painting, a play of textures, sheets, skin, and blankets, an inlay of surfaces filling in the gaps, thus transforms into a visually and narratively challenging device. It sets the tone for the exhibition: in dreams as in the intimacy of a hug, it is impossible to be at ease.

The other paintings in the exhibition – each independent but subtly linked to the others – build a fragmented, romantic narration.

² Knowyourmeme.com/memes/parkour-the-office, added four years ago by Philipp.

³ Nicola Suthor, *Bravura: Virtuosity and Ambition in Early Modern European Painting*, Princeton University Press 2021 (Brill 2010).

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Only the paintings' titles and shifts in light allow the viewer to reconstruct the broken chain of events. *Schwache Lichter* freezes an intimate moment in the middle of the night while the warm morning light floods *Tell me about the dreams you had*. Some iconographic, perhaps symbolic elements already present in earlier works by Cecilia connect the paintings: the yawns, the moths, the tiny flowers – the blue ones reminding of forget-me-nots, perhaps unconsciously. The flower is a diurnal sign, the moth is a nocturnal symbol, and the yawn is a liminal act between the two universes. Chewed or freshly sprouted, little blue flowers fill the sleepy cavity of *Picking a flower off your mouth* while the shadow of a hand threatens to tear them away. Perhaps it's morning already, the hands and the skin depicted in this painting also appear in *Before saying goodbye (una carezza)*: here, the flower, in the twilight, has morphed back into a moth. An absence concludes this nocturnal saga: all that remains of one of the two protagonists is their imprint on a pillow, lying next to a bouquet of blue flowers, still threatened by a hand that fails to reach them.

A blue flower, barely wilting as in Mafai or De Pisis paintings, is also depicted on the left side of the first painting I mentioned, *Me and you on the bed, doing nothing at all (see you tomorrow?)*. One of the two characters relinquishes their grip. The flower hovers over the edge of the bed, risking plummeting deep into the darkness. Young figurative painters are depicting with increasing insistence intimate environments. Their bedrooms, intended as spaces of emotional self-representation, are the stages for the most diverse obsessions and events, from unbridled orgiastic euphorias to the dim memories of ancient loneliness. At first glance, beds seem a safe retreat, both concretely and pictorially – however, they often embody the opposite. “Artists,” remarked Robert Walser with his painter brother in mind, “are never, or only rarely, feeling at ease!”⁴.

⁴ Robert Walser, *Un pittore*, in *I temi di Fritz Kocher*, Adelphi 1993 (Holle 1959), p. 128 (my translation from Italian).

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To stay calm while painting a bed, to ignore the ominous shadows invading the room, to give proper attention to the petals of a forget-me-not or the texture of a felted blanket, to lie down “doing nothing,” painters must resort to all their confidence, feeling, or at least pretending to be, at ease. Painting parkour!

Text by Giorgio Di Domenico

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CECILIA DE NISCO

Cecilia De Nisco (b. 1997, Parma) lives and works in Vienna, Austria.

She attended a Bachelor's Degree in Graphic Art and a Master's Degree in Visual Arts at University of Arts in Urbino, Italy.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

Upcoming

- . **May - June 2024**, Andrew Kreps, New York (NY)

Past

- . **November 2023 - January 2024**, *Body Double*, curated by Sophia Penske, Ketabi Bourdet, Paris (FR)
- . **March 2022**, *Madrigale*, VIN VIN, Vienna (AT)
- . **October 2020**, *Surprize 2*, curated by Umberto Palestini, Centro Arti Visive Pescheria, Pesaro (IT)
- . **November 2019**, *Surprize*, curated by Umberto Palestini, Centro Arti Visive Pescheria, Pesaro (IT)

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

Upcoming

- . **April 2024**, Siegfried Contemporary, London (UK)

Past

- . **June 2023**, Liste Art Fair Basel, Basel (CH)