



Betty Bee

curated by João Laia

Opening reception: Saturday 30th November 2024, from 12.00 pm to 9.00 pm
Until: 25th January 2025

Exhibition venue: Casa Di Marino - Via Monte di Dio, 9, 80132 - Naples
Opening hours: Monday - Saturday 11.00 am - 1.00 pm / 3.00 - 7.00 pm

Umberto Di Marino Gallery is pleased to present *Betty Bee*, the artist's first solo exhibition within the spaces of Casa Di Marino. This retrospective aims to explore Betty Bee's artistic journey in depth, from her iconic videos and performance photographs of the 1990s to her latest works, offering a comprehensive view of her expressive evolution and the varied languages that define her research.

Through a carefully curated selection, the exhibition unveils the richness and complexity of Betty Bee's artistic language, balancing the provocative energy of a bold femininity with the delicate introspection of her paintings. Her recent works reveal a more intimate, vulnerable side—a private dimension that becomes central, a quality to be protected but also courageously displayed.

Curated by João Laia, director of the Galeria Municipal do Porto, the exhibition begins with a series of new canvases that reimagine Betty Bee's beloved iconographic motifs. In these recent works, she gradually moves away from grids, barbed wire, and protective nets, leaving the stage to her flowers adorned in fluorescent tones and glitter. Central to these canvases is a single recurring flower, both fragile and intense, constant yet transformed. The dripping colors, drying cracks, and pearlescent pigments that shift with the viewer's angle lend the flowers a shimmering, fleeting beauty. Set against dark, luminous backgrounds reminiscent of starry skies, these flowers symbolize a layered, ambiguous femininity shaped by time and reflection. The flower and natural elements become metaphors for the body—a recurring figure that questions, confronts, transforms, and contemplates itself. This body withers, renews, and adorns itself anew in a pursuit of beauty and self-affirmation, masking the fractures of a wounded subconscious.

For Betty Bee, painting is a tool of introspection, just as her videos, photographs, and celebrated performances have been. All are means through which she explores the unconscious, the body, and her own intimacy. Thus, the exhibition is developed by the curator around the theme of self-portraiture, a central element in Betty Bee's practice. With meticulous care and sharp self-awareness, she constructs a continuous *mise-en-scène* capturing a complex femininity—distorted, provocative, and fragile all at once.

João Laia interweaves these elements to craft a narrative where the recurring themes in Betty Bee's work emerge: delicacy, mythological figures, sexuality, irreverence, and irony. Each piece expresses the artist's strength and sensitivity, encapsulating an uncontainable femininity that permeates every aspect of her artistic practice and visual storytelling.

Betty Bee**1962, Naples, IT**

In the early 1990s, she held her first exhibitions in Italy, involving the group "Eretici Sfrattati". During those years, she exhibited at: KunstRaum in Vienna; the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Marino for *Le Mille e una Volta*, curated by Laura Cherubini and Giacinto Di Pietrantonio; and, among others, at De Appel, the Center for Contemporary Art in Amsterdam, and Kunsthalle in Frankfurt. With her video-documentary *Ciao Bucchi (Surviving Art)* (1999), she won first prize at the Turin Youth Cinema Festival, and in 2001, she was invited by Achille Bonito Oliva to represent Italy at the Valencia Biennale. That same year, the Naples Metro purchased one of her installations for the "Quattro Giornate" station. In 2002, she participated in the group exhibition *Napoli Anno Zero Qui è Ora* curated by Gianfranco Maraniello at Castel Sant'Elmo. In 2003, Achille Bonito Oliva invited her to exhibit at the Certosa di Padula for the exhibition *Le Opere e i Giorni*. In 2004, she inaugurated her solo exhibition *Incantesimo Lunare* at the Castel Nuovo Museum, Maschio Angioino, in Naples. In 2005, she was selected by Lorand Hegyi for the group exhibition *Napoli Presente* at PAN (Palazzo delle Arti di Napoli). That same year, she was featured at PAC in Milan for *Rosso Vivo*, curated by Gianfranco Maraniello, and exhibited again in Berlin at Stiftung Theater und Kunst for *Semaforo Universale*, curated by Patrizia Bisci. In 2007, she exhibited at the Chelsea Art Museum in New York and MAXXI in Rome. In June 2007, she participated in the Ravello Festival, invited by Achille Bonito Oliva, for *La Passione Secondo ABO*. That same year, she was one of the main artists in the exhibition *Arte e Omosessualità da von Gloeden a Pierre et Gilles*, curated by Vittorio Sgarbi, first in Milan (Palazzo della Regione) and later in Florence. In 2008, she exhibited in New York in the group show *Home Sweet Home* at Dorsky Gallery and in *The Ego, The Persona, The Shadow and The Old Man, Or Was It The Great Mother* at The Guild Gallery, both curated by Ombretta Agrò Andruff. In 2009, she exhibited at the Arts.i Religare Initiative Limited in New Delhi, curated by Ombretta Agrò Andruff. That same year, she exhibited at the Filiberto Menna Foundation in Salerno in *Arte di Sera / 33 - Sovrimpressioni* curated by Eugenio Viola and Antonello Tolve. In 2013, she participated in the exhibition *Arimortis* at Museo del 900 in Milan, curated by Milovan Farronato. In 2014, she exhibited at the Morra Greco Foundation in Naples with the solo exhibition *Second Life*, curated by Francesca Boenzi, and participated in *I HAVE A DREAM* at Palazzo Reale, Milan, a group exhibition promoted by the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights Europe. Also in 2015, some of her works were featured at MEF in Turin in *LIBERI TUTTI! Arte e società in Italia. 1989 - 2001*, curated by Luca Beatrice, Andrea Busto, and Cristiana Perrella. In 2018, she exhibited at Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome in the show *L'altro sguardo. Fotografie italiane 1965 - 2018*, curated by Raffaella Perna. In 2021, she was part of the exhibition *Utopia Distopia: il mito del progresso a partire dal Sud* at MADRE - Museo d'arte Contemporanea Donnaregina in Naples, curated by Kathryn Weir. In 2022, she exhibited again at MADRE for the show *Spettri: palinsesti della memoria*, curated by Kathryn Weir. In 2023, she exhibited at the Morra Greco Foundation in Naples for the show *Goal*, curated by Giulia Pollicita. She was later selected by the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation for the group exhibition *Che sarà sarà*, curated by Stefano Collicelli Cagol and Michele Bertolino. In 2024, Milovan Farronato invited her to engage in a dialogue with Sagg Napoli in the exhibition *Nacquero a Napoli Improvvisandosi: Modelle - Cameriere - Manicuriste - Arciere - Motocicliste - Scassacazzo - Pazze - Artiste Compagne e Scompagne* at Galleria Zazà in Milan.

João Laia**1981, Lisbon, PT**

João Laia is Artistic Director of the Contemporary Art Department of the Municipality of Porto. From 2019 to 2024 he was chief curator at Kiasma–National Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki. With Valentinas Klimašauskas, he curated the Lithuanian National Pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale (2024) and the 14th Baltic Triennial at the CAC in Vilnius (2021). Laia curated the 12th Gothenburg Biennial (2023) and co-curated the 18th and 19th editions of Videobrasil in São Paulo (2015-17).