

Francis Offman - *Still Grounded* 08 February - 29 March 2025

blank is pleased to present *Still Grounded*, a solo exhibition by Francis Offman.

Offman's collage-paintings weave together echoes of past and present global histories, economies of trade and ecological concerns with personal memories and biographical traces. These references reveal themselves through varying degrees of subtlety, as the artist constructs each work as a narrative—or a constellation of narratives—that invites careful observation of the intricate, layered surfaces.

Emerging from an intuitive process of improvisation and accidental discovery, the stories within Offman's works are articulated through a deliberately crafted visual language rooted in a principle of zero waste. Materials such as 'expired' cotton gauze bandages from the artist's residency at the Modern Art Museum in Bologna during the pandemic, or fragments of colorful paper and ephemera collected over the years—are rediscovered here as remnants of personal and collective history. Even discarded works resurface, as manipulated photographs of past paintings are reproduced as digital prints incorporated into the compositions.

Offman embeds his biography directly into the visual and material lexicon of his works, which includes pigment made from recycled coffee grounds—a nod to the fraught history of coffee as a commodity originating in East Africa, including his native Rwanda. His use of traditional Bolognese plaster to prepare canvases, meanwhile, reflects both his academic training in painting and the material's cultural and utilitarian significance in the homes and architecture of his adopted city.

To borrow from a Nassim Taleb* idea on the value of "tinkering," the works become a study of 'capitalising on unexpected opportunities'. Offman transforms discarded objects, fabrics, and pigments into encyclopedic collages that provoke an active aesthetic experience in the viewer, characterized by the artist as "watching" rather than merely seeing. The borderless, unframed canvases—all titled *Senza titolo (Untitled)*—with their all-over compositions, evoke Offman's own sense of displacement as a Rwandan living in Italy. Simultaneously, they invite an open-ended engagement with the works, challenging viewers to appreciate their abstracted constructions without relying on fixed interpretations or translations.

Still Grounded marks Offman's first solo exhibition with the gallery and his debut solo presentation on the continent.

*Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder* (2012).

Francis Offman (b. 1987, Butare, Rwanda) graduated in 2019 from the Academy of Fine Arts of Bologna in Italy, where he lives and works. Recent institutional solo exhibitions include *Economics of Painting* at Warwick Arts Centre (Coventry, 2024); *Notes from the Heart* at La Società delle Api (Monaco, 2024); and *Quotidiana: Paesaggio* (La Quadriennale di Roma) at Museo di Roma (2022). In 2025, Offman will present a solo show at Secession in Vienna. Selected group exhibitions include *The Invention of Europe. A tricontinental narrative (2024-2027)* at Kunst Meran (Merano, 2024); *Ouverture* at Castello de Rivoli (Turin, 2024); *Arte circolare* at MAXXI (Rome, 2023); *uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things* (Liverpool Biennial) at Tate Liverpool (2023); *Italian Painting Today* (Triennale Milano) (Milan, 2023); and *The 't' is Silent* (8th Biennial of Painting) at Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens (Sint-Martens-Latem, 2022). He has been awarded several prizes, most recently the Arcolaio Art Prize in Teramo (2024), and recent residencies include those at Civitella Ranieri in Umbertide (2024) and Gasworks in London (2023). Offman's work is represented in several notable institutional collections, including Frac Bretagne (Rennes), The Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, MACRO Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea (Turin), The University of Warwick Art Collection (Coventry) and the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles).