

Ground Floor

Rappresentazione fedele e imprevedibile, 2025

Acrylic on canvas

90 x 160 cm

Folle volo, 2025

Acrylic on canvas

50 x 80 cm

Floor -1

Ipotesi con sentimento, 2025

Acrylic on canvas

50 x 80 cm

Colazione allo specchio, 2025

Acrylic on canvas

50 x 80 cm

Notturmo con finestra aperta, 2025

Acrylic on canvas

50 x 80 cm

Office

Povero me (bambino), 2025

Acrylic on canvas

50 x 80 cm

Giacomo Montanelli
Realista

ON VIEW

May 22 – August 2, 2025

OPENING

May 17, 2025

Triangolo
via Stella, 14
26100 Cremona (CR)

TRIANGOLO

Realista, the first solo show of Giacomo Montanelli at Triangolo, consists of six works.

To introduce the exhibition, I would like to start with a very first consideration. Montanelli's practice could be described as a search for the necessity of form as the voice of things: an obstinate exploration through frankness and disillusionment. In this sense, his painting is essential, even self-referential at times. The stillness of the geometries it balances, their compositional rigour, the innate rather than perspectival frontality of its images, as well as the fullness of the solid-coloured backgrounds, may lead one to discern in it a painting that offers itself transparently, without mediation. An instantaneous painting. Or again: an arithmetic language with a reluctance towards emotion. But to break this self-evidence, this totality to which his works seem to aspire, is to discover an unexpected norm at the heart of this crystalline system. It invites us to consider the possibility that Montanelli's painting is grounded on a state of ambiguity that resembles a tale or a dream rather than an axiom.

In the artist's practice, things, objects, figures never really cease to be forms, nor do they refrain from behaving as such. This ambiguity, which draws a sort of double movement, is perhaps the meaning of painting that calls itself realist. As is well known, the adjective realist refers to a historical-artistic category with a dense near past in terms of chronologies, geographies and collisions. With its nineteenth-century European meaning, Montanelli's approach shares an echo that is not stylistic but possibly one of attitude: a proximity that refers to the attempt of honesty, always fallible, that the artist owes to the space of representation.

This realist desire, and this is a theme that I consider crucial, is expressed in the artist's process of inventing the image. It radiates in a rhythmic pattern of planes of vision understood as reflections of possible levels of reality. The more one experiences them, the more works seem to contain an implosive temporality and an insane imagination. His compositions, so clear in their state of endless rest, are vertigo, and sometimes prisms, especially when given time to be seen.

While observing, the gaze sometimes falls into them, revealing the depth of the image: then a marina unfolds in flight, a stretch of water shimmering in the moonlight, between roofs and chimneys. Or one might discover the outline of a domestic interior, brightened by the light of a ceiling lamp, uninhabited except for a moth; or perhaps witness the all-too-human loneliness of a valet stand, the weary interpreter of an ordinary night. As this happens, and the thought plunges into the background of the painting, Montanelli's images perform a tiny, almost imperceptible leap. Rising to the surface, they coincide again with an uninterrupted frontal plane, spreading out a narrative of lines and colours, textures and shapes.

The hypothesis of a panorama, for example, is rendered by the artist using an essential syntax suggested by what we might call the genius of the image, that is, its purpose and intuition. Here, this is achieved concretely by means of a vibrant flatness, a juxtaposition of opaque partitions with as many shining ones, whose material density creates that entirely meta-pictorial impression of glittering, which nevertheless refers to a shared experience, such as contemplating a landscape immersed in darkness.

As I have already touched upon, I believe that Montanelli's sense of being a realist lies in this movement inherent in the narrative of the image: a realism inspired by the prodigy of representation. Spell of the surfacing and receding of the composition, it reveals that secret moment in which the image imagines itself, to use a pun. In the exhibited works, this oscillation between flatness and space has no univocal direction. Some of Montanelli's works display an extraordinary placid synthesis, generated by the full alignment of vision and grammar. At other times it is the composition that extends as a surface, perhaps embracing within the plane the reflection of a painting captured in the gloom of a mirror. In the most daring case, such a mechanism of expansion goes so far as to put the presumed binomial of figuration and abstraction out of play, framing a carol of forms envisaged in the penumbra but exhibited as a document in broad daylight.

Realist, some will say!

For these reasons, too, the meaning of Montanelli's works is fully embedded in the layers of the picture. There is no conceptual or post-modern tendency in his practise, but rather a genuine passion for the many, negligible events that constitute everyday life. The nightly atmosphere that often surrounds his works does not pay homage to the nocturnal as a genre, but reflects a consequence, a pretext or a sentimental condition of the already mentioned narrative fluctuation.

Lastly, his images denote a consonance between the interchangeability of the signifier and the inevitability of choice. An assonance which can be glimpsed in the characters which emerge from his paintings: a soap bubble, two moths, Manet. Such appearances are closer to the realm of the exorbitant than to that of the symbol or the clue. An excess of realism inherent in figures that, although served in mimetic uniform, exist solely in that rhythmic pattern of planes that fixes them, without shadow, between surface and abyss.

The painting is stripped back to its bare essentials: a monkey waits alone, yearning, on the threshold of the image.

Valentina Bartalesi