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Massinissa Selmani
Loophole

Opening reception: saturday 07 June 2025, from 11.00 am to 7.00 pm
Until: 14 September 2025

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

“The action takes place in an oppressed and tenacious country: Poland, Ireland, the Republic of Venice, some South American or Balkan state... [or perhaps Naples]”

(Jorge Luis Borges, *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*)

Galleria Umberto Di Marino is pleased to announce *Loophole*, the first Italian solo exhibition by Massinissa Selmani. For the occasion, the Algerian artist will present a new series of drawings, his primary medium, along with installations reshaped specifically for the spaces of Casa Di Marino. Narrating and freely constructing a world of his own, always in balance between the gravity of his themes and grotesque characters, marked by a constant tension between surreal or improbable situations and solemn architectures, Selmani captures the moment when, within that absurdity, the possibility of real order emerges, and that is when laughter fades.

Loophole is an escape route, but also a narrow opening; it can be seen as a derailment from official history, a way out of the system, a gap through which one can either look or flee. Its very ambiguity paradoxically explains the multiple layers of interpretation found in the landscapes Selmani constructs through his drawings and installations. Pushing the limits of reality, breaking through a wall, and carving out an exit is a concept dear to Naples, a city dotted with architectural and social loopholes, where the boundary between official and unofficial is porous and in constant flux. Here, protest is not direct confrontation, but a way of absorbing and rewriting power through its own grammar, transforming rules into exceptions, and vice versa. Even the use of drawing itself, especially in this essential form, made up of isolated figures, surreal spaces, and entirely white backgrounds, is a *loophole*. It does not aim to build monumental and totalizing narratives that universalize the human condition, but rather to become an interstitial possibility, where there is no dialectical opposition. The suspended, comic, and disoriented characters neither fully obey nor rebel; instead, they seem to glimpse alternative paths, losing themselves in narrative holes and continuous reversals of common logic.

Each drawing is a crack, a breach that highlights the absurd stumbles of a reality that can no longer close its own loop, opening up infinite thresholds through which the possible can filter in. A “gentle sabotage”, technical, social, historical, and narrative. Drawing inspiration from press photography in printed newspapers, Selmani’s images suggest traces of latent tragedy or the foreshadowing of an elusive, impending violence. The fictional potential they evoke, constructed through deliberately familiar gestures or architectural fragments, resists clear spatial or temporal definition.

What comes to mind is the idea of a “minor literature”, not in the sense of a reduced or marginal form due to lack of means, but a practice that, starting from a peripheral position, manages to dismantle the codes of dominant language from within, by forcing or bending them. Selmani, in fact, presents a world where architecture does not confine, gesture is out of sync, and figures move according to a

logic that is neither compliant nor deviant, but rather askew. The narrative is paced by a mechanism that unravels itself, blurring the line between event and fiction, and leaving the field open to possibility and the unforeseen.

And so, even the narrator, the artist, scatters the story with ambiguities and uncertainties. But as in Borges, where a story begins with a writer still thinking about writing a story, here too the structure remains unstable, yet surprisingly sharp: despite the shifts, the gaps, the fictions, and the *loopholes*, the action, drawn, remains perfectly described.

Massinissa Selmani
1980, Algiers, DZ

Selmani's work addresses contemporary and political issues through drawings that combine a documentary approach with fictional constructions and animations. He constructs situations that confront, juxtapose and even superposition the elements in a context that has systematically been concealed. Selmani produces exaggerated and enigmatic scenes inconceivable to reality, bearing witness to the absurdity of human behaviour. He balances depictions between the comical and the tragic and introduces architecture as an instrument of power.

He studied computer science in Algeria, and graduated from the École supérieure des beaux-arts in Tours. He has recently exhibited at major museums and institutions, including: Aranya Art Center, Beidaihe New Area, Qinhuangdao, Hebei Province, China; Frac Picardie, Amiens, France; Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France; the Dakar Biennial, Senegal; the Lyon Biennial, France; FRAC Centre, Orléans, France; Modern Art Oxford, Oxford, UK; IVAM, Valencia, Spain; the Museum of African Art of Belgrade, Serbia; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France. His work has subsequently been hailed by a special mention of the jury at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015. In 2016, He received the Art Collector Prize and the Sam Art Projects Prize for contemporary art. In 2023, Selmani was nominated for the Marcel Duchamp Prize. Massinissa has also been featured in the book *African Art Now* by Osei Bonsu, co-published by the Tate Publishing and Ilex; *Drawing in the Present Tense* by Claire Gilman and Roger Malbert, Thames & Hudson; *Vitamin D3: Today's Best in Contemporary Drawing*. Phaidon Publishers. Selmani's work forms part of prestigious collections of art, including Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; MAC, Lyon, France; Frac Centre Val de Loire, Orléans, France; Samdani Art Foundation, Dhaka, Bangladesh; and The British Museum, United Kingdom.