

Giulio Noccesi: *Fermo per sempre (Stranded in time)*

April 3 – May 22, 2026

“In Maurilia, the traveler is invited to visit the city and, at the same time, to examine some old postcards that show it as it used to be: the same identical square with a hen in the place of the bus station, a bandstand in place of the overpass, two young ladies with white parasols in the place of the munitions factory. If the traveler does not wish to disappoint the inhabitants, he must praise the postcard city and prefer it to the present one...”

– Italo Calvino

In Italo Calvino's novel *Invisible Cities*, Marco Polo recounts his explorations along the Silk Road to the emperor Kublai Khan, each chapter detailing its own city. Calvino's non-linear, combinatory prose asks us to think beyond the borders that separate cities, presenting metaphysical themes that are specific to each place described, yet which permeate the text as a whole. We are implored to consider the relationship between history and memory; above all, we must consider how ideas take shape across chapters to form a composite aesthetic experience.

The paintings on view in *Fermo per sempre* make a similar demand of the viewer. Like Calvino's postmodern cartography, Giulio Noccesi's paintings construct a subjective map of his native Italy, an intricate network of isolated yet interrelated scenes. Each painting is simultaneously autonomous and contingent, an intimate, self-contained reflection of his life and a reference to the Italian art historical canon that animates his compositions.

Streets, porticos, and cypress trees recur as both symbolic and compositional devices, signaling the importance of each image's setting. A visible horizon line runs through all the paintings, even in still lifes or indoor scenes where an open window reveals the landscape outside. This omnipresence of the landscape suggests there is no interior without a relationship to the exterior. Yet despite this insistence on a painting's sense of place, these images offer no immediately recognizable sign of any city in particular. At once indexical and allegorical, these Italian landscapes amalgamate the real, modern city and the “postcard city” as categorized by Calvino. Noccesi's images are both romantically anachronistic and strikingly modern; a still life of a basket of eggs hangs beside a painting lit by the glow of a cell phone.

In works such as *Renault Scenic* (2024), this synthesis of the real and “postcard” landscape becomes surreal, superimposing a still life of peaches, a compact Renault on a winding road, and a robed figure sporting an early Renaissance pageboy haircut. The artist not only disorients the viewers' sense of time and place, but also our understanding of how to read a painting, especially through genre. Within a single image, the artist makes a still life, a landscape painting, and a portrait, in turn destabilizing the autonomy of each genre. Across Noccesi's paintings, the relationship to the landscape is made precarious. The artist's manipulation of depth intensifies the distance between figure and ground; the city in the distance often appears flattened like a photographic backdrop, a postcard. Unable to situate ourselves within the composition, the viewer assumes the alienated position of Noccesi's subjects: lost in space, stranded in time.

Giulio Noccesi (b. 1996, Florence, Italy) is a painter based in Turin, Italy. He has participated in group exhibitions at Minor Gallery, Copenhagen, DK (2025); Monti8, Rome, IT (2024); Candysnake Gallery, Milan, IT (2024); and D Contemporary Gallery, London, UK (2023). He received a degree in Printmaking from Fine Arts Academy, Florence in 2018.