

Giangiaco­mo Rossetti  
*Bones of the Men*  
08/11/19 – 15/01 2020

*If we wish to grasp the things reflected, we touch nothing in the end but the mirror.*  
Friedrich Nietzsche, 1881

In *Bones of the Men* Gian­giaco­mo Rossetti exhibits, amongst other things, paintings of himself. He embeds his own image—and those of some of the people in his life—in a medley of compositions crediting Renaissance masters, Arnold Böcklin and the Pre-Raphaelites. By repainting these thoroughly studied subjects, the artist claims their ownership. Irreverence settles in. Rossetti reconfigures these acclaimed compositions by inhabiting them with his own presence, with his own image. Half-heartedly, his audacity is covered up behind smears of adulation. This is precisely where Rossetti departs from the classical master copy. This is where he rips off the cord.

His infiltrating gesture reanimates history's buoyant images and depletes them of their original significance. Or perhaps he overcharges their meaning. At any rate, he pushes their symbolic value to a point of abruption. Time and again, the artist dissects and recontextualizes the idolatry of painting. He slits these paragons' throats, stitches them back into his own Frankenstein-made Lilith. And as a result, these ghoulish patricides hold court for a subjective vision of art's genealogy that is committed to the dissemination of painting's nonlinear evolution. Gestures trudge precariously. Every move is as precise as its treatment of history is potentially painful, and, consequently, the pictures act as mnemonic devices, which sever the fingers of the past to ride the knuckles of contemporaneity.

With these amalgamations, Rossetti considers the self-portrait, posturing it as the most objective subject. The artist presses on the ever-recurring issue of subjectivity and whether it is, in fact, the most honest of available devices. Is autofiction anything other than an unapologetic form of realism? Can anyone speak truthfully about anyone but themselves?

By raising the question of truth, the artist's position can be mistaken as moralizing. Being a slippery slope, Rossetti's work cannot be reduced like that: his boldness instead echoes Luigi Ontani's work, who, for decades, camouflaged his self-portraits as depictions of the likes of Dante or Jesus. In his case, the delusion of grandeur can be read as a tool to queer the Western canon, which isn't really the case with Rossetti. But the impetus is the same in the end. Transference to the present attempts to thwart the mandate of the past. To spin history's momentum to the here and now, to facilitate a trans-epochal encounter with the self as the primal other.

Rossetti's trick is his feeble transmission, easily missed, as he examines the ambivalence of pathos. The more drama he invokes, the closer he pulls the paintings' most significant other—their viewers—into a lucid dream space. The works swing between something that is synthetically dark and a light that shines Scientology-bright. His ambivalence is one of stark contrasts. It portrays in

Mendes  
Wood  
DM

13 Rue des Sablons / Zavelstraat  
1000 Brussels Belgium  
+ 32 2 502 09 64  
[www.mendeswooddm.com](http://www.mendeswooddm.com)  
[@mendeswooddm](mailto:@mendeswooddm)

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unusual and maladjusted ways how human ambition always works for and against itself, how it turns a person to kill another, and, simultaneously, entices compassion.

Rossetti brings it close, up to the nose, his figures share the horizon, belong to something. Go for long-drawn walks. Place one hand in another. Keep secrets because it matters. They care. But even if being together is the purpose, even if two people are each other's destination, the distance between their bodies, minds, and sensations keeps them apart. Two imposing subjects are always two opposing objects. The individual perspectives inescapably meet at the crossroads of their converging desires. There is an end to happy together.

Text by Tenzing Barshee

Giangiaco Rossetti (1989, Milan) lives and works in New York, USA.  
Rossetti attended the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan and in 2019 graduated from Die Institut Kunst FHNW in Basel. His solo exhibitions include *DEEPSTARIA ENIGMATICA*, Riverside, Bern (2018), *KRIS*, Federico Vavassori, Milan (2017) and *Bellarmina*, Warm, São Paulo (2016).

His work has been featured in several group exhibitions such as *Techniques of the Observer* at Greene Naftali Gallery, New York (2019); *Nightfall* at Mendes Wood DM, Brussels (2018); *Tra l'inquietudine e il Martello* at Federico Vavassori, Milan (2018). Rossetti's recent projects include *I got the Moon in the Morning and the Sun at Night* at WallRiss, Fribourg (2019) as well as the exhibition *Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato* at Mendes Wood DM, Brussels (2019).

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[@mendeswooddm](mailto:@mendeswooddm)