

KETELEER GALLERY is very pleased to present *Who's Talking to me?*, a solo exhibition by Giacomo Montanelli (°1996, San Miniato, Italy.). The exhibition consists of a completely new series of paintings that continue with the style and themes Montanelli has been developing for a few years now.

*“A rectangle becomes infinite things, a landscape is how we think about ourselves, everything is truth and fiction.”*

*Giacomo Montanelli.*

Montanelli juggles with our perception. Seemingly trivial computer-generated rudimentary shapes and symbols in complementary colours or greyscales appear to have been selected and thrown together at random. But nothing is farther from the truth. Montanelli likes control and leaves nothing to chance, everything is meticulously thought through.

When we look further we encounter elements that raise unanswerable questions: traces of a bigger, perhaps overarching story. Though nothing is truly unveiled. By adding ambiguous figures and suggestive titles, Montanelli turns a sterile collection of elementary colour fields, lines or paint smudges into an enigmatic puzzle floating between the natural, the artificial and the imaginary.

By going back to the basics, dissecting the parts that make a whole, he wants to pull the attention to the language of images; how shapes and colours influence each other and collaborate to produce thoughts and narratives. He employs the illustrative as sparingly as possible. What he does illustrate is only the strictly essential, what functions as a key narrative symbol.

In *Old Avatar* for example, an abstract, flat composition of coloured bars is disrupted by a pair of figurative peering eyes suddenly insinuating depth, perspective and human presence. But also the works' titles bring the neutral, prototypical imagery to life by revealing a complex personal experience. Here, the title adds a very specific layer of connotations, but doesn't offer any real explanation. Are these the imaginary remnants of an old online avatar? Or is it the artist re-evaluating the building blocks of an image to once again renew his way of seeing, and thus being?

As all flags are meant to represent what a country stands for (often literally referring to its landscape), so does *Building one's own inner landscape is a complex matter* represent the place we inhabit inside ourselves. Out of the bottom beige strip budding ears of corn sprout up, reaching towards what could be a sun composed of a multicolour yin-yang sign, a sort of amalgam of the myriad lgbtqia+ symbols and for Montanelli a symbol for our hyper-complicated modern reality, but set in a primitive, airy landscape. Symbols and flags usually mark those who belong and those who don't, offering a community to associate with. Today however, the overabundance of things to possibly identify with makes it more confusing than ever to create a somewhat peaceful inner landscape.

In *Histogram* insects have come to disturb the image (as they do in many of the artist's works, as if they were uncontrollable intruders) and the title turns the multicolour striped background into a reference to data analysis. Again, the rest needs to be filled in by us. Is this about online privacy and the inefficient protection measures?

Like one of those retro fly curtains that don't really do the trick? About categorizing behavioural patterns into classes in order to determine a "norm"? Or about the tendency to want to climb higher on the social ladder?...

Montanelli's images were inspired by very diverse reflections and are meant to speak to us from different levels, contain multiple layers of meaning and go in many directions... "*a canvas pulled from many points*" as he puts it. He therefore tries to not become obsessed by any kind of material (though colour is still the strongest messenger to him). He rather explores how different surfaces, modes of expression and thus techniques provide every work of art with a different character and, in doing so, observes the possible meanings, perceptions, interactions and effects of contemporary image production.

The impact of digital media on our perception plays a huge role in Montanelli's oeuvre and one could even recognize phone screens in the painting's dimensions. But art history also has an inescapably huge impact on how we look and what we believe to see. Today, no form, colour or symbol is still immune to these kind of associations. The *Have a mirage* works beautifully demonstrate this; even a colourless and characterless house in an empty landscape makes the imagination run wild. Hence, what this work really shows is what isn't shown.

Montanelli wants his works to be a reflection of his inner dialogues with the contemporary visual culture, the weight of art history on his creative process, the things he reads, everything he wants to be... while also becoming a mirror for everyone to reveal something - however indeterminate - about our humanness.

*Lauren Wiggers, 2022.*

The exhibition will be on view 3 September – 15 October, 2022.

Giacomo Montanelli graduated at Brera Fine Arts Academy, Italy, in 2019. He lives and works in Milan and San Miniato. He took part in numerous group and solo exhibitions in, a.o., Ordet, Milan (IT), Galleria Renata Fabbri, Milan (IT), Galleria Margini (solo), Massa (IT), OwO Space, Milan (IT), Toast Project Space (solo), Florence (IT), Cardi Gallery, Milan (IT), Yellow, Varese (IT), Villa Vertua Masolo, Nova Milanese (IT), Fondazione Adolfo Pini, Milan (IT), Museo Botanicco Aurelia Jozs, Milan (IT), ...