



To speak does not mean to be heard or understood or believed. Each time a word leaves our lips, not yet audible but partially formed in the way our tongue moves/pushes it outward, our mouth becomes a threshold into vulnerability. There is risk in speaking as there is risk in not. It is impossible: language. The magic of the mundane that holds the power to both bring humanity together as well as divide it. To express then becomes an attempt of sublimation; an act of transformation from thought into word, akin to line into letter, color into shape, edge into limit, soft into hard, and abstract into figure. It is an ongoing translation in search for meaning or a proximity to it, an invisible work of movement, an attempt, in silence, in screams; to communicate oneself. As philosopher, literary critic, semiotician, psychoanalyst, feminist, and, most recently, novelist, Julia Kristeva writes: "Art, literature, painting, music: the imaginary. Such is the privileged utterance which restores to language as a system of communication the sublimatory dynamic that constitutes it and which continuously works through it, even in cases of the most severe inhibitions and devastating anxieties"

In A Forgotten Tongue is equally a presentation of Mattea Perrotta's paintings as it is about hidden languages; as such the exhibition continues a common thread with her previous shows *L'Ultima Cena* (2018) and *L'Ultima Cena II* (2022) in which gestures, surfaces, and food became alternatives for words. Both of these exhibitions dealt with traditional renaissance narratives through an abstract lens and showed how language has been both maintained and lost. And while words were absorbed and carried by tables and tableaux in both

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cases, they are now taking shape.

Perrotta's work teeters between abstraction and figuration and at times are held in baroque backgrounds of chiaroscuro cloud formations or by deep, endless black bases. Conscious dramatization, not to distract from but to emphasize the urgency--an underrecognized reasoning behind baroque art such as in Artemisia Gentileschi's work--in Perrotta's case of listening in order to make oneself clear amidst a sea of voices. Shapes in a soft palette, with cubist references, characteristic of Perrotta's oeuvre, are pieced together into imagery of geometric fields that now and then take on human characteristics. Hard lines remain to distinguish each shape, each voice from the other. The contradiction of baroque and cubist perspectives-- an ongoing overlap of viewpoints versus all viewpoints visible at once--combined in single works to bring a surprising clarity to the omnipresent multitude that forms the fabric of life.

Abysses and clouds carrying color fields, forms always still forming, into portals; muscles running but not escaping, and through lines and context thoughts leak and seep through the oils, the veil behind which the artist speaks, in a language of lines and dialects of color. Perrotta's work engages in art historical discourse and challenges its linearity connecting movements outside of their fixed chronology. Her abstraction opens a window into an unspoken past of secrets and mystery. In *A Forgotten Tongue* a lack of recognition is not a loss of meaning, it urges conversation with the imaginative, which--despite the nostalgic tone of the work--leads us into the future: to that which we can still dream up, beyond the threshold, partially formed.

Mattea Perrotta (b. 1990 Los Angeles) lives and works in Naples, Italy. This June she is the artist in residence at the American Academy in Rome. Her work has been exhibited in solo exhibitions at Haverkamp Leisten Schneider in Berlin, Lamb Arts in London, Et.al in San Francisco, and MAMA Gallery in Los Angeles, Madrid and Mexico City, and in group exhibitions in Istanbul, London, Melbourne, Lima, São Paulo, Mexico City, and Bogotá. Perrotta holds a BFA from UC Berkeley.

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