

Ariana Papademetropoulos

Ringing Saturn

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MASSIMODECARLO is very pleased to present ***Ringing Saturn*** by Ariana Papademetropoulos, an exhibition curated by Arturo Galansino marking the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery, at Casa Corbellini-Wassermann in Milan.

Ringing Saturn, the first exhibition in Italy by California-based artist Ariana Papademetropoulos (b. 1990, Los Angeles), explores the idea of paintings as mediumship; as portals to worlds where science, pseudo-science, physics, planetary, magnetic, astrological and psychic fields are channelled into landscapes of materialized imagination.

The title of the exhibition riffs on Margot and Rudolf Wittkower's "Born under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists" (1963) a well-known dissertation on the embrace of eccentricity that came to distinguish the skilled artisan, who worked under the sign of light-fingered Mercury, from the artists identified with the mysterious and brooding Saturn. Papademetropoulos plays with this distinction to create traditional paintings in the manner of Old Masters that explore the otherworldliness that marks outer edges of our contemporary society's fascination with the metaphysics and astrology.

Each painting offers its own take on the 'umwelt' or sensory bubble that both contains and limits our perceived realities. The origin story of each is never singular but born of dialogue between artist and medium, visible and invisible worlds. The genre might be termed 'psychic-specific', conjured as it is from the conversations between the artist and Wendy - a well-known spiritual medium based in Los Angeles who illuminates her visions of Papademetropoulos's metaphysical realm.

Planets plunging into the abyss, giant soap bubbles floating lightly over sulphurous quarries, ghostly parlour animals, sensual female bodies bewitched by spells, are the subjects that characterize these canvases poised between hyperrealism and the surreal. The technical precision with which the painter renders these dreamlike worlds defies the distinction between the natural and the supernatural, creating tableaux that serve as portals to worlds of wonder. The paintings are pervaded by a luminous darkness in which evanescent, translucent heroines,

captured in muffled interiors of silk and blue velvet, emerge from dark backdrops, creating an effect of temporal and spatial suspension that captures the viewer in accordance with the concept of re-enchantment of the world, the conceptual core of the artist's poetics.

In response to a reality perceived as demystified by technological progress and damaged by the ecological crisis, the painter thus proposes an ethos that reconnects us with mystery and the unknown. The influence of the occult and esotericism, rooted in California culture since the first half of the twentieth century, permeates, albeit lightly and ironically, the artist's work. References to alchemy, mythology and psychoanalysis are woven into her canvases, creating a rich symbolic fabric that invites exploration and free interpretation.

The installation at the end of the exhibition unveils the pun of the title and completes the exhibition experience: three vintage coin-operated telephones inserted into shell-shaped structures and sourced from the Tropicana, a disused Las Vegas casino, allow visitors to listen to conversations between Ariana and her psychic Wendy, revealing, in a manner both amusing and intimate, the iconographic source of the subjects depicted in the paintings. These whimsical *objets trouvés* are interactive elements that amplify the theme of communication between different worlds, the layering and variety of creative processes, and embody the dualism between artifice and nature dear to the artist.

Ringing Saturn is thus structured as an immersive experience in the artist's visual and conceptual universe, inviting us to explore worlds beyond the visible and to rediscover the magic hidden in the everyday. Ariana Papademetropoulos, with her unique ability to fuse myths and symbols, eroticism and Jungian archetypes, guides us on a journey through liminal spaces that challenge our perceptions of reality, inviting us to reconnect with our sense of wonder and reminding us of the transformative power of the imagination, an enchanted lens through which to rediscover the magic hidden in the very fabric of our existence.

– Arturo Galansino

Ariana Papademetropoulos

Papademetropoulos, best known for her work as a painter, delves into themes ranging from mythology and femininity to Jungian psychological archetypes. She earned her BFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 2012 and furthered her studies at the Universität der Künste in Berlin. Her paintings frequently draw on historical references from medieval and Renaissance art, reinterpreting traditional iconography and symbolism within her contemporary narratives.

Her work is characterised by hyperrealism and illusion, blending reality into surreal tableaux that serve as portals to fantastical worlds.

In 2021, she curated and participated in the immersive exhibition *The Emerald Tablet* at Jeffrey Deitch in Los Angeles. Papademetropoulos's work has been exhibited across the United States and internationally, including Thaddaeus Ropac in Paris, Institute of Contemporary Art in Miami, Galerie Max Hetzler in Berlin, Vito Schnabel Gallery in New York, Gagosian in Miami, Jeffrey Deitch in Los Angeles, Manifesta in Marseille, Soft Opening in London, and The Breeder in Athens. In 2023, she presented a film commissioned by the Musée du Louvre. She is currently preparing projects with the Villa Medici, Rome.