

Galerie Mezzanin
Karin Handlbauer
63, rue des Maraîchers
CH -1205 Geneva
T +41 22 328 38 02
geneva@galeriemezzanin.com
www.galeriemezzanin.com

Gianni Motti
Au-delà de tout doute raisonnable

Opening: 12.03.2026, 18:00-21:00
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“It is parallel worlds that interest me.” - Gianni Motti

Gianni Motti (*1958) does not see himself as an artist who partakes in the culture of spectacle like some kind of entertainer, but as an activist who unveils the functions of different systems. The artist has celebrated his own funeral, spoken in the name of the people of Indonesia at the UN Human Rights Convention, claimed responsibility for earthquakes, and repeatedly referred to himself as a kind of terrorist infiltrating a system to implode it from within. He currently holds the Guinness World Record for the most valuable bar of soap, allegedly made from excess body fat removed from the former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. The artwork, titled *Mani Pulite* or “Clean Hands”, brought Gianni Motti worldwide renown, as the title of the now famous piece references an anti-corruption campaign of the 1990s and reflects the artist’s view of the government.

What Gianni Motti’s second solo show *Au-delà de tout doute raisonnable* (Beyond All Reasonable Doubt) at Galerie Mezzanin proposes is a different kind of encounter. Here, an environment is transformed and becomes a space for unexpected overlaps. The scarecrow – Spauracchio – is a rudimentary peasant object made of straw and old clothes. The scarecrow’s function is to scare away birds, therefore protecting the fields and crops. However, by dressing his scarecrows in dark, somber costumes that recall the suits worn by businessmen, Gianni Motti radically overturns the traditional image we have of the scarecrow, as well as its protective function. The strict suit, the rigid and composed demeanour, typical of the bankers from the City of London or Wall Street in New York, reinforces the image of the professional speculator. These contemporary scare tactics are the actors of speculative finance, imposed austerity, food insecurity, speculation on raw agricultural materials, among many other things. Moreover, the base is no longer a simple wooden stake: the straw becomes itself the support, but in a darker, more symbolic sense, as if these “modern scarecrows” had confiscated everything, including the original peasant base, leaving only ruin and emptiness after their intervention.

Gianni Motti wields the art of appropriation and subversion with unyielding irony, revealing the absurdities and flaws of a politicized, civilized, and media-driven contemporary world, and – through his actions or their traces – he distances himself from the purely artistic milieu.

A series of photographs and videos that question the notion of the author and the sociological situation of the artist – particularly in relation to economic issues and the symbolic value of his status – complete the exhibition. *The Messenger* is a 2003 performance which took place when Raël invited Gianni Motti and Michel Houellebecq to the celebrations marking the thirtieth anniversary of his encounter with extraterrestrials and his galactic journey, launching himself in front of the artist’s camera and improvising a small cosmic performance together with the scientist and bishop of the movement, Brigitte Boisselier. *First Step in Belgium* immortalizes the artist’s first step on Belgian territory, which took place on February 9, 2010, at 07:55. The materialization of the action, as well as the spirit, is cast in bronze, while the body is elsewhere. *Ala Sinistra* was created in August 1995 as an additional piece for the artist’s exhibition at the CAN (Centre d’Art de Neuchâtel). The performance consisted of an infiltration of the first match of the 1995 – 1996 National League A season, Neuchâtel Xamax vs. Young Boys Bern, at the Stade de la Maladière. After deceiving the president of Xamax, Gianni Motti walked onto the field, shook hands with the opposing team, greeted the crowd, played for a few minutes, left the pitch, and sat on the substitutes’ bench. At the end of the match, he threw his jersey into the stands. A perfectly successful infiltration – except for one detail that escaped everyone’s attention: Gianni had kept his city shoes on, black loafers with smooth soles.

The series of 10 colour photographs titled *Collateral Damage*, are not the result of a performative adventure as such, but images of the Balkan conflict that Agence France-Presse was unable to sell. The pictures lack the conventional narrative structure of most photojournalism, their force therefore originating in their aesthetics. They are staging neither a tragedy nor showing pure banality, but instead only talking about themselves. War is today the ultimate spectacle that lies at the core of the mass media economy. Consequently and paradoxically, images have become the total fetish of truth. Conflicts do not exist in the Western world's public consciousness or political life as long as there are no pictures available in the media. In the end, these images evoke the collapse of mass media economy and the habitus of aesthetic economy. Ultimately, these images become collateral damage in the framework of both the mass media and aesthetic economies, and Gianni Motti's gesture is nothing more than a demonstration of this, leaving everything else to his viewers, alone with their suspicions and the conditioned search for patterns of meaning.

As a self-taught artist, Gianni Motti's work eludes all of the usual categories. His hybrid interventions are something of a cross between performances and "happenings", questioning social, artistic or religious norms, oscillating between the rational and the irrational, between irony and provocation, between rumour and misunderstanding.