

Amedeo Polazzo: *Commedia dell'arte*

23 May – 1 August 2026

You've probably found yourself, at least once in your life, fixated on a word, repeating it until its familiarity fades away and its meaning becomes unknown, distant, and foreign. This phenomenon is called semantic satiation and is an ongoing motivation in Amedeo Polazzo's practice. The subjects appear to be apples, bananas, and cherries that punctuate our everyday experience: when we go grocery shopping, when we open the fridge, when we watch an advert or sit down at the table. In Polazzo's hands, these fruits become alien objects, stripped of the meaning most familiar to us, the meaning that makes us feel within a safe perimeter. Apples, cherries, and bananas take on dimensions that do not conform to what our senses recognise as real, and their bodies contradict the laws of terrestrial physics. They swim through the air as if navigating outer space or float on the surface of water as if on a planet where the laws of gravity have been overturned. By betraying every expectation of the familiar, Polazzo places us in an uncomfortable situation, one of subtle unease.

The 'Commedia dell'arte [Comedy of art]' referenced in the exhibition title offers a solution to the dilemma. What we are observing is not the real world, but a staged performance in which nothing is what it seems. Every subject is a character playing a role. Apples, cherries, and bananas are masks, adopted to best perform a part in a show written by the artist-director, who always allows his subjects a margin for improvisation. At times they may embody a psychological state, represent a person, or transform themselves into actual functional objects, such as a lamp, as in *Banana Lamp* and *Fruits of the Loom* (both 2026).

Thus, while at first glance these works resemble still lifes, some such as *Succession*, (2026), can be uncovered as portraits of a family. A small yellow apple in the foreground stands before two ancestors, a slightly larger green apple and a red one in the background, which appears gigantic compared to the first two. The formation recalls the structure of Victorian staged family photographs. Like a matryoshka doll, the largest apple contains the smaller ones, introducing another key theme for interpreting Polazzo's works: the inexorability of time and the ephemeral nature of existence. *Passaparola* (2026) refers to the lunar cycle, interpreted through different kinds of apples lined up on a table side by side. While in *Passenger* (2026), a solitary apple floats in a vast sea that has calmed after a storm, as sun and moon succeed one another on the horizon. In *Richiamo* (2026), the same storm strikes an intimate pair of fruits. A pear and an apple cling to one another in an attempt to save themselves, waves crash inexorably over a small plum that prepares to be engulfed by it. By renewing and combining the conventions of still life and seascape painting with an irony tinged with bitterness, Polazzo depicts vanitas for the contemporary world, interior landscapes that offer no comfort.

With *L'apparizione* (2026), Polazzo moves slightly away from this first group of works, setting the scene in a domestic space, depicted through the architectural element of the window and its curtains, through which a winged apple enters the night. Whilst in the Bible and in art history the apple symbolises sin, here the pair of wings transforms it into an iconography of the opposite meaning, bringing it closer to the bodiless angelic hierarchies, those closest to the divine. In a similar way, *L'apparizione* represents a movement from the outside inward, functioning almost as a break between two moments of the exhibition.

The other paintings on view depict closed doors, drawers, and nearly abstract monochrome canvases scattered with patterns of floating fruits. All of them convey the sensation that the gaze cannot penetrate a secret hidden beneath the surface of the painting. *Taurusgate*, *Nesting Model*, *Sleeper I*, and *Sleeper II* (all 2026) deceive the viewer's eye with precise painting and hyper-realistic details, leaving behind the unsettling feeling of a well-kept secret.

Another closed door is depicted in the work *Cave Canem* (2026), where the artist plays with another perceptual phenomenon, in some ways similar to the semantic satiation, whereby one can read faces into abstract structures, as if one were cloud watching. This is a form of subconscious illusion that leads us to recognise orderly structures and familiar shapes in images generated by chance, in this case, wood grain. The artist applies a first layer of colour on the panel and then works with delicate brushstrokes to bring out the outlines of animals – dogs, wolves, or foxes – which appear light on the surface of the painting, in contrast to the perfect realism with which the brass doorknob is rendered, where one can glimpse the artist's reflection. The works *Body* (2026) and *Bodies* (2026) also deceive the viewer's eye, hinting not too subtly at references to human body parts. A sense of menace pervades the works *Roxy Music*, *Bananarama*, and *Verde età* (all 2026), as though the joyful, festive fruit concealed a lethal poison – in the case of the apples – or were in fact made of gleaming plastic, equally inedible. Through this uncanny effect, Polazzo leaves the viewer on the outside, peering in and imagining what simmers beneath the painting's only apparently harmless surface.

– Text by Marta Papini