Uwe Wittwer

Controcorrente

Opening:
Thursday
24.09.2026
6 pm

On view:
24.09.2026
to 09.01.2027

Hours
Tuesday
– Saturday
11 am – 7 pm

Monica De Cardenas is pleased to present *Controcorrente (Upstream),* **Uwe Wittwer**'s first solo exhibition in Italy.

Uwe Wittwer explores the relationship between image, memory and history through a painterly practice that transforms photographs, archival documents and images from art history into works of striking visual intensity. Watercolour, painting and drawing become the means through which the artist constantly challenges the presumed objectivity of representation, reworking pre-existing images through processes of appropriation, alteration and rewriting.

For this exhibition, the artist focuses his research on the photographic heritage of the Basel Mission and the ethnographic collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. Through images from West and Central Africa, India, southern China and the Americas, these archives document missionary activity, colonial expansion and the the ways in which the populations encountered between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were represented. Drawing on this vast visual repertoire, Wittwer develops a new body of work that challenges the authority of the historical document, revealing how every image reflects the perspective and power structures that produced it.

The title *Controcorrente (Upstream)* evokes the upstream journey along the great rivers that historically enabled colonial expeditions to penetrate progressively deeper into the continents. From the Congo Basin to the Amazon River, and on to the major waterways of Asia, the river becomes a metaphor both for colonial expansion and for the exhibition's own journey through the archives, tracing images back to their origins to examine their omissions and political implications. Rather than offering a historical reconstruction, the exhibition reflects on how these representations continue to shape our relationship with the past.

Alongside this body of work, Wittwer engages with two masterpieces of art history, both housed in Milan: Caravaggio's *Basket of Fruit* at the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana and Paolo Veronese's (Paolo Caliari) *The Last Supper* at the Pinacoteca di Brera. A further group of watercolours, inspired by the drawings of Willem van de Velde, connects the exhibition's two principal strands. As the chronicler of the Dutch naval and merchant fleets of the seventeenth century, Van de Velde depicted the very ships that laid the foundations for European expansion and colonialism, bringing art history into dialogue with a critical reflection on the colonial legacy.

Uwe Wittwer (Zurich, 1954) lives and works in Zurich. His major solo exhibitions include: Musée Jenisch, Vevey (2026), Musée Ariana, Geneva (2020), Kunstmuseum Grenchen (2019), Kunst(Zeug)Haus, Rapperswil-Jona (2008), Kunstmuseum Solothurn (2005), Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen (2005), Museum Schloss Morsbroich, Leverkusen (1997) and Helmhaus, Zurich (1998). He has also exhibited at institutions such as the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen; Tate Britain, London; MoMA PS1, New York; Centre Pasquart, Biel; and Kunsthalle Bern. His works are held in major international public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Kunsthaus Zürich; Kunstmuseum Bern; Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht.