

PALADINO

Galleria Christian Stein

Milan, Corso Monforte 23 - Pero (Milan), Via V. Monti 46

May 12 – October 8, 2016

The Galleria Stein is presenting a wide-ranging retrospective of the work of **Mimmo Paladino** (Paduli, 1908), installed in both the historical venue on Corso Monforte and in the large exhibition spaces in Pero. Together, both these shows are meant to illustrate the path, from its inception and in its most significant and spectacular transitions, of one of Italy's most important artists.

This double anthology unfolds through seven stations, the number of exhibition spaces within the works have been grouped thematically. It starts with a collection of the earliest works by the very young artist, who, in the 'Seventies, turned to painting in order to define his identity. But in the largest of the six rooms in Pero, a majestic installation that was shown for the first and only time at the 1988 Biennale becomes the visionary pivot point around which a succession of works by a now mature and self-aware artist revolves. It was in Venice where Paladino demonstrated that he knew how to redevelop and expand his work in new ways, going beyond the surface of the walls, with sign, color and the most varied materials.

Then, from geometries that analyze and redesign the space to sculpture that is a reflection on archetypal elements of form and volume, to a room of large paintings in primary colors, yellows, reds, whites and blacks, the exhibition path proceeds through discontinuities and differences. Amid yellow light and tones of black and white that punctuate the surface, a room of gold — one of the foundational elements of Paladino's language — acts as a luminous counter melody to a large work of burned wood amid broken limbs and black figures consumed by fire. Like a teeming apocalypse of signs and stains dancing on a wall, it becomes the backdrop for a sculpture that rests all its weight on the elbow of a vigilant and silent figure. Here in Milan, from one room to another, from one beginning to another, through numerous passages and returns, Paladino's work is seen in all its complexity, revealing its conceptual and analytical development, an immutable condition in a pictorial oeuvre that is never random, and which, precisely for this reason, can encompass both traditional and avant-garde examples, drawing freely from archaic and non-European cultures, always knowing how to choose who and what to look at.

The journey through the salient images of Paladino's prolific and multiform career is preparatory for understanding how, even in his early paintings, traversed by branches and pieces of wood, or flanked by three-dimensional elements that, in certain cases, are objects and sculptures, a great many of his works present themselves as veritable installations. Thus one also comes to understand that the subjects are never simply figurative, since what appears as pictorially visible is always the result of a formal language that appropriates and restores a phantom or phantoms through everything that can become or be painting and figure. Likewise images often arise from the proliferation or stratification of signs and materials, creating tangles and fragments, sometimes declaring, sometimes alluding to, and sometimes hiding a significance. And it is thus comprehensible and legitimate to read in Paladino's work the surfacing of an archaic and Mediterranean culture, to the point where the language of art and the artist's practice seem to be something magical or shamanic, a site of ritual or tragedy. On the other hand his works, while figurative and symbolic, evoke significances and contents without ever revealing their origin, expressing only their shadow, mask or archetypal trace.

However this large exhibition in Milan attempts to rethink the figure of Paladino from a different perspective, that of a painter who is also a sculptor, set designer, architect and filmmaker. Or, put more simply and succinctly, he is seen in terms of his demiurgic function as a modern visual director, from time to time accustomed to positioning signs and materials, colors and objects, in a landscape in motion between present, past and future.

Pero, Via Vincenzo Monti 46: Tuesday - Saturday 12 - 7pm

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Milan, Corso Monforte 23: Tuesday - Friday 10 am - 1 pm / 2 - 7 pm, Saturday 10 am - 1 pm / 3 - 7pm

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