

Nightfall

07/11 2018 – 19/01 2019

Curated by Erika Verzutti, Fernanda Brenner and Milovan Farronato

In the XV and XVI centuries, Dutch and Flemish painters created a symbolic hyperrealist painting genre known as Vanitas. Inspired by the opening lines of the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible: 'Vanity of vanities, said the Preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity', those paintings depict still-lives, luxury objects, skulls and flowers aiming to raise awareness of the shortness and fragility of life and the vanity (in the sense of worthlessness) of worldly pleasures and ambitions. The ambivalent presence of these paintings – the moral approach is shadowed by the skillfully painted compositions, as if the artists could overcome death by giving permanence to the ephemeral – recall painting's primordial role as recording-devices of a certain time and luxury-goods that last centuries. The polished and seductive atmosphere of these images reminds us of our own bodies' finitude while offering sparkling promises of a lustful existence.

Marlene Dumas said: 'Painting doesn't freeze time. It circulates and recycles time like a wheel that turns, those who were first might well be last. Painting is a very slow art. It doesn't travel with the speed of light. That's why dead painters shine so bright.' Why do we insist on painting in a fast-paced world flooded with disposable snapshots and digital imagery that confusingly express our time's inexorable finitude, while promising escape and immortality (one can notice that simply by shifting the pages from the cover news to the science section of any newspaper, where symptoms of global warming and endless economic and political crisis meet planetary colonization start-ups and new anti-ageing techniques and life-extending drugs)? 'The job of the artist is always to deepen the mystery,' the British painter Francis Bacon once said. So, here is a possible answer: we insist on paintings because they hold mystery. These mysterious objects, which supposedly outlive us have always acted as humanity's 'guarantors.' Paintings can as well baffle conventions and reinforce cultural paradigms and - besides its much-heralded death claims - it has been on a noted upswing in the past decade and remains an unquestionable reference point for art historians and critics.

Nowadays, the question of which artistic medium one takes up has become a critical issue. In this exhibition, we plan to investigate the reasons why very little has changed since the 1600s regarding painting's allure, social status (and market value) and mysterious power by assembling together the work of several artists, hailing from many different backgrounds and different times, who insist on painting. We will depart from *Vanitas* and medieval *Danse Macabre* imagery in its aim to recognize frivolity and mortality as subject matter to highlight the riveting and obscure aspects of this infamous media. Focusing more on the perception of these genres rather than their actual iconography, the exhibition intends to be, in fact, a gloomy experience as visitors weave their way through the heady and metaphysical atmosphere of the *Nightfall*. What is on view is the result of a pursuit for unrivaled, bewitching, heretical, cryptic, unorthodox, ulterior – or nearly impossible – forms of expression.

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Participating artists: Adriano Costa, Allison Katz, Amelie von Wulffen, Autumn Ramsey, Bracha L. Ettinger, Celia Hempton, Daniele Milvio, Dawn Mellor, Dorothea Tanning, Eliza Douglas, Emily Sundblad, Enrico David, Erika Verzutti, Giangiacomo Rossetti, Gokula Stoffel, Issy Wood, Jacqueline de Jong, Jake & Dinos Chapman, Jakub Julian Ziółkowski, James Ensor, Josh Smith, Kathleen White, Lucas Arruda, Lucy Stein, Maria Loboda, Mark Van Yetter, Mathilde Rosier, Miriam Cahn, Monster Chetwynd, Nicolas Party, Nicole Eisenman, Osman, Patricia Leite, Patrizio di Massimo, Paulina Ołowska, Paulo Nimer Pjota, Pedro Caetano, René Daniëls, Rodolpho Parigi, Rodrigo Hernandez, Sanam Khatibi, Santiago de Paoli, Sanya Kantarovsky, Semiha Berksoy, Stanislava Kovalcikova, Tiago Carneiro da Cunha, Tony Camargo, Vincent Desiderio, Walter Swennen.

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