

banquet

Matteo Cremonesi

Fantasmagorie

Banquet Gallery is pleased to present *Fantasmagorie*, a solo exhibition by Matteo Cremonesi dedicated to his recent painting and sculpture production.

With *Fantasmagorie*, Matteo Cremonesi explores a semantic territory characterized by the presence of a series of heterogeneous works, paintings, and sculptures, made with different materials.

A collection of objects, artifacts, and images, through which the author animates a universe of signs stretched between the expression of a mediation between contemporary languages and imaginaries and the return of signs, narratives, and compositional practices linked to the ancestral universe.

A questioning about survival and the dark return of impressions, stories, and symbols, and their ability to be grafted into contemporary fabric.

As suggested by the title of the exhibition itself, Cremonesi's work insinuates itself into an uncertain territory of apparitions and specters, where the echo of a peculiar pictorial tradition encounters the crossing of literary and cinematographic imaginaries characterized by a violent and distorting confrontation with modernity and its demands.

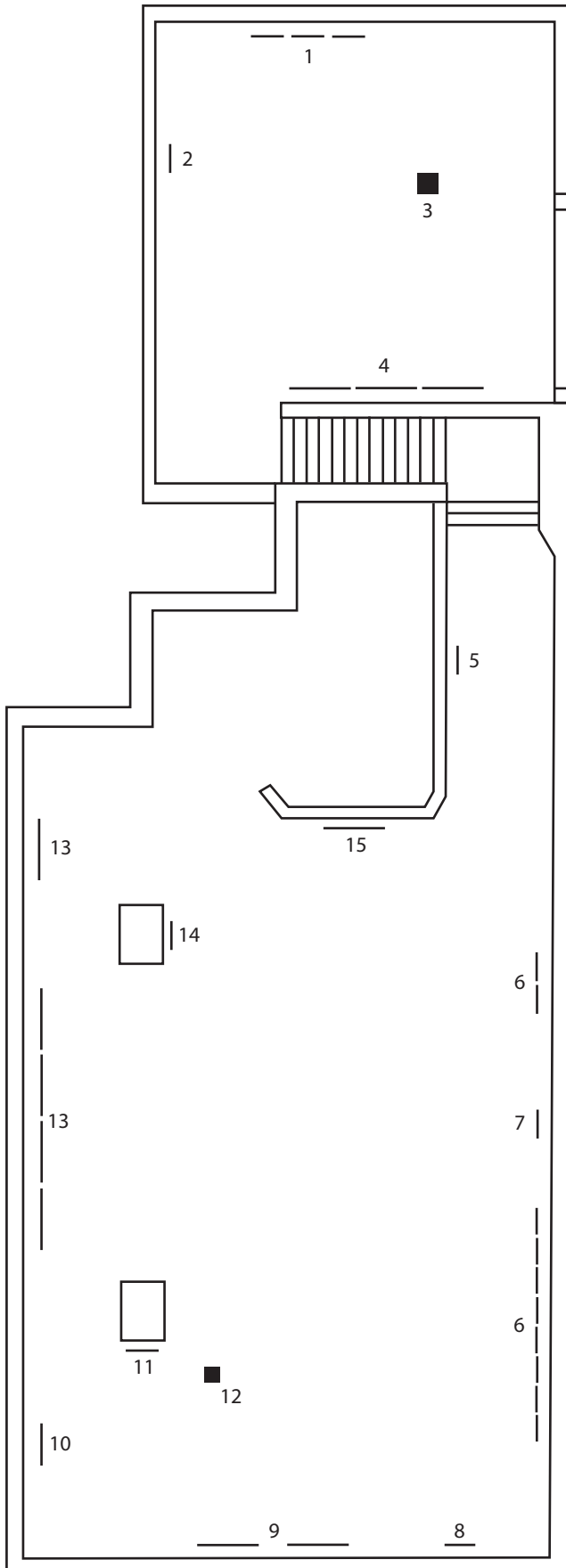
A Ballardian process in which the coexistence of material and imaginary elements gives rise to an archaeology of the present, through sculptures made by assembling discarded elements and bones found during excursions, a collection of blackened ceramic heads, casts of a silicone mask of Donald Trump used during the electoral campaign by his supporters, as well as through paintings that combine digitally printed images with a traditional painting behavior. This delineates a veritable environment in which each present element keeps on reworking the echo of the previous work.

The exhibition is accompanied by texts by Mauro Folci and Bruno Muzzolini.

banquet
Via Gozzano, 4
20131 - Milano

www.banquetgallery.com
info@banquetgallery.com

banquet



1 - Faceless #1, #2, #3, 2023,
oil and mixed media on printed canvas,
30x25 cm

2 - Idol #1 - Mask, 2024,
mixed media, bones, metal ties, plastic sneakers,
40x20x20 cm

3 - Idol #5 - Cap, 2024,
cap, bones and spine,
28x15x10 cm

4 - Fantasmagoria #1, #2, #3, 2024,
oil and mixed media on printed canvas,
80x70 cm

5 - Portrait, 2023,
oil and mixed media on printed canvas,
40x30 cm

6 - Scream #1 / #10, 2023,
oil and mixed media on printed canvas,
30x25 cm

7 - Idol #2 - Mask, 2024,
mixed media, bones, plastic sneakers,
25x15x15 cm

8 - Idol #3 - Mask, 2024,
mixed media, bones, plastic sneakers,
40x18x25 cm

9 - Cave #1, #2, 2024,
oil and mixed media on printed canvas,
100x80 cm

10 - Idol #4 - Horns, 2024,
mixed media, bones, metal ties, plastic sneakers,
26x18x10 cm

11 - Truned, 2023,
oil and mixed media on printed canvas,
30x25 cm

12 - Beast, 2024,
boar's paws, iron,
35x27x15 cm

13 - Scream #11 / #15, 2024,
oil and mixed media on printed canvas,
60x50 cm

14 - Idol #6 - Mask, 2024,
mixed media, bones, plastic sneakers,
35x16x16 cm

15 - Head, 2024,
oil and mixed media on printed canvas,
100x90 cm

All around the space:

16 - Head Trump, 2023,
painted clay with pigment and ink,
variable dimensions

banquet

Matteo Cremonesi

Fantasmagorie

banquet

www.banquetgallery.com

For Matteo Cremonesi

*In two days they began to come upon bones and cast-off apparel. They saw halfburied skeletons of mules with the bones so white and polished they seemed incandescent even in that blazing heat and they saw panniers and packsaddles and the bones of men and they saw a mule entire, the dried and blackened carcass hard as iron.*¹

For those who have come to know and appreciate the photographic work of Matteo Cremonesi, I am thinking particularly about the extraordinary photocopier series, which is the culmination of a rigorous ten-year investigation both conceptual and formal, they will be surprised to see how many and diverse drifts the artist's research has taken in recent times. Rather than drifts, we should speak of rhizomatic processes whose multiple nodes, in the manner of Indra's web, hold together the conceptual minimalism of the photographs and the recent pictorial work.

I'd like to trace the peculiar feature of this connection, to bring to light - a very pertinent expression - what broods in the pitch dark of the painting and in the white surface of the photocopier, shiny machine made abstract by the enlargement, alienating voyeuristic and pornographic vision.

An image that, by breaking every relation between signified and signifier, transforms the almost object of affection into a disturbing object. It is an exhausted image that has exhausted in its inappropriate yet impeccable presence every relationship with reality, that is with time and space. In front of this image there is no reaction, there are no considerations to be made, one accepts it as something inevitable, one lets oneself go, one is as suspended and chained as when one is captured by powerful passions such as love or boredom.

I am no longer certain that I recognize the object, I am in front of it as when one is dumbfounded in front of a fold of the curtain at the window or a ray of sunlight penetrating through the shutter on a hot summer Sunday, an image that solicits a timeless memory, as Dino Campana wrote "*this memory that remembers nothing is so strong in me*"². And indeed, Cremonesi's pictures are boring. The observer experiences a power, a possibility without any determination; they impose a kind of suspension of judgement, sceptics would say an epochè, a condition whereby we can neither affirm nor deny.

Art, like poetry and philosophy, after all, investigates truth in every way without ever finding it, and often "*suspends judgement due to the state in which it finds itself after investigation* - writes Diogenes Laertius about the sceptics - *it remains undecided about everything*"³.

Matteo Cremonesi's pseudo photocopier merely shows the phenomenon, it does not communicate anything, it only shows the pathos, almost as if it were a performance, and all without any judgement or opinion, an asinificant image in front of which we are passive, we are waiting for

¹ McCarthy Cormac, *Meridiani di sangue*, Einaudi 2014, p. 43

² Campana Dino, *Un po' del mio sangue*, BUR, Milano 2007, p. 264

³ Laerzio Diogene, *Vite e dottrine dei più celebri filosofi*, Bompiani 2005, p. 1113

banquet

the guest who will obviously not arrive, we experience our constitutive impotence, which allows us to imagine even the unimaginable.

If it is true that that photocopier has lost all connotations to the point of becoming a sparkling white wall, according to Melville in *Moby Dick* or of the sheet of paper left blank by the famous scribe Bartleby, then we are in the field of the negative, then we are saved.

The photocopier is a monochrome, don't listen to those buttons and knobs stamped on the paper, the photocopier is a monochrome behind which hides nothingness, a nothingness of entity; in that machine there is the echo of the beginning, of the time when matter and light together were just a continuous indistinct flow of energy.

I inevitably think of Samuel Beckett, of *Film* and his mad attempt to trace all forms of images until the annihilation of his own, which is the *image of affection*, the most difficult to destroy because it is that of his own subjectivity⁴.

In those photographs, but at this point we can also say of black painting - the quotation from Goya is not accidental - I seem to see a radical attempt to deconstruct images in order to free them from their referents and gain that freedom to be otherwise: ordinary images, without any particularity, devoid of quality are images among other images. Bodies among other bodies; somehow an inhuman attempt to bring everything back to that pre-individual dimension where everything becomes possible again. In short, we are talking about what pure power is and the ways of experiencing it: the convergence I am looking for between the white monochrome photo - this is how we must see it at this point - and Cremonesi's black painting have to do with this concept.

An important fact to keep in mind in this regard is that in the paintings the artist uses photographic images - sometimes they are his own shots, some other times images taken from magazines and the most disparate media -, placed by the artist at the base of the support, mostly canvas, and on which he proceeds by layers, by fields of colour in almost black shades, by erasures and washes and new superimpositions of colour. A painting that somehow denies itself exactly like the white image in photography: is it not true that black and white are the negation of painting? We have to think in these terms with Cremonesi's works: negation.

After all, if one wants to search for light, good and innovative ideas, poetry and the truth of the human soul, one must descend into the abyss of chaos, into the night of Tartarus, as recounted by myths, ancient philosophers, mystics and revolutionaries: it is down in the indistinct that power dwells, where everything can be and at the same time not be.

It is from the darkness that light emerges and not the opposite as the Christian tradition tells us, it is in the night of the senses that powerful encounters are made. Matteo's painting is monochrome, but not in the manner of the Americans Ad Reinhardt or Barnett Newman, because if one pays attention and overcomes the reflections of light on the pictorial matter, it is possible to glimpse a world, they are anthropomorphic forms, at times they are animals, others they are humans that vaguely bring to mind the *combed and sponged* portraits of Francis Bacon and his *logic of sensation*⁵.

Sometimes there are glimpses of horses alone or in a quadrille, black beasts that seem to struggle to emerge from the surface of the painting, that are implacably held back and eventually pushed back to the bottom by the heavy dark blanket. We seem to hear Kafka "*...and even the horses of the cars, down below, reared up like mad horses in battle, their throats abandoned*"⁶.

⁴ Deleuze Gilles, *Immagine movimento*, Ubulibri 1984, pp. 86-90

⁵ Deleuze Gilles, *Francis Bacon Logica della sensazione*, Quodlibet 1995

⁶ Kafka Franz, *Essere infelici*, in: *Kafka. Tutti i romanzi, i racconti, pensieri e aforismi*, Newton Compton Editori 1999, p. 496.

banquet

Bad omen beasts for a Europe devoted to reactionary nihilism, to the fascism of land and blood, of homeland, war and death. Is there room for satisfaction of pictorial matter? Certainly there is, but what prevails in my opinion is a feeling of deprivation and negativity, but beware because here, I repeat in other words, deprivation, negation and impotence are the attributes that specify a pure power: it is only from an impotence that I can create new worlds and unprecedented salvific relations.

Between the photocopier, but now it no longer makes sense to call it that, let's say between a white and a black painting, Cremonesi exhibits a whole series of works of heterogeneous workmanship and material. Sometimes they are objects that the artist collects during long walks in the beloved woods of his Trentino region. He has a peculiar passion for animal bones, that he collects in those parts of the forest where they go to die and arranges them to modulate installations or stack up some anthropomorphic mask, almost as if it were a magic rite of passage, or rupture, if one prefers.

As an experienced palaeontologist he catalogues and photographs these relics, bones and skulls of phantasmagorical whiteness, nothing to do with *memento mori* - who would still believe the old admonition with the Mediterranean turned into a charnel house, with the genocide of Palestinians being carried out at the hands of Israel - rather it comes to mind as a charitable gesture for those in need who have received no comfort.

*"The world is not only hostile, the world pursues a battle of extermination, wants the den not to exist and not to have the possibility of existing"*⁷, writes Roberto Calasso in *l'animale della foresta*, reflections on Kafka.

From the darkness of the paintings, Salvator Rosa's weeping Democritus⁸ might appear, a surprising Democritus that overturns traditional iconography, which by now we no longer understand whether he is laughing or weeping, assuming that there is any significant difference when - as we observe in Cremonesi's installation - a pile of bones unfolds at our feet. *"Democritus, the mocker of all things, here halts facing the end of all things"*⁹, so declares the clearly visible inscription placed in the engraved version of the work.

The exhibition staged by Cremonesi has the vague Beckettian flavour of the theatre of the absurd; by carefully observing the black paintings, we could glimpse and hear the Irish playwright's *Nacht und traume*:

*"He spies them with pleasure; / he calls them back, in the early hours of the day: / come back, O holy night / O dreams of enchantment, come back"*¹⁰.

And again, in front of the piles of bones how can one not think

*"Another. Say another. Sunken head on shrunken hands. Perpendicular occiput. Clenched eyes. Seat of everything. Germ of everything"*¹¹.

March 2024

Mauro Folci

⁷ Calasso Roberto, *L animale della foresta*, Adelphi 2023, p. 85

⁸ Salvator Rosa, (Napoli 1615 - Roma 1673) *Democrito in meditazione*, 1650-51, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark. The engraving is from 1662

⁹ Reinhard Brandt, *Filosofia della pittura*, Mondadori 2003, p.120

¹⁰ Beckett Samuel, *Nacht und traume*, last play written and directed by Beckett for German television, 1982

¹¹ Beckett Samuel, *peggio tutta*, in: *Nessun modo ancora*, Einaudi 2008, p.68

banquet

banquet
Via Gozzano, 4
20131 – Milano

www.banquetgallery.com
info@banquetgallery.com