

SENTIMENTO ILLUMINA

ALESSANDRO PESSOLI / PIERO MANAI

A drawing of his stayed in my memory for a long time:
a small figure, swiftly sketched,
a painter before an easel with a lit torch in his hand,
and the handwritten words: "Illumina la Pittura."

Alessandro Pessoli

Opening Saturday 6 April 2024, 3–8pm
6 April — 8 June 2024

Opening times
Tuesday–Saturday / 10am–2pm, 3–7pm

Alessandro Pessoli (Cervia, 1963, lives and works in Los Angeles, USA). He has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions including *Italian Painting Today*, Triennale Milano, Milan, IT (2023); *Full Burn: Video from the Hammer Contemporary Collection*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA (2023); *NO, NEON, NO CRY*, MAMbo, Bologna, IT (2022); *L'esca*, MACTE, Termoli, IT (2022); *Vita Nova*, Villa d'Este, Tivoli, IT (2021); *Fuori*, La Quadriennale, Rome, IT (2020); *The Neighbors*, MAN, Nuoro, IT (2016); *Alessandro Pessoli – Project Room*, Villa Paloma, MNM, Monaco (2015); *Alessandro Pessoli*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, USA (2012); *Ennesima*, Triennale Milano, Milan, IT (2015). His works are to be found in the collections of leading international museums: MoMA, New York, USA; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA; MOCA Museum, Los Angeles, USA; MAXXI National Museum of 21st-Century Art, Rome, IT; MIC Museo della ceramica, Faenza, IT; and Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, IT

Piero Manai (Bologna, 1951–1988) exhibited in various galleries and museums in Italy and abroad, including PS1 in New York, USA (1982). He took part in the exhibitions *Nuova Immagine* at the Triennale in Milan, IT (1980); *Linee della ricerca artistica italiana 1960–80* at Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, IT (1981); *Italian Art 1960–80* at the Hayward Gallery in London, UK (1982); at the Biennale des jeunes in Paris, FR (1982); and also exhibited at the Kunstverein in Hannover, DE (1985) and Frankfurt, DE (1986). The GAM in Bologna dedicated an extensive retrospective to his work in 2004, curated by Peter Weiermair. P420 and CAR drde dedicated a major solo exhibition to him in 2019.

P420 is delighted to present the exhibition *Sentimento illumina* in its gallery space, featuring previously unseen paintings, produced especially for the occasion, by Alessandro Pessoli (Cervia, 1963, lives and works in Los Angeles, USA), in dialogue with a selection he himself has chosen of works by Piero Manai (Bologna, 1951–1988).

By juxtaposing the works of the two artists, it becomes clear how there is a Bolognese tradition that, as Antonio Grulli writes in the critical text accompanying the exhibition, "over the centuries, it is as if painting in Bologna had evolved in a particular direction, i.e., becoming a surgical instrument of the metaphysical analysis of reality that – starting empirically from the skin and body of things – manages to reach the soul.

In the case of Piero Manai and Alessandro Pessoli (Pessoli studied at the Bologna Academy of Fine Arts during the last years of Manai's life and held his first solo show the same year Manai died), this investigation tool is turned on themselves, applying it to their own condition as human beings, to their own body to be vivisected, dismembered and pieced back together, so as to see how it works and whether it still does so once it has been taken to bits and reassembled; to find out whether the soul slips away when opening this sacred vessel made to contain desire, pleasure, fear and splendour. Or perhaps simply to find out in advance whether something survives us even after our death.

"It is Alessandro Pessoli himself who clarifies the meaning of the exhibition and the reason behind the choice of this title: "I have always thought the sense of that drawing by Piero was not really the painter's ability or desire to turn a spotlight onto painting, its language or conceptual status. Rather, it's the attempt to shed light on our interiority, our inner light, our ability to be illuminated, by passion first and foremost, then ultimately by love. This is why I chose the title *Sentimento illumina*."

Pessoli's style is colourful and at first glance cheerful. The artist imbues his canvases with a wealth of imagery, all linked by their strong emotional intensity. Going beyond the cheerfulness of the palette and style in which he blends techniques and materials in a lively manner, his works remain poised between amusement, dreaminess and the grotesque. With regard to the themes dealt with, we notice how he always falls back on the great existential – we might say biblical – issues: life, death, desire, sex, joy, sadness, hope, fear, and all the whys they entail.

Devoid of expression or psychology, almost in ruins, Piero Manai's figures and heads are neither representations nor portraits. They are perhaps more accurately self-portraits, yet they are not seen from the *outside*, but from *within*. "It is an internal work," wrote Manai himself, "it's an anatomical and psychic construction, it's painting a figure, flaying it three times, putting it to the test to reach a threshold." His pictorial language seems to be irreducible to any of the various artistic practices in force at the time, indeed, in its diversity, it seems to bring them all together, to such an extent that it is hard – perhaps futile – to find a way of classifying it.

P420

Via Azzo Gardino 9, 40122 Bologna (IT)
info@p420.it / www.p420.it