

# ALAIN URRUTIA

## PENSARE CON LO SGUARDO

GIORGIO MORANDI, ALAIN URRUTIA

La mostra mette in scena un dialogo rarefatto e sommesso tra una selezione di importanti incisioni di Giorgio Morandi, datate tra il 1915 e il 1956, e una nuova serie di quadri di Alain Urrutia. La pittura come cosa mentale, con il suo potere di liberarsi dalla rappresentazione naturalistica degli oggetti per aprirsi sull'essenza delle cose è dunque il punto di partenza di questo ideale dialogo pittorico.

Entrambi gli artisti procedono infatti non forgiando immagini secondo verosimiglianza, ma costruendo idee attraverso le sembianze degli oggetti, che diventano membrane, diaframmi, confini, che aprono la visione su presenze nascoste, trasposizioni figurate di stati d'animo, consonanze ed echi interni al mondo delle immagini e al mistero che esse portano con sé.

Cosa riflettono le immagini? La domanda sembra aleggiare da un'opera all'altra: le immagini di Morandi scambiano la corporeità con l'ombra e puntano all'archetipo, tanto quanto quelle dipinte da Urrutia sono lasciate libere di circolare nel flusso della coscienza, anarchiche nella loro assolutezza, anche quella inconscia.

Le immagini riflettono quindi la loro capacità di riflessione, che è quella dei loro due autori, mai dimentichi del fatto che, come scriveva Leonardo da Vinci: "La pittura è il maggior discorso mentale". Questo vuole anche dire, nell'opera dei due artisti, dare voce all'inesprimibile, a ciò che abitualmente non si lascia vedere. Nel caso di Morandi è la qualità incorporea della luce che trapela dall'uso magistrale del chiaroscuro dell'incisione, e che porta queste opere allo stesso livello della pittura, come già evidenziato da Cesare Brandi. Gli oggetti escono così dalla loro sembianza quotidiana, come ad estrarre un nocciolo dal frutto, e acquistano una verità che va oltre la loro apparenza. In modo analogo, seppur con una diversa tecnica espressiva e un mutato orizzonte culturale, Alain Urrutia sa spingersi oltre i confini della rappresentazione dipingendo l'assenza, anche attraverso il riflesso in uno specchio, o un piedistallo deserto della sua scultura, una figura di spalle, il nodo di una tenda o una clessidra in cui il tempo scorre all'indietro.

### **Dati essenziali**

MAAB Gallery, Milano

Via Nerino 3 – 20123 Milano

Dal 30 novembre 2023 al 16 febbraio 2024

Dal lunedì al venerdì dalle 10.30 alle 18

ALAIN URRUTIA

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## PENSARE CON LO SGUARDO

GIORGIO MORANDI, ALAIN URRUTIA

The exhibition presents a rarefied and understated dialogue between a selection of important engravings by Giorgio Morandi, dated between 1915 and 1956, and a new series of paintings by Alain Urrutia. In this ideal interaction between works, the starting point is painting as a mental thing, with its power to free itself from the naturalistic representation of objects in order to open up to the essence of things.

In fact, both artists create their works not by forging images that resemble something, but by constructing ideas through the semblances of the objects, which become membranes, diaphragms, boundaries, for opening the vision to hidden presences, figurative transpositions of states of mind, consonances and echoes within the world of images and the mystery they carry with them.

What do the images reflect? The question seems to be hovering from one work to the next: Morandi's images exchange a corporeal quality for shadow and focus on the archetype, just as Urrutia's paintings are left free to circulate in the flow of consciousness, anarchic in their absoluteness, including the unconscious.

The images therefore express their capacity for reflection, which is that of their two authors, never forgetting that, as Leonardo da Vinci wrote: "Painting is the greatest mental discourse". In the work of these two artists, this also means giving a voice to the inexpressible, to what is not normally allowed to be seen. In Morandi's case, it is the incorporeal quality of light that emanates from his masterly use of chiaroscuro in engraving, and which puts these works on the same level as painting, as Cesare Brandi already pointed out. The objects therefore emerge from their everyday semblance, as if the stone were extracted from the fruit, and acquire a truth that goes beyond their appearance. Similarly, albeit with a different expressive technique and an altered cultural horizon, Alain Urrutia knows how to push the boundaries of representation by painting absence, also through the reflection in a mirror, or a deserted pedestal of his sculpture, a figure from behind, the knot of a curtain or an hourglass in which time flows backwards.

### **Hard facts**

MAAB Gallery, Milano

Via Nerino 3 – 20123 Milano

From 30 November 2023 to 16 February 2024

From Monday to Friday - 10.30 am - 6 pm





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*Duo exhibition*

***Pensare con lo sguardo***  
MAAB Gallery, Milano, 2023



*Duo exhibition*

***Pensare con lo sguardo***  
MAAB Gallery, Milano, 2023





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## MEMORABILIA

ALAIN URRUTIA

Dopo la mostra collettiva del 2020, Alain Urrutia (Bilbao, 1981) ritorna alla MAAB Gallery con una mostra personale dal titolo Memorabilia, in cui espone l'ultimo ciclo pittorico realizzato a partire da alcuni oggetti raccolti per il loro valore simbolico oltre che intrinseco. Come infatti ha dichiarato l'artista: "In queste nuove opere è rappresentato l'atto del collezionare e il modo in cui diamo valore e significato a oggetti che apparentemente non ce l'hanno".

L'artista basco, oggi residente a Berlino, ha elaborato una ricerca pittorica che investe i suoi soggetti di una memoria intensa, un'atmosfera enigmatica e talvolta perturbante che origina dallo stesso trattamento pittorico delle immagini, che dal realismo della presentazione passano immediatamente alle ambivalenze di una rappresentazione sospesa e mentale che trova nell'idea di collezione la sua propria Wunderkammer pittorica.

A differenza dei precedenti lavori rigorosamente giocati sulla scala dei grigi, questa volta le opere sono state realizzate con una leggera modulazione cromatica che produce una sorta di effetto anaglifo e stereoscopico, una oscillazione del campo percettivo che qui riecheggia nella vibrazione psico-emozionale innescata da queste opere, che all'interno dell'oggettività della rappresentazione riescono così a includere valenze soggettive.

Anche in questa mostra Alain Urrutia prosegue quindi il suo personale viaggio attorno agli oggetti ed ai modi della rappresentazione, facendosi evocativo e sfidando l'osservatore nel gioco di rimandi e di assonanze emotive con il soggetto osservato nel quadro. Attraverso questa operazione, che disvela tanto quanto ammanta di mistero, l'artista offre ad uno sguardo ravvicinato, saltando dall'ingrandimento alla distanza, i soggetti dei suoi lavori, e nel far questo, come avviene nel ciclo Memorabilia, li sottrae alla perdita, riportandoli al centro dell'attenzione e riavvicinandoli come apparizioni lievi, soffuse e memoriali.

### **Dati essenziali**

MAAB Gallery, Milano

Via Nerino 3 – 20123 Milano

Dal 17 novembre 2022 al 27 gennaio 2023

Dal lunedì al venerdì dalle 10.30 alle 18

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## MEMORABILIA

ALAIN URRUTIA

After the collective event of 2020, Alain Urrutia (Bilbao, 1981) returns to the MAAB Gallery with a solo exhibition entitled Memorabilia, in which he displays his latest cycle of paintings, which take their lead from several objects which he collected for their symbolic value, in addition to their intrinsic qualities. As the artist himself stated, 'In these new works is represented the act of collecting and the way in which we give value and meaning to objects that apparently have none'.

The Basque artist, who now lives in Berlin, has carried out a pictorial project which invests its subjects with intense memory and an enigmatic and at times perturbing atmosphere originating in the very treatment of the depicted images: from the realism of their initial appearance, the images are immediately transformed into the ambivalences of a suspended mental representation, which finds its pictorial Wunderkammer in the idea of collecting.

In contrast to his past works, which are rigorously based on grey scales, these paintings were realised with a slight chromatic modulation which produces a sort of bas relief and stereoscopic effect. The oscillation of the perceptual field is here echoed in the psycho-emotional vibration triggered by these works, which thus manage to include subjective valences within the objectivity of representation.

In this exhibition, then, Urrutia continues his evocative personal journey around objects and modes of representation, challenging the viewer through playful allusions and emotive harmonies with the object observed in the painting. By means of this approach, which reveals as much as it cloaks in mystery, the artist presents a close-up view of the focal points of his works, moving abruptly from enlargement to distance. As occurs in the Memorabilia cycle, he thus rescues the objects from oblivion, returning them to the centre of attention and re-approaching them as delicate, suffused and memorial appearances.

### **Hard facts**

MAAB Gallery, Milano

Via Nerino 3 – 20123 Milano

From 17 November 2022 to 27 January 2023

From Monday to Friday - 10.30 am - 6 pm



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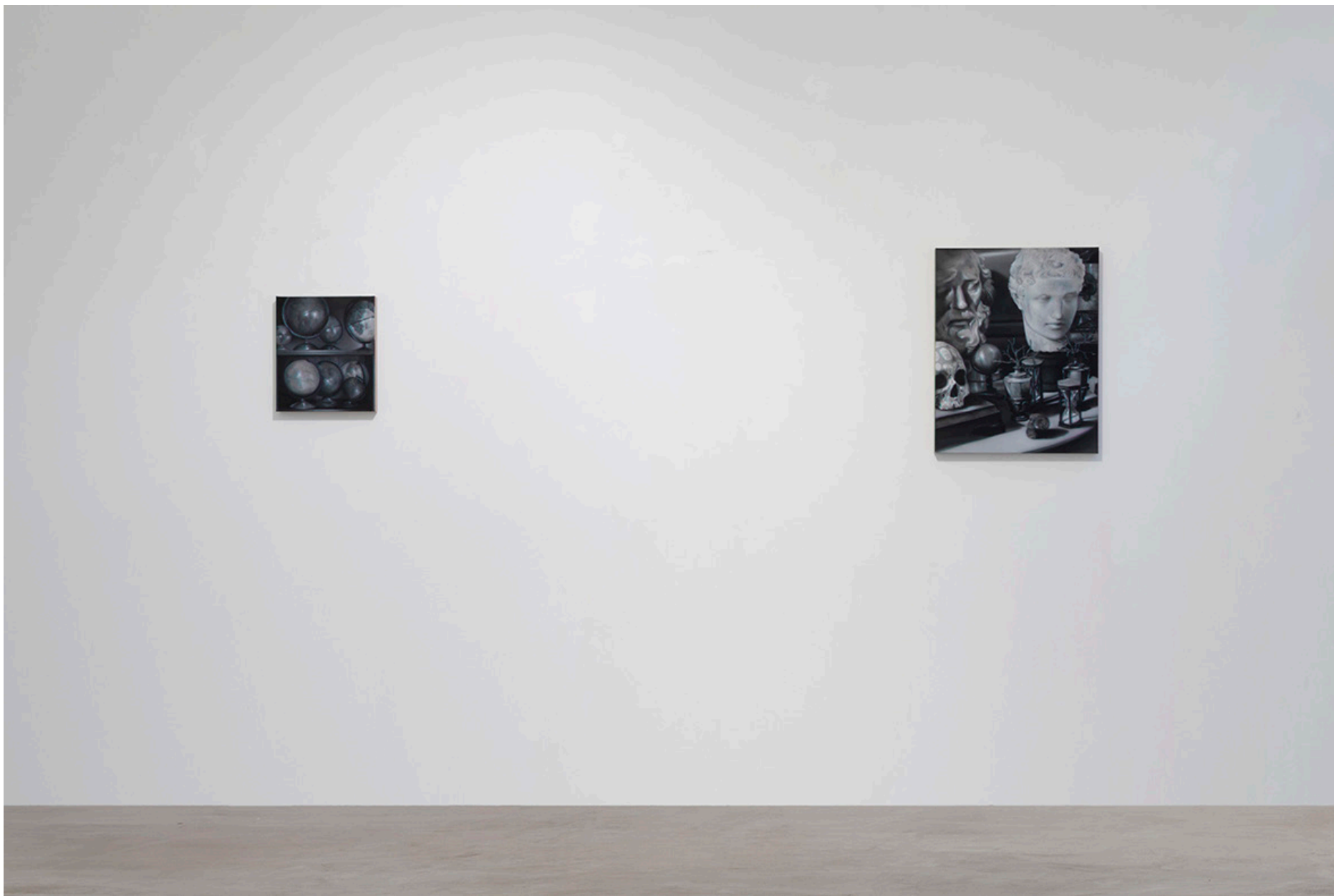
*Solo exhibition*

**Memorabilia**  
MAAB Gallery, Milano, 2022

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*Solo exhibition*

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MAAB Gallery, Milano, 2022

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*Solo exhibition*

**Memorabilia**  
MAAB Gallery, Milano, 2022



## MENTAL PAINTING

GIORGIO MORANDI, ALAIN URRUTIA

Un dialogo ideale tra l'opera di Giorgio Morandi e quella di Alain Urrutia. Se oggi la pittura espansa sperimenta in modo orizzontale sempre nuovi campi della tecnica e dell'immagine, questo progetto si muove in profondità, alla ricerca di un filo rosso di continuità tra un grande maestro italiano del Novecento e un giovane pittore spagnolo. La loro ricerca pittorica, pur così diversa, punta a trasfigurare la materia e gli oggetti, intrecciando emozione e metodo, materia e leggerezza, realtà e immaginario. Emerge in entrambi l'idea della "pittura cosa mentale", come la intendeva Leonardo Da Vinci. Una pittura rarefatta e concettuale che sa andare al di là dell'occasione e dell'iconografia, abitata da spirito di osservazione e sperimentazione, aperta sul mondo e disponibile verso la vita. Per Giorgio Morandi e per Alain Urrutia l'immagine dipinta partecipa con tutto il suo sistema di nessi spazio-temporali alla creazione di un ordine superiore, che rivendica autonomia e autosufficienza, anche se fortemente materiale e per niente mistico.

### GLI ARTISTI

Giorgio Morandi (Bologna 1890-1964) stabilisce un dialogo senza tempo con gli oggetti che rappresenta nelle sue opere. L'artista bolognese ha indagato la realtà fisica degli oggetti in una visione tanto ravvicinata quanto elusiva e trascendente, visioni sospese che se da una parte restituiscono brani minimi di realtà dall'altra si liberano nel ricordo e nelle tracce di un momento nel tempo: magia di apparizioni sia esistenziali che pratiche.

Seguendo le orme di Morandi e con un'intenzione simile, Alain Urrutia (Bilbao, 1981) inserisce ogni dipinto in una grande mappa mentale in continua crescita. Percorrendo nuove idee e territori, si avvicina e si allontana da ciò che non smette di cercare: ciò che resta imperituro sotto l'immobilità delle immagini. Prime sensazioni e azioni riflesse, luoghi comuni elementi primari, tutto questo crea nel suo lavoro intimità quanto spaesamento.



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## MENTAL PAINTING

GIORGIO MORANDI, ALAIN URRUTIA

an ideal dialogue between the works of Giorgio Morandi and Alain Urrutia.

If today's expanded painting experiments horizontally with ever new fields of technique and image, this project moves in depth, in search of a thread of continuity between a great master of the Italian Novecento and a young Spanish painter. Their pictorial researches, albeit so different, aim to transfigure matter and objects, interweaving emotion and method, matter and lightness, reality and imagination.

What emerges in both is the idea of "mental painting," as Leonardo Da Vinci intended it. A rarefied conceptual painting that transcends occasion and iconography, inhabited by a spirit of observation and experimentation, open to the world and towards life. For Giorgio Morandi and Alain Urrutia, the painted image participates with its entire system of space-time connections in the creation of a superior order, which claims autonomy and self-sufficiency, even if strongly material and not at all mystical.

### THE ARTISTS

Giorgio Morandi (Bologna 1890-1964) established a timeless dialogue with the objects he represented in his works. The Bolognese artist investigated the physical reality of objects in a vision that was as close as it was elusive and transcendent; suspended visions that if on the one hand suggest minimal fragments of reality, on the other they free themselves in the memory and traces of a moment in time: a magic of both existential and practical apparitions.

Following in Morandi's footsteps, and with a similar intention, Alain Urrutia (Bilbao, 1981) inserts each painting into a large, constantly growing mental map. As he pursues new ideas and territories, he approaches and moves away from what he is relentlessly searching for: what remains everlasting beneath the stillness of the images. First emotions and reflex actions, commonplaces, primary elements, all this creates intimacy as well as disorientation in his work.





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## ASK ME ANYTHING

GIUSEPPE COSTA, ANDREAS RAGNAR KASSAPIS, ALAIN URRUTIA

A cura di Massimiliano Scuderi

I discorsi sulla pittura riproducono i limiti stessi che li determinano, un di-dentro e un di-fuori dell'opera. Ed il primo è la stessa delimitazione della questione. Le opere presentate presso la galleria MAAB di Milano, pongono la questione delle possibili relazioni tra la pittura contemporanea e il mondo, ma anche tra la pittura e i vari linguaggi artistici della contemporaneità. Così come Vito Acconci nella realizzazione di alcuni video e performance era ispirato dai film noir degli anni cinquanta e sessanta, così la pittura indaga oggi, come ieri, altri ambiti disciplinari per costruire strategie, situazioni o semplicemente immagini che appartengono alla duplice pulsione dell'artista, come dice Baudrillard, di annientamento, di cancellazione di tutte le tracce dal mondo e di resistenza a tale forza annichilente.

Il titolo scelto dal curatore Massimiliano Scuderi esprime esattamente queste molteplici possibilità, un'aspirazione ad includere l'altro secondo una mutevole strategia.

Andreas Ragnar Kassapis (Atene 1981) propone una serie di lavori intitolati *Impostors* (2019) in cui mette in luce il suo interesse per i cataloghi e le vetrine di prodotti, e in generale per il design. Egli stesso dà una definizione di questi lavori come la realizzazione di una repressione freudiana all'interno di una struttura come la città o la libreria. Trovo qui il mio fascino per il disegno di design che vedo come minimizzazione della pittura gestuale, allo stesso modo del macina cioccolato di Marcel Duchamp. Tuttavia il mio interesse per la parte nascosta delle connotazioni sessuali all'interno del disegno di design e le sue simbolizzazioni politiche così come il suo valore mnemonico. Vedo l'oggetto come un corpo, l'oggetto come una mano.

Dei dipinti di Alain Urrutia (Bilbao 1981) colpisce soprattutto la loro "impenetrabilità emotiva", possiedono e producono una sorta di silenzio, una dimostrabile mancanza di leggibilità, anche una difficoltà che supera il loro argomento di per sé. Ispirato dalle immagini fotografiche, rallenta il processo di percezione per consentire percorsi verso nuove interpretazioni di immagini preesistenti, sollecitando lo spettatore a mettere in discussione le proprie ipotesi su ciò che osserva.

Il silenzio del giovane siciliano Giuseppe Costa (Palermo 1980) costruisce il contesto dei suoi paesaggi iconici, che ricordano le incisioni di lacche cinesi. Questo effetto, realizzato a grafite con una raffinatissima e delicata tecnica chiaroscurale, esprime una pittura - se così si può definire - che impone rigore, tempo e dedizione amanuense. C'è ancora l'incanto di fronte alla natura ed ai suoi fenomeni, includendo gli eventi dell'uomo, sospeso in un tempo infinito come quello delle vittime nel Mediterraneo.

### **Dati essenziali**

MAAB Gallery, Milano

Via Nerino 3 – 20123 Milano

Dall'1 ottobre al 4 dicembre 2020

Dal lunedì al venerdì dalle 10.30 alle 18

ALAIN URRUTIA

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## ASK ME ANYTHING

GIUSEPPE COSTA, ANDREAS RAGNAR KASSAPIS, ALAIN URRUTIA

Curated by Massimiliano Scuderi

Discussions about painting reproduce the same limits that define them, the inside and outside of the work. And the first is the very delimitation of the question. The works presented at the MAAB gallery in Milan pose the question of the possible relationships between contemporary painting and the world, but also between painting and various contemporary art languages. And so, just as Vito Acconci when making certain videos and performances was inspired by film noir for the 1950s and 1960s, so painting today, like that of yesterday, investigates other disciplinary areas in order to construct strategies, situations, or simply images that belong to the artist's double impulse, as Baudrillard says, to the annihilation and cancellation of all traces of the world and of resistance to such annihilating forces. The title chosen by the curator Massimiliano Scuderi exactly expresses these multiple possibilities, an aspiration to include otherness according to a changeable strategy.

Andreas Ragnar Kassapis (Athens 1981) proposes a series of works titled *Impostors* (2019) in which he highlights his interest in catalogues, products in shop windows, and design in general. He himself gives a definition of these works as *The realisation of a Freudian repression within a structure such as a city or bookshop*. It is here that I find my fascination for the drawing of design that I see as a minimisation of gestural painting, in the same way as a chocolate grinder by Marcel Duchamp. However, my interest is in the hidden part of the sexual connotations within the drawing of design and its political symbolisms, as well as in its mnemonic value. I see the object as a body, the object as a hand.

In the paintings by Alain Urrutia (Bilbao 1981) what is striking above all is their "emotive impenetrability"; they possess and produce a kind of silence, a demonstrable lack of legibility, and also a difficulty that supersedes their argument in itself. Inspired by photographic images, he slows down the process of perception to allow paths towards new interpretations of pre-existing images, stimulating the viewers to question their own hypotheses about what they can see.

The silence of the young Sicilian Giuseppe Costa (Palermo 1980) constructs the context of his iconic landscapes, that are reminiscent of Chinese lacquer works. This effect, realised in pencil with an extremely refined and delicate chiaroscuro technique, expresses a painting – if we can define it as that – that imposes rigour, time, and dedication to transcription. There is still enchantment in the face of nature and its phenomena, including the events of mankind, suspended in an infinite time like that of the victims in the Mediterranean.

### **Hard facts**

MAAB Gallery, Milano

Via Nerino 3 – 20123 Milano

From 1 October to 4 December 2020

From Monday to Friday - 10.30 am - 6 pm



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*Group exhibition*

***Ask Me Anything***  
MAAB Gallery, Milano, 2020

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## PRESENTATION

Born in 1981 in Bilbao, Spain  
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

## STUDIES

Graduation at the Basque Country University, Bilbao  
Graduation at the Brera Academy, Milano

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

### 2023

*Pensare con lo sguardo* - with Giorgio Morandi, MAAB Gallery, milano  
*Framed [12 Rooms]*, Kewenig Gallery, Berlin  
*The Immortal*, Galeria Pelaires, Palma

### 2022

*Memorabilia*, MAAB Gallery, Milano

### 2021

*Concittinio*, Galeria Pelaires, Palma

### 2019

*The Age of Anxiety*, Casado Santapau Gallery, Madrid  
*Pando* – with Aldo Chaparro, Aldo Chaparro Studio, Ciudad de Mexico

### 2018

*Mise en Abyme*, Plæt Project Space, Amsterdam  
*Mirror Rim*, Appleton Square, Lisbon

### 2017

'Mirror Rim'. DIDAC Foundation, Santiago de Compostela

### 2016

*Tierra y cemento (Sentarse y esperar)*, Juan Silió Gallery, Santander  
*20 minutos de Pensamiento Abstracto*, Casado Santapau Gallery, Madrid

### 2015

*Sociedade Anônima; True Lies*, KUNSTHALLE São Paulo, São Paulo

### 2013

*Gazing Again!*, Egg Gallery, Beijing  
*Revista de Occidente*, Casado Santapau Gallery, Madrid  
*Grey Flag*, Artium, Vitoria

### 2012

*Chapter II*, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao.  
*Nafragio/Esperanza*, Casado Santapau Gallery, Madrid  
*Aktionismus*, Sala Rekalde, Bilbao  
*Incomodidad y otros tiempos*, Juan Silió Gallery, Santander

### 2011

*The Coyote and the wolf*, MA STUDIO, Beijing  
*El quinto en discordia*, Torre de Ariz, Basauri

### 2009

*Wünscht*, BilbaoArte Foundation, Bilbao  
*Next*, Montehermoso Cultural Center, Vitoria-Gasteiz

### 2008

*Evig Sondag (Eternal Sunday)*, Stavanger



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**GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)**

**2023**

*Una tradición moderna*, BilbaoArte, Bilbao

*Tino Grandío. Correspondencias*, Centro Obra Abanca, Santiago de Compostela

*Un nuevo mundo por ver*, Museo Bellas Artes de Bilbao, Bilbao

*High Spirits*, Monopol, Berlin

*La distancia que hay entre A y B es la misma que entre B y A*, Museo Municipal de Arte Contemporáneo Conde Duque, Madrid

**2022**

*Basque Artist Programm (2015-2019)*, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao

*Una historia de arte reciente (1960-2020) II*, Fundación Juan March, Palma de Mallorca

**2021**

*Studiolo*, Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid

*Una historia del arte reciente / 1960-2020*, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca; Fundación Juan March, Palma

*An eye Line*, Egg Gallery, Beijing

*Pintura. Renovación permanente*, Museo del Patio Herreriano, Valladolid

*Spiritu Andante*, Archivo Colectivo Gallery, Ciudad de México

**2020**

*Ask Me Anything*, MAAB Gallery, Milano

*Remake*, SSIFF-68. Altxerri Gallery, Donostia - San Sebastián

*Armonías en blanco y negro*, Colección Los Bragales, Centro de Exposiciones Fundación Vital, Vitoria-Gasteiz

*La cuestión es ir tirando*, Centro Cultural de España en México, Ciudad de México

**2019**

*Soñé que un museo ardía*, Tasman Projects, Madrid

*Begira*, Bilbao Arte Fundazioa, Bilbao

**2017**

*Library of Love*, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati

*Hacer Amar Plantar Árboles*, Centro de Arte de Alcobendas, Madrid

*Sobrexposición*, EAC - Espacio de Arte Contemporáneo. Montevideo, Uruguay

*Pintura, Pintura, Pintura*, Espacio Proyectos - Fernando Pradilla, Madrid

*NO hay color*, Los Bragales Collection, Torre D. Borja, Santillana del Mar, Cantabria

*Del Rigor en la Ciencia*, Centro Parraga, Murcia

**2016**

*Rehabitar el espacio: presente, pasado y futuro*, Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid

*Viaja y no lo escribas*, Inéditos 16, La Casa Encendida, Madrid

*Bete Noire*, Musart-Berlin, Berlin

**2015**

*Brisure de symétrie* – with Nacho Martín-Silva, Sobering Gallery, Paris

*Susan Fletcher in dialogue with Alain Urrutia*, Herbert Read Gallery - UCA, Canterbury

*Feelers*, BCA // Boston Center for the Arts, Boston

*La piel translúcida*, Centro Cultural Bancaja, Valencia

*La mirada plural*, Museo Muñoz Sola/ Fundación María Forcada, Tudela

*Tener que sentir*, Centro de Cultura Antiguo Instituto, Gijón

*Monochrome*, Beers Contemporary Gallery, London

*Saturation*, Coperfield Gallery, London

**2014**

*Crise de identidade*, Eugenio Granell Museum, Santiago de Compostela

*Suturak/Cerca a lo próximo*, Museo San Telmo, Donostia/San Sebastián

*Dibujo Contemporáneo DKV*, DA2, Salamanca

**2013**

*Historias de la Historia*, Barrié Foundation, Vigo

*2014; Antes de irse*, MAC, A Coruña

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*Freestyle*, Cajamurcia Cultural Centre, Cartajena  
*In Situ*, OTR Art Space, Madrid  
*Presages*, FIFlprojects, Ciudad de Mexico

**2012**

*Wunderkammer*, Museum Nacht, Delft  
*Prospectus*, Biancovolta, Via de Piagge, Viterbo

**2011**

*A montanha encantada*, Mario Sequeira Gallery, Braga  
*Un disparo de advertencia*, Lalín  
*EXPOLIS*, Triennale di Milano, Milano  
*Melodías Prohibidas*, S.O.S. 4.8, Murcia

**2010**

*Todo disfraz*, OTR Art Space, Madrid  
*Antes que todo/Before Everything*, CA2M, Móstoles  
*Oscuro y salvaje*, Inéditos 10, La Casa Encendida

**RESIDENCES AND FELLOWSHIP**

**2018**

Basque Government Arts fellowship, Bilbao

**2016**

Basque Government Arts fellowship, Bilbao

**2015**

Guggenheim Basque Artist Program, New York

**2014**

Basque Government Arts fellowship, Bilbao

**2012**

Basque Government Arts fellowship, Bilbao

**2011**

MA STUDIO Resident Fellowship, Beijing

**2010**

Bizkaia Provincial Council Arts Fellowship, Bilbao

**2008**

Rogaland Art Centre Of Stavanger Exchange Fellowship  
Bilbaoarte Art Project Residence Grant, Bilbao



***Memento 24***, 2024  
olio su lino su tavola  
oil on linen on board  
diam. 9,5 cm (diam. 3,74 in)



***Mental Painting #13***, 2024  
olio su lino su tavola  
oil on linen on board  
23 x 17 cm (9,95 x 6,69 in)

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***Pensare con lo sguardo #13***, 2024

olio su lino su tavola

oil on linen on board

21 x 15 cm (8,27 x 5,90 in)



***Mental Painting #15***, 2024  
olio su lino su tavola  
oil on linen on board  
21 x 15 cm (8,27 x 5,90 in)



***Pensare con lo sguardo #14***, 2024  
olio su lino su tavola  
oil on linen on board  
23 x 17 cm (9,95 x 6,69 in)



***Mental Painting #16***, 2024  
olio su lino su tavola  
oil on linen on board  
17 x 23 cm (6,69 x 9,95 in)





***Pensare con lo sguardo #16***, 2024  
olio su lino su tavola  
oil on linen on board  
21 x 15 cm (8,27 x 5,90 in)

ALAIN URRUTIA

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***Pensare con lo sguardo #2***, 2023

olio su lino su tavola

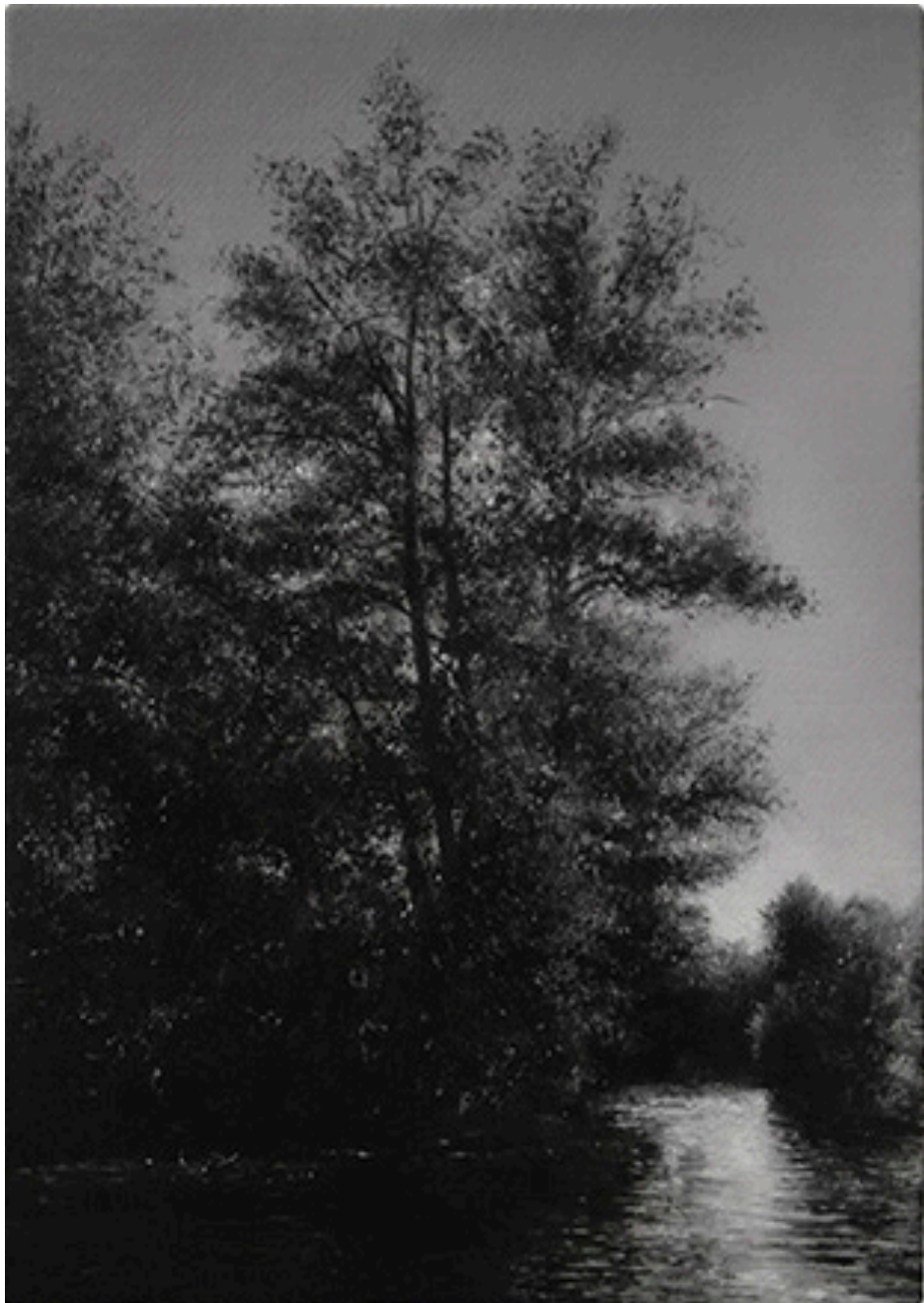
oil on linen on board

21 x 15 cm (8,27 x 5,90 in)

ALAIN URRUTIA

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***Pensare con lo sguardo #4***, 2023

olio su lino su tavola

oil on linen on board

23 x 17 cm (9,95 x 6,69 in)



***Pensare con lo sguardo #5***, 2023  
olio su lino su tavola  
oil on linen on board  
23 x 17 cm (9,95 x 6,69 in)



***Pensare con lo sguardo #6***, 2023

olio su lino su tavola

oil on linen on board

21 x 15 cm (8,27 x 5,90 in)

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***Pensare con lo sguardo #7***, 2023

olio su lino su tavola

oil on linen on board

21 x 15 cm (8,27 x 5,90 in)



***Pensare con lo sguardo #8***, 2023  
olio su lino su tavola  
oil on linen on board  
17 x 23 cm (6,69 x 9,05 in)



***Pensare con lo sguardo #9***, 2023  
olio su lino su tavola  
oil on linen on board  
17 x 23 cm (6,69 x 9,05 in)

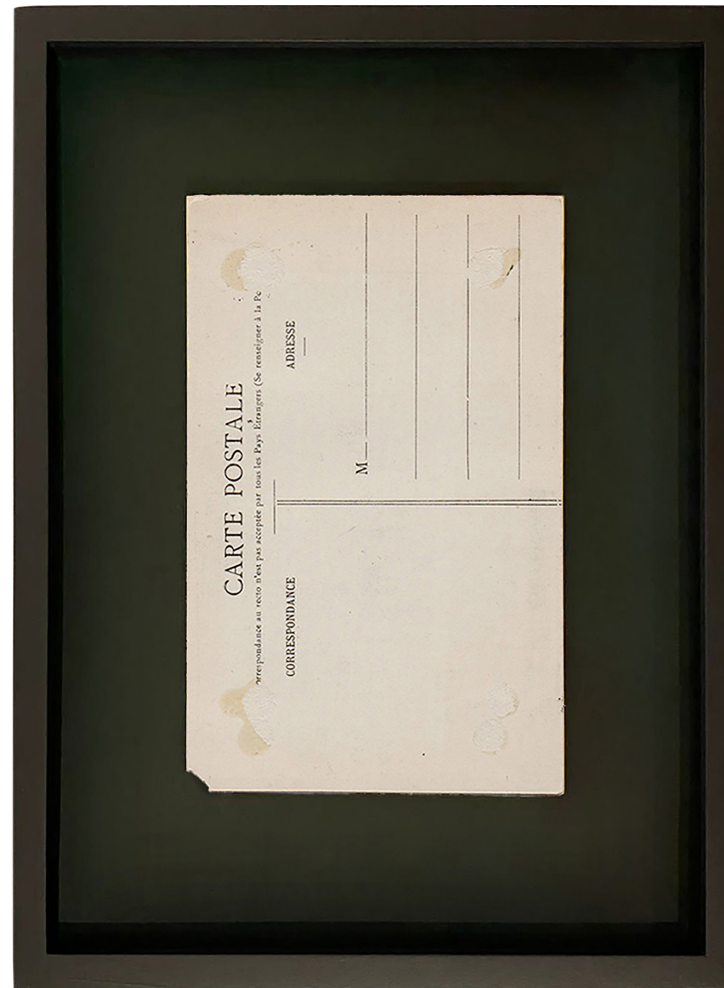




***Pensare con lo sguardo #10***, 2023  
olio su lino su tavola  
oil on linen on board  
17 x 23 cm (6,69 x 9,05 in)



**Nox #8**, 2023  
olio su lino su tavola  
oil on linen on board  
23 x 17 cm (9,95 x 6,69 in)



***Historias de Fontainebleau, 184. Forêt de Fontainebleau.***

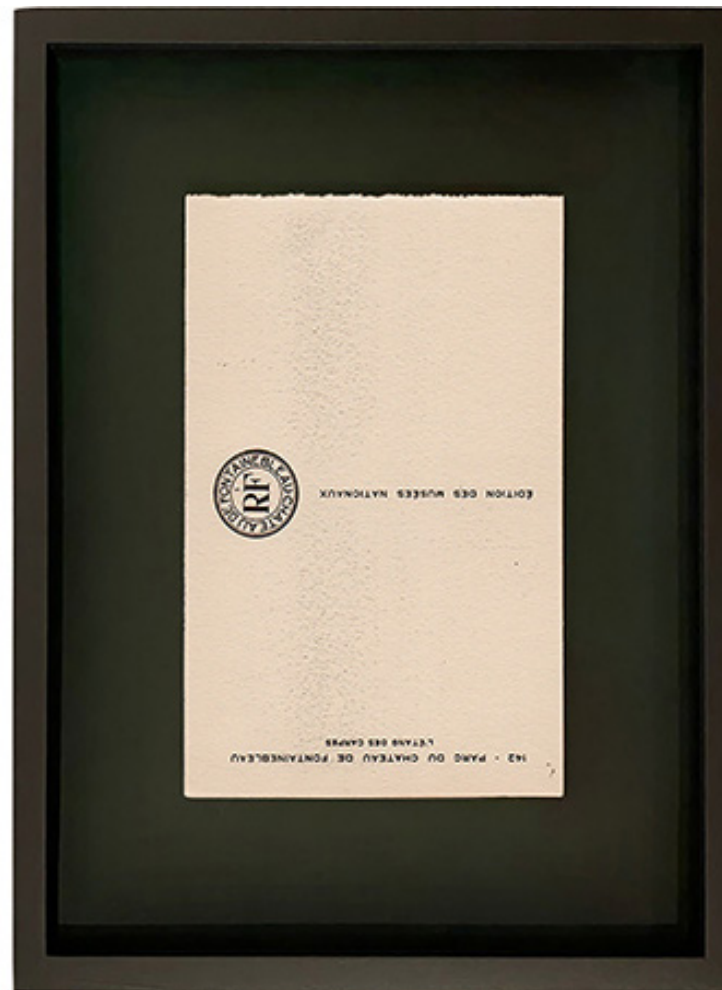
***Le Chêne-Charmé, 2022***

olio su lino su tavola

oil on linen on board

21 x 15 cm (8,27 x 5,90 in)

cartolina postcard ca. 1910



***Historias de Fontainebleau, 142. Forêt de Fontainebleau.***

***L'étang des Carpes, 2022***

olio su lino su tavola

oil on linen on board

21 x 15 cm (8,27 x 5,90 in)

cartolina postcard ca. 1910



***Historias de Fontainebleau, 120. Forêt de Fontainebleau.  
Chaos de Fonceveaux (Mont Ussy), 2022***

olio su lino su tavola

oil on linen on board

15 x 21 cm (5,90 x 8,27 in)

cartolina postcard ca. 1910



***Historias de Fontainebleau, 20. Forêt de Fontainebleau.***

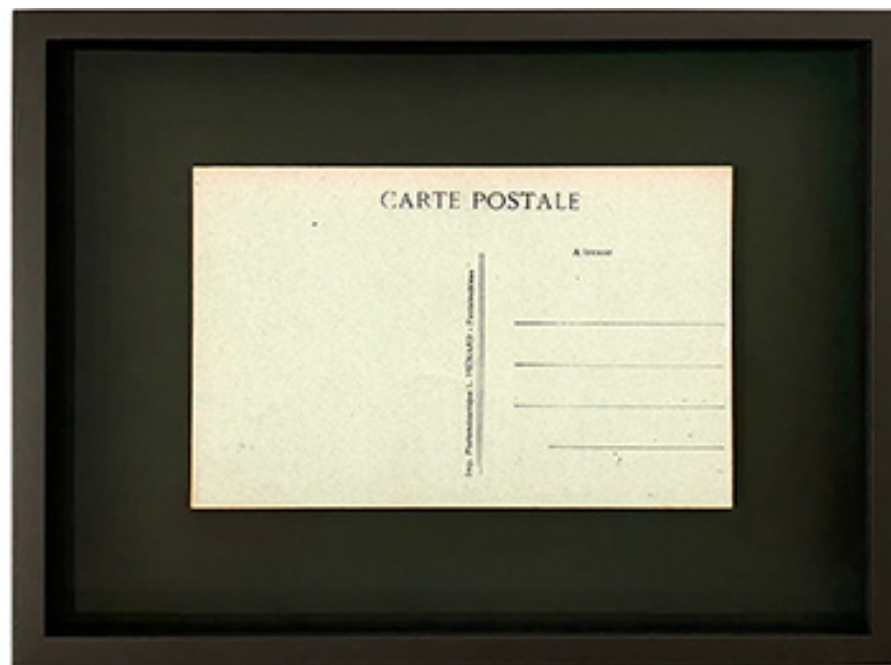
***La Garge aux Loups, 2022***

olio su lino su tavola

oil on linen on board

15 x 21 cm (5,90 x 8,27 in)

cartolina postcard ca. 1910



***Historias de Fontainebleau, 1031. Forêt de Fontainebleau.***

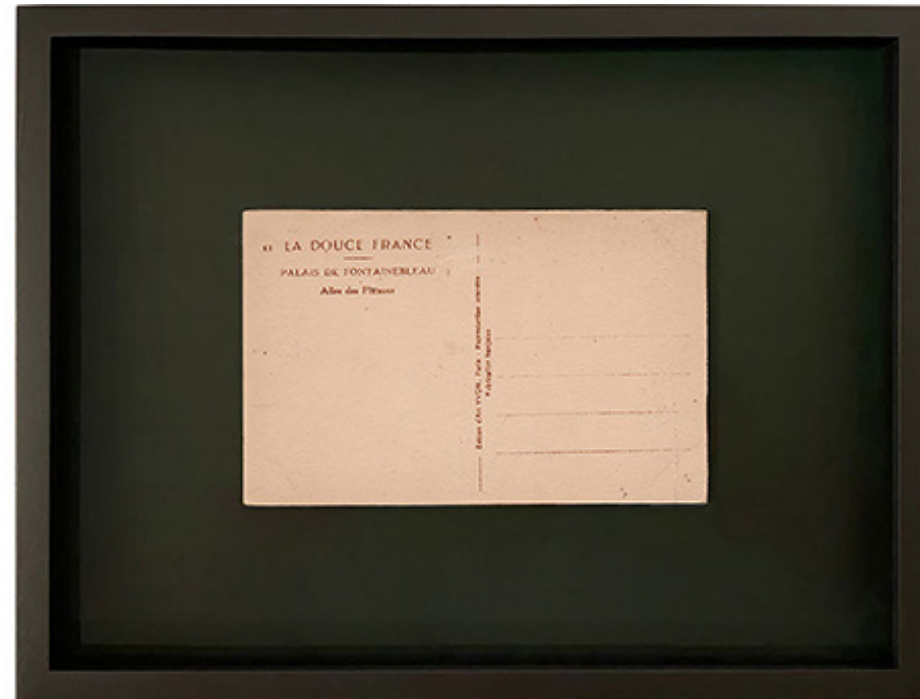
***Le Canal du Parc, 2022***

olio su lino su tavola

oil on linen on board

15 x 21 cm (5,90 x 8,27 in)

cartolina postcard ca. 1910



***Historias de Fontainebleau, 11. Palais de Fontainebleau.***

***Allée des Plataues, 2022***

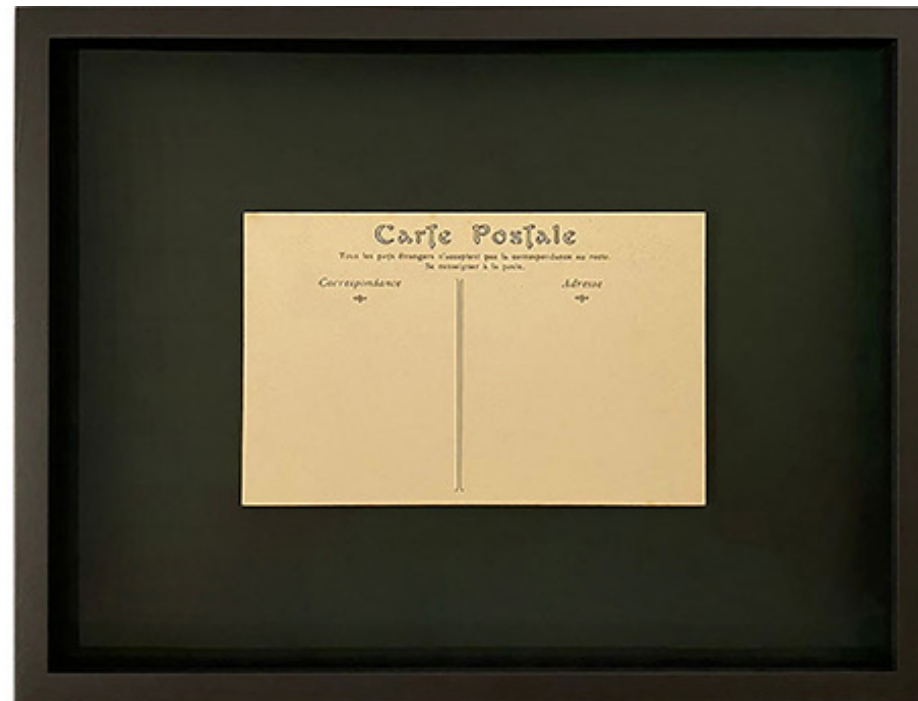
olio su lino su tavola

oil on linen on board

17 x 23 cm (6,69 x 9,05 in)

cartolina postcard ca. 1910





***Historias de Fontainebleau, 66. Forêt de Fontainebleau.***

***La Mare aux Fée, 2022***

olio su lino su tavola

oil on linen on board

17 x 23 cm (6,69 x 9,05 in)

cartolina postcard ca. 1910

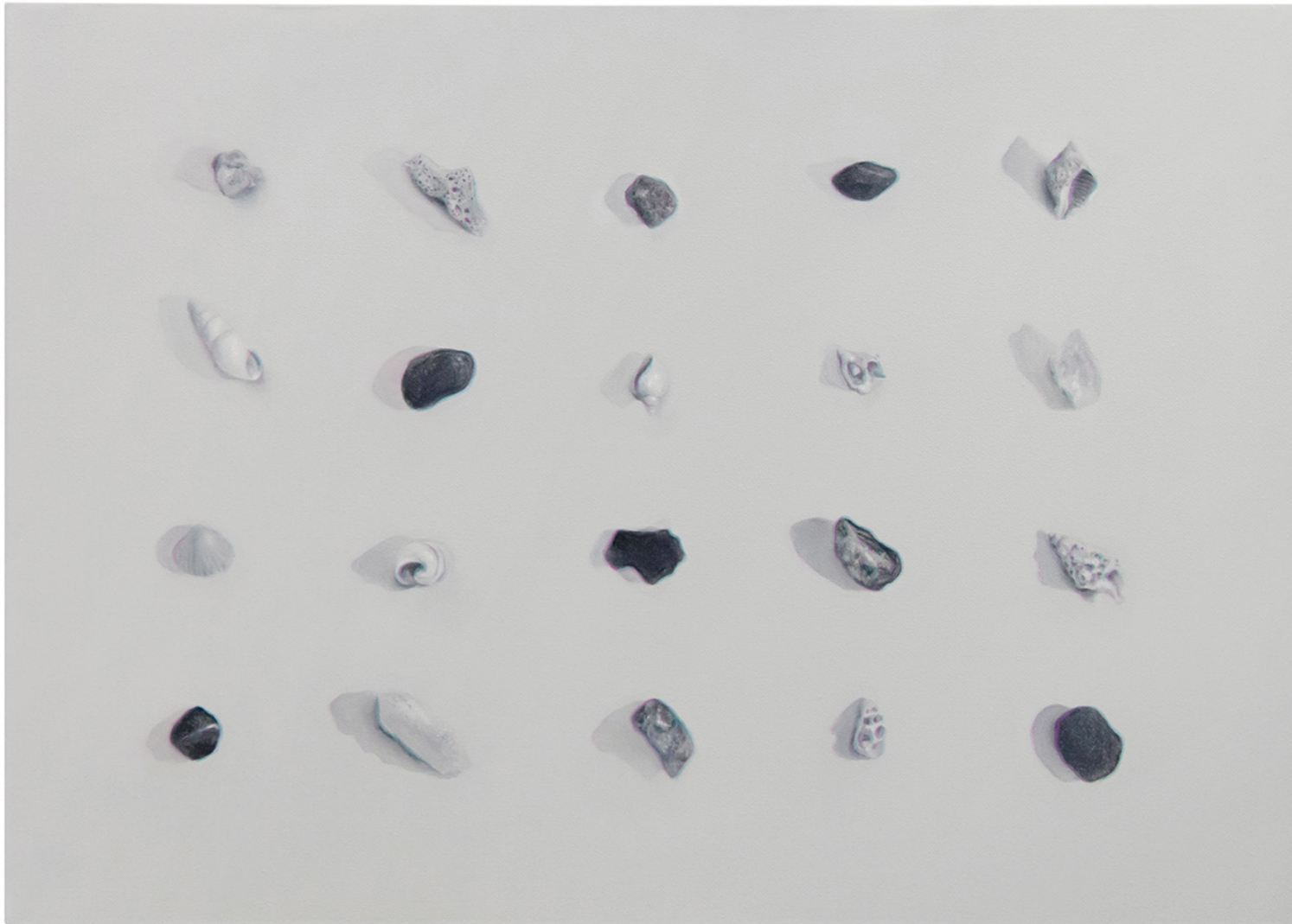


***Memorabilia #1***, 2022

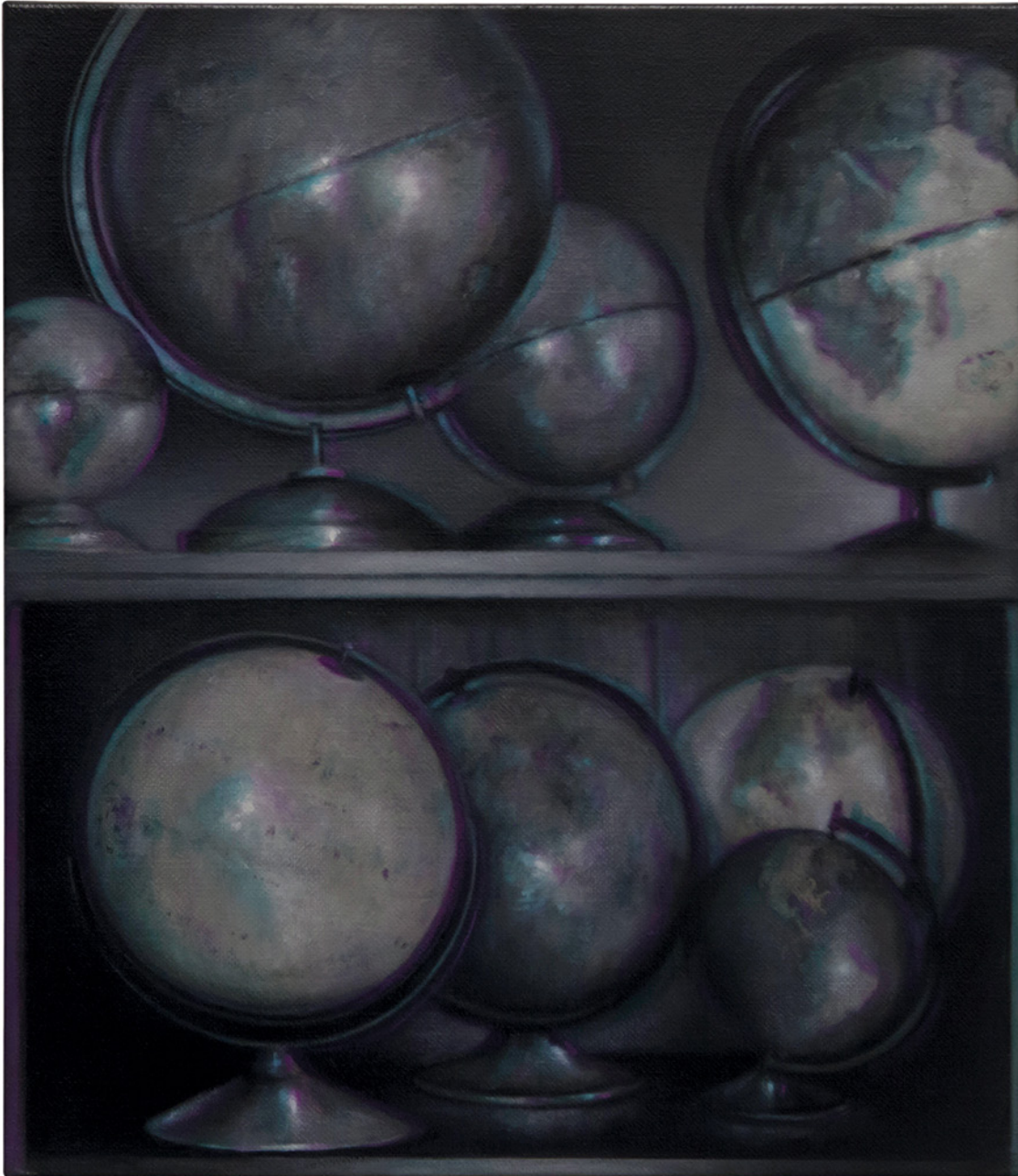
olio su lino

oil on linen

70 x 55 cm (27,56 x 21,65 in)



**Memorabilia #6**, 2022  
olio su lino  
oil on linen  
51 x 70 cm (20,08 x 27,56 in)



***Memorabilia #4***, 2022  
olio su lino  
oil on linen  
40 x 35 cm (15,75 x 13,78 in)

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***Pando***, 2018-2019  
olio su lino su tavola  
oil on linen on board  
21 x 15 cm (8,27 x 5,90 in)

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***ORPHAN PAINTINGS (after Giovan Battista Moroni)***, 2019

olio su lino su tavola

oil on linen on board

17 x 23 cm (6,69 x 9,05 in)



**Untitled**, 2010  
struttura metallica e olio su tela  
metal structure and oil on canvas



***Nostalgia [4]***, 2016  
olio su lino  
oil on linen  
115 x 145 cm (42,27 x 57,09 in)





***Nostalgia [2]***, 2016  
olio su lino  
oil on linen  
115 x 145 cm (42,27 x 57,09 in)



***Cielo de verano***, 2020  
olio su lino  
oil on linen  
140 x 190 cm (55,12 x 74,80 in)



***Mental Painting #12***, 2021-2022  
olio su lino  
oil on linen  
17 x 23 cm (6,70 x 9,05 in)



***Postcards #3 (Pando)***, 2022

olio su lino su tavola

oil on linen on board

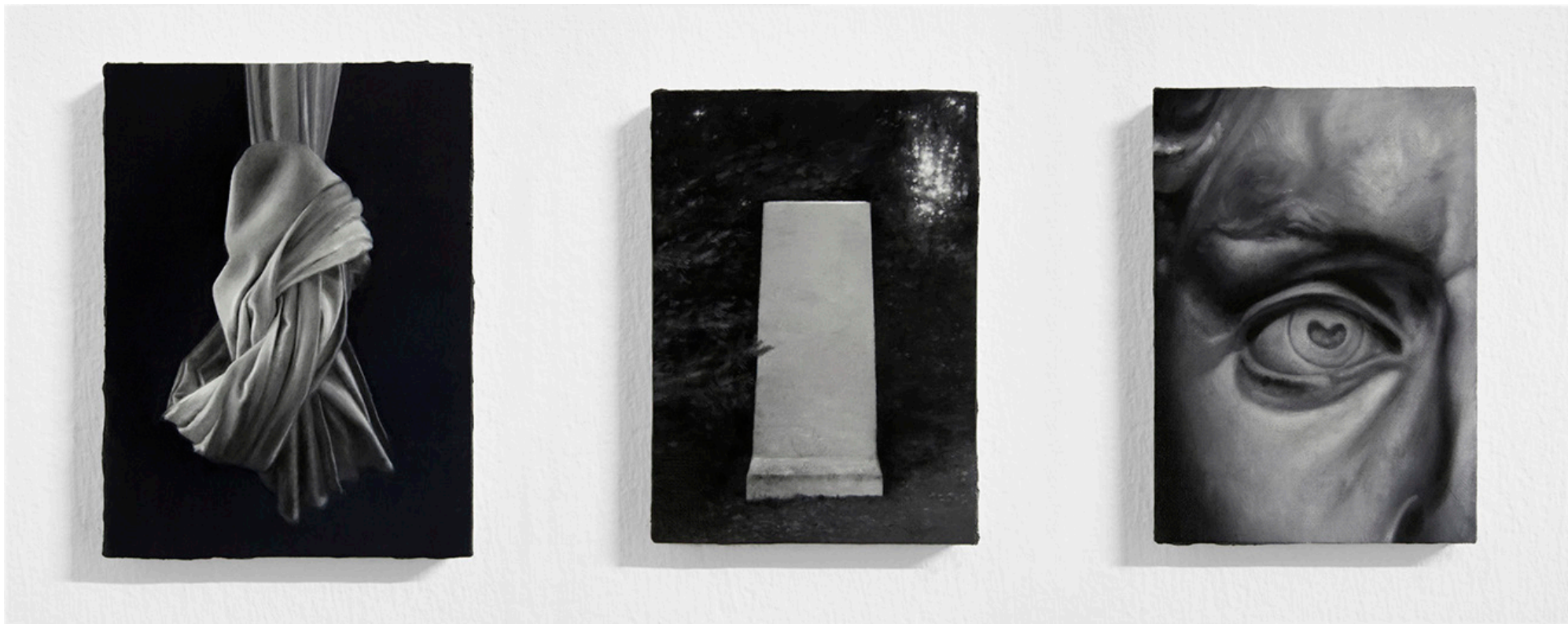
105 x 130 cm + 15 x 17 cm (41,34 x 51,18 in + 5,90 x 6,69 in)



***El paseo (grupo 2)***, 2019  
olio su lino  
oil on linen  
dimensioni variabili (variable dimensions)



***El paseo (grupo 4)***, 2019  
olio su lino  
oil on linen  
dimensioni variabili (variable dimensions)



***El paseo (grupo 5)***, 2019  
olio su lino  
oil on linen  
dimensioni variabili (variable dimensions)





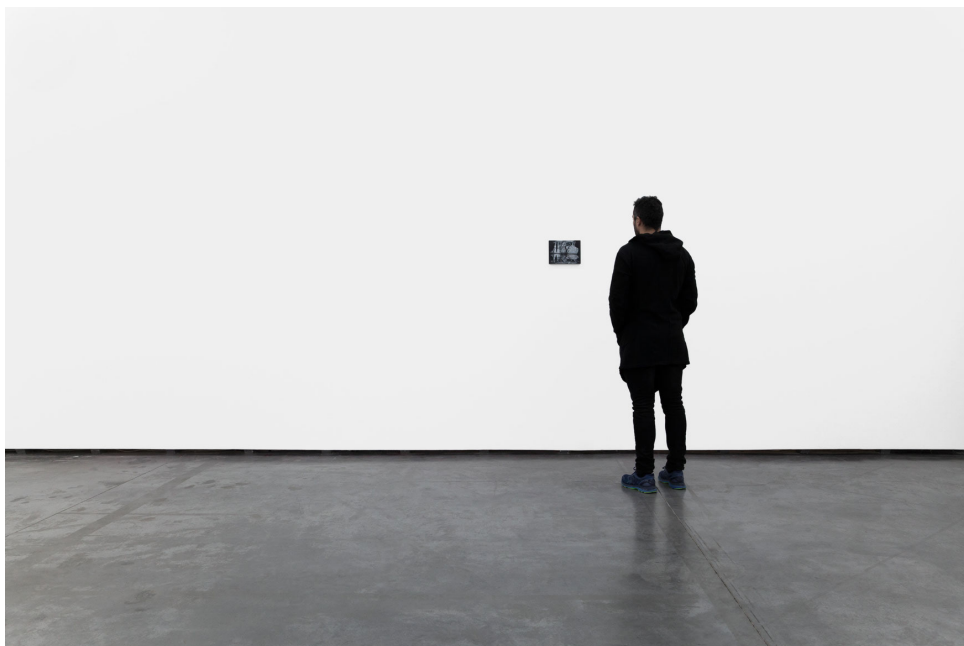
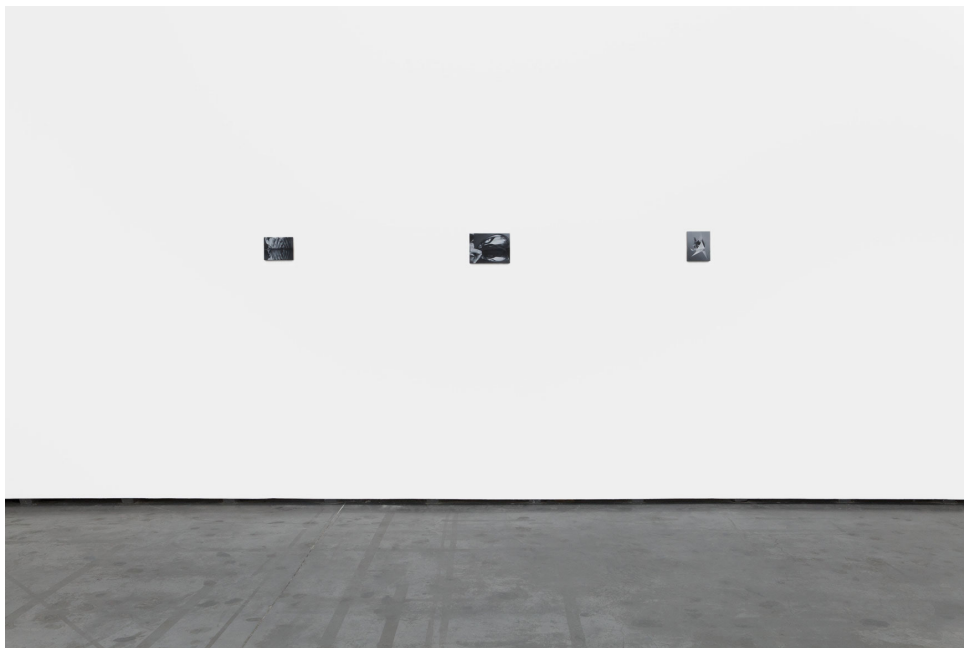




*Group exhibition*

***Una historia de arte reciente (1960-2020) II***  
Fundación Juan March  
Palma de Mallorca, 2021





*Solo exhibition*

***Mirror Rim***

Appleton Square Foundation. Lisbon, 2018





*Solo exhibition*

**Sociedade Anônima**  
Kunsthalle São Paulo, São Paulo, 2015



## THE AGE OF ANXIETY

### CAROLINA PUIGDEVALL

The long poem by W. H. Auden on the continuous search for the meaning of existence in a changing world without brakes inspired Bernstein, who captured this feeling in a symphony of the same title. Under the influence of this same symphony, as a kind of soundtrack of contemporary ethos, Alain Urrutia paints the series of works that form this exhibition which as usual, invites to reflect, to pause and to fix the gaze on a single image. A recognition of the slowness in front of the continuous scrolling with which we codify the images surrounding us, inside and outside the screens.

As it was the case in previous works such as *20 Minutes of Abstract Thinking*, Alain Urrutia tries to obtain something very specific from the viewer: their time. The need for a relaxed tour of the exhibition space to contemplate the images and engage in dialogue with them. *The Age of Anxiety* leaves behind the idea of an «empty room» in which the works of small format are mixed with the wall, and an apparently full room opens up, in which the canvases -not the images- occupy more space, causing the initial sensation of the viewer, who believes he can cover the exhibition with his eyes at the first general glance, quickly transform and are forced to retrace the steps, to start the road again and, unavoidably, to stop. As in Bernstein's symphony, the void becomes silence, and the only way out of it is to cross it in a conscious way.

The images, or meta-images, relate to each other, raise questions about their own nature, about the way we look at them, the reading we give them or the one that is given to us. All of them belong to the artist's imaginary, and although they have been conceived independently and stripped of their meaning, they belong to a plural and transversal fabric of ideas that suggest a different way of looking, in which attention becomes the key to figure out the message.

The conceptual map that accompanied the paintings in previous exhibitions and that unravelled the connections between them now disappears to make way for a conventional text [*the one you are reading*], which accentuates the responsibility of the viewer at the moment of reading the images. This help is no longer necessary, because they all have a double dimension; visual and textual, and are at the same time an object of study and the necessary tool for reflection.

*The Age of Anxiety* invites us to look once more at the modernity surrounding us and is, at the same time, a refuge from it.



## ON THE OTHER SIDE

### DAVID BARRO

#### *A conversation with Alain Urrutia*

A cursory glance might suggest that very little has changed in Alain Urrutia's painting since he first burst onto the scene a decade ago, staking a place for himself in the complicated contemporary art world. His quests are apparently the same, but the process of coming up with answers or new questions is increasingly more intense or condensed. As I have argued elsewhere when speaking about this artist, his technical dexterity allows him to cultivate a kind of painting that is fast in process yet slow in reception. One thing for sure, however, in Alain Urrutia's ongoing evolution is how he has learnt to tarry so that an image can deploy the full potential of its wealth. Gadamer calls this *verweilen*, a kind of unhurried waiting that eventually discloses the interiorities of the work. This is because -and this is increasingly so- Urrutia's projects entail a profound prior reflection, detracting spontaneity from the idea though without, extirpating the intuitive inspiration that drives his practice. In other words, he has become more demanding, calling into question each and every step he takes and how to keep on painting. To put it more succinctly, I would say that, without ceasing to be a painter, he has managed to become even more of an artist.

Of course, these premises I am setting out could be seen as part of a natural evolution. However, I highlight them, it is because it is not easy to be always right about the many decisions to be taken: timing, scale, form, motifs and so on. Alain Urrutia is one of those painters in control of their craft—he always has been, technically speaking—but today he is in possession of better resources and time has bestowed him with greater technical skill. Furthermore, for some years now he construes his projects beforehand, without the pressure of the deadline of an exhibition opening. In this regard, he has also learnt to tarry, putting his works on hold. And all this has its effect on the reception of the beholder, who has to take this waiting, its rhythms, voids and disappearances into account. Urrutia continues to take his decisions fearlessly, from a limited spectrum of colours, though now he considers this second time: the time of the spectator, and of the encounter. You could say that, today, he is a less anxious artist; something which can be appreciated in the very finish of his works, or in his more carefully-conceived compositions, as well as in his way of presenting himself publicly. Alain Urrutia is a mature artist, much more than one would expect from someone of his generation.

For some people, this may suggest a more cryptic, less colourful, less spectacular painting, yet, for others, among whom I include myself, this concatenation of circumstances has prompted a brand of painting with capital P, where the format is less important than the intensity and the weight; in short, a painting for painters. This is largely owing to a demanding process that has consciously taken the artist out of his comfort zone or, if you will, his area of success. It is no accident that for his latest phase in London, there is no return ticket. For a foreign artist, arriving to a city like London is always a new beginning. And it is precisely when you are forced to have to explain your work from scratch, forced to completely rethink it, that you realise that you have to choose between continuing happily in the inertia of a well-executed work or asking yourself why, how, when and for what purpose you should continue painting. Urrutia wisely chose the more difficult path, the place for a slow, attentive, reflective and tarried gaze. Once again, painting as a coded message now expanded in space.

**David Barro:** I have followed your career for over a decade now. Our first contact was via email, discussing what kind of work was best suited to exhibit in the no longer existing Injuve Visual Arts Show which was to be held a few months later at Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid. At the time you said that even though the choice of images was not arbitrary you were unable to put it into words. Since then, I believe that your painting has become increasingly more

complex. To a certain extent, I would say that the figuration of your earlier phase as a painter has now become more emotional, albeit paradoxically more concentrated, as if today images operated as a projection of abstract essence, and are increasingly more indefinite, more removed from the starting point. Memory dilutes the image, distorts it, though everything still rhymes.

**Alain Urrutia:** I'm not sure about speaking of painting in terms of complexity. I'd lean more towards speaking in terms of maturity. With the passing of time I am able to look back at my early work and it has taught me how to address new projects differently. All these changes have taken place naturally.

**DB:** The colour of your paintings is not the same unfocused black and white that produced such good results for those artists interested in the aging of the image and in representing the unrepresentable.

**AU:** The way I see it, it is directly related with the changes I just mentioned. We shouldn't think that this evolution is restricted solely to formal concerns, because it also affects the conceptual part too. Either way, there is no rupture with my previous work, as I am still concerned with the idea of looking for new readings of pre-existing images; with the idea of fragmenting and reconstructing their reality and excising their very history through painting.

**DB:** You've called it *desaturated painting*. I like that. Of course, I am reminded of all those great painters who have also deliberately sought, from a technical viewpoint, "flawed technique" in order to separate the paint from any mimetic remit. And I am also reminded of when Deleuze said "paint the sensation", though he said it when talking about Bacon, an artist who I believe you are closer to all the time in your way of foreshortening, of working with the idea of the threshold, the intermediary space, the in-between, with time itself. Bacon was a master in uneasy concealment and therein his idea of placing thick glass that would impede access to what he painted.

**AU:** With regards the idea to "paint the sensation" that Deleuze speaks about in his book *The Logic of Sensation* and in the way in which you relate it with the idea of "flawed technique", I believe that it is important to clarify that I am not after flaws in technique. On the contrary, I try to ensure that the technique is imperceptible and that, putting it to one side, it is not a barrier between us and the image. I have never given much thought to unease as a result of concealment, but, at the end of the day, in my practice I repeat this idea of showing enough to let people understand that there are things that remain hidden. This is directly related with obstacles to hinder access to what is painted. Nor should you forget that some images are impenetrable. For me it is important to understand whether the image is impenetrable due to its formalization or simply because it is impenetrable in itself.

**DB:** Absolutely. I know that you are not after flawed technique, though I would disagree that the technique in your works is imperceptible, especially when you play with a palimpsest of varnishes, letting the skin of the painting surface smoothly as if it had the feel of an elegant piano. In addition, I believe that the idea of flawed technique in painters like Richter or Tuymans, insofar as methodology, has not so much to do with searching for flaws in technique, but with appropriating a process of impurity as a kind of painterly device to construct an image with meaning.

**AU:** If we were to understand it as an impure process to construct meaning, then I would agree with the idea of *flawed technique*. Ultimately, the construction of meaning is the groundbase of my whole practice. That's not to say that, to start with, the existing images don't already have one, but my intention is to give them new readings. The formalization doesn't take place as a simple transposition of an existing image into painting. Painting not only makes what is painted more than a simple representation, but it also ensures that what is represented becomes real. In this way, I not only bestow meaning but I also

construct the image itself.

**DB:** That agrees with Gerhard Richter's premise: if reality becomes an image in photography, when it is turned into painting the image becomes reality. Indeed, in your work there is a kind of diversion that is somehow also redolent of a certain memory from a strange and disturbing corporality, in step with the dislocation proposed by artists like Bacon and Borremans. I don't know whether grasping this distortion is what has led you to work recently with mirrored images. Almost certainly this is where we will come up most incisively against the paradox of the image, with motifs that are stretched and deformed, that shrink and expand; everything turns towards the unknown, towards an area of conflict.

**AU:** I am interested in mirrored images for several reasons. One is as basic as the attraction towards mirrors we have all had since childhood. I remember the first time I read Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, especially the part where, just before crossing through the mirror, Alice describes the room she sees reflected as different to the room where she is. Since then I have always thought that mirrors reflect fragments of this other world. When I moved to London, I found a mirror on the street and without knowing what I was going to do with it, I took it home with me. Every day when I arrived home, I emptied the contents of my pockets on it. After a while I started to photograph what was happening there. Later on I became conscious that by turning around the images of the reflected objects you got a very strange point of view. It was like being on the other side of the mirror. Then I started to work with this idea and I changed from looking for the reflection of objects to looking for the reflection of photographs. The necessary twofoldedness to reveal the reflected image created the distortions you mentioned.

**DB:** The mirror in art has always been a fantastic voyage for the gaze and this voyage is created by the dislocation of the body and of space. It is as if space never becomes fully definitive. The field of vision in your current works is expanded when the gaze is destabilised. This even further accentuates painting as a transitive space. The mirror is a challenge and a utopia because it is a place without place, but it is also a heterotopia, as theorised by Foucault.

**AU:** It's obvious that the fragments we see of this other world through mirrors, these distortions of images or our relationship with the reflected image, speak to that other heterotopian place that Foucault talked about. I'm glad that you speak about mirrors as a place without place, as a challenge and a utopia. It is there, in its ability to contain a place within its two dimensions, where the magic lies. Working with mirrored images was just something natural in the process of my work and was a response to a question that had been bothering me for some time. I had been invited to prepare an exhibition for the DIDAC Foundation in Santiago de Compostela which would then travel to Appleton Square in Lisbon. I started wondering about how the exhibition would mutate on its tour. By creating images around their vertical axis, which would work in composition when turned around, I could create a project in which the paintings were shown in each of their two possible positions. In this way, the second exhibition would be a reflection of the first. Months later, when talking to you about a possible title for the exhibitions, we reached the conclusion that *Mirror Rim* would be perfect; the mirror-like palindrome would also make reference to the edge of the mirror, so present in this project.

**DB:** In the Baroque the artwork was looked on as an infinite operation and, in this sense, I see your work as leaning towards the Baroque. The mirror is presented to us as the end of objectivity. In contemporary art we have key examples, like Pistoletto's *Cuadri specchianti* or Robert Rauschenberg's *non sites*; although my favourite example is when Giuseppe Penone made his self-portrait in 1970 wearing contact lenses with mirrored surfaces. The eyes reflect in the space the images they perceive in their usual observation, delaying in time the faculty of seeing, but also transmitting the information with the work before the artist himself sees it. The images in *Mirror Rim* are, like Penone's contact lenses, instruments to begin the transition of constructing the gaze. To my way of thinking, paradoxically, your work now takes on greater abstract density.

**AU:** Now that you mention abstract density, I see it as something that has accentuated with the passing of time. There are still works in which I am interested in images and the stories they hide. At once I like painting's capacity to tell stories, and in my more recent work the motif of the painting is an excuse to talk about other things. I suppose that is what you are referring to when you talk about the indecisiveness of images and, indeed, this is something that happens to a greater extent in my recent work. In *Mirror Rim* each image has its *raison d'être* within the overall whole, but the idea that encompasses the project—making turned-around images, like the second exhibition, that would operate as a reflection of the first—makes the particularity of what happens in each painting remain on a secondary level. Even still, this type of project comes with a conceptual map that affords keys to the relationship and origin of the images.

**DB:** The same thing happens in your *20 Minutes of Abstract Thinking*.

**AU:** That's right. The exhibition operates like a walk on which one comes across images that have no apparent connection with one another. There is a certain similarity between coming across these images on this exhibition walkthrough and Robert Walser's *The Walk*. The tiny format of the paintings in both projects and the way in which they are arranged in large open spaces, creates the sensation of walking between them and coming across images in such a way that when you are in front of one of them the rest are blocked out. And this gives the walkthroughs a hypnagogic quality.

**DB:** It is not easy to achieve, because this alleged hypnagogic state you mention is only possible if the visitor to the exhibition is relaxed. In this state of contemporary acceleration we live in, where most people see exhibitions as if through a tracking radar, without time to tarry a while in front of any of the images or, in any case, to discriminate which images they are interested in and want to stop in front of, the enterprise and challenge you take on is huge. Of course, it is true that the small format means another kind of intensity because of the empty space it creates, paradoxically lending more visual weight to each individual work, in comparison with larger works. This subjective, ironic and ambiguous construction can be seen in the work you made for the exhibition I curated for Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Gas Natural Fenosa called *2014. Antes de irse. 40 ideas sobre pintura* that is now part of the museum's collection. The work *Paraleloan (In Parallel)* is made up of two images. On one hand, a large oil on canvas measuring 250 x 400 cm which depicts an apparently violent scene of hands holding open the mouth of a dog with fierce canines. On the other, a small, outwardly charming portrait of a beautiful woman whose face is held by a man's hand. The former responds to a rough form of imaging; the latter to a smooth play of glazes and polyurethane varnish that softens the image even further. A more thorough or detained gaze suggests that only the owner or a vet would place their hands around a dog's mouth in this way, and also that the hand which at first glance seems to caress the woman's face is really a violent hand. Could you explain how you address and look for this ambivalence and whether the choice of format is part of this conceptual play rather than a purely formal decision.

**AU:** Here we could approach the issue of the format from two different levels, depending on what I am after: conceptual and formal. When I was working on *Paraleloan*, I felt the need to understand the way we have of reading or interpreting images, depending on the way I wish to formalise them. This can lead to a completely different reading. In this specific case, I wanted the initial interpretation to be false and for the correct reading, as you've just explained, to come with a more detained gaze. For some time now, I have been concerned with the way we visit exhibitions. These projects made up of small pictures demand more time. I am interested in understanding how one walks through an exhibition, how to make you stop in front of each picture and then, once we have seen them, to go back through the exhibition again trying to grasp the connections between the different motifs. The latest projects and the projects on which I am currently working are all formalised in the same way. They are all small paintings well-spaced out from one another in the exhibition space. The idea is to give my work a formal unity within which a whole range of highly disparate things can take place.

**DB:** I believe that it gives the conceptual reading much greater elasticity. I am thinking, for instance, of Helmut Dorner and his way of structuring space, the distance between paintings, like a form of writing, with pauses and punctuation signs. To a certain extent, you are closer and closer to poetic tension, in the how and in the why, allowing silence to enable resonance. As a result, painting becomes a more critical space, which is consumed much more slowly and more condensed. The small pictures are monumentalised and, similarly to what happens inside them, in the image, this kind of montage also induces a sense of unease. At bottom, in your painting one can see, more and more, a kind of romantic counter-world, sometimes nostalgic and somewhat suffocating, that sets us off on a strange journey, and takes us to landscapes able to join sky and sea, in more direct references to Friedrich, or in plays of baroque-like chiaroscuro. Do you believe that, somehow, a greater insight into history brings you to how Pier Paolo Pasolini defined his work: “I am a force from the Past”?

**AU:** Pasolini spoke about the search for the modern in past times and I have always agreed with the idea that “the classics are comforting”. I have always thought that I would like to be able to see what we are doing now from the future. Which reminds me of the scene where Alice (*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*) asks the White Queen what kind of things she remembered the best. The queen answered that the best memories are “things that happened the week after next.” And this romantic counter-world you mentioned, this nostalgia for the future, trying to understand what will happen with the present in a dystopian future, is precisely the main theme of the exhibition “*Tierra y Cemento (Sentarse y Esperar)*”.

**DB:** That would fit in with the idea of nature where nothing is natural. I mean nature as a cultural construct of images. Everything has a cultural existence and painting also has a history, in recent years contaminated by the advent of other disciplines and movements. In terms of montage, for instance, I think about how minimalist premises changed our way of reading and consuming an exhibition. Because nature is not just what you see, but the same can be said for the art object too. This is the kind of writing I was referring to.

**AU:** You compare the spatial structure of a project with writing and I imagine art as system of graphic representation for the transmission of information. I prefer to equate spatiality and the rhythm created through mounting a project with music or, in my case, seeing as we are dealing with images, with cinematography. That is why I don’t believe a project is finished until it is mounted in the exhibition space. The way it is mounted determines the way in which the beholder walks through the exhibition and, as a result, conditions how he reads it. It is like applying the idea of the *Kuleshov effect* to disciplines outside cinema.

**DB:** I don’t think that we could talk about a Kuleshov effect here, although I do understand what you are getting at when mentioning it. It is true that the portrait of a lady in an art gallery is not the same as the same portrait on the cover of a fashion magazine or in a shampoo advert. Arthur C. Danto used Warhol’s *Brillo Box* to wonder about what it is that makes them artworks if they look exactly like the original object. But I am much more interested in focusing on this sensorial aspect you talk about, because you have looked for a tactile quality and you work with the visual, but you speak about music and film, which has found precisely in music a great ally for linking sequences together. To my way of thinking, implicit in Barnett Newman’s *zips* is a sound able to stretch time. Sound is always time making itself present. When I think of Clyfford Still’s painting I see it as containing the vibrant sound of a fissure, where the tension contracts the time that is broken. At the same time, in James Turrell this tension is tempered, and becomes unbearable in its abysmal quality. Many and very different painters, like Terry Winters and Alex Katz, associate their painting with jazz. For you, what would be the sound of your painting and what is your relationship with film, over and beyond purely formal questions?

**AU:** When citing it as a resource, I was referring to the changes in reading that take place during the montage, which is to say, with the order in which you

show the works and the rhythm created by empty spaces within an exhibition.

**DB:** Many artists have taken this into account when they are ordering the works in a series. For instance, in her series of photographs, Tracey Moffatt only decides which ones are the first and the last, leaving the rest to the taste or intuition of the individual curator or other person in charge of installing the pieces.

**AU:** You can't repeat this type of montage all the time. When you repeat a resource the magic is lost and it loses consistency. That's why I would have loved to have seen the face of the abstract expressionist James Harvey when he visited Warhol's exhibition at the *Stable Gallery* in New York back in 1964. There he would have seen the *Brillo Boxes* that he had designed transformed into works of art. Unlike Duchamp, who used objects he had not fabricated himself in his *ready-mades*, in Warhol's work, and in mine, the image we use already exists. We not only add content, but the hand and technical skill also intervene. As far as sound and music is concerned in relation to my work, I would distinguish between two moments: first of all, the creative process, in which I always have music playing, and then the moment when the painting is finished, when the music functions like a soundtrack for the image. While making the project *20 minutes of abstract thinking* I was listening to Beethoven in the studio and when I finished the series I decided to give the works the names of his compositions. I had to listen to Beethoven over and over again until I could decide which piece would work best conceptually and formally with each painting. This means that when reading the titles the beholder journeys mentally outside the exhibition space. If, on top of that, the spectator knew that this is the music I was listening to when I was painting the pictures, then that would also send him on a journey.

**DB:** This mental journey is increasingly more important for a proper understanding of your paintings. In his book *The Eyes of the Skin*, the Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa argued that we need to express the importance of the sense of touch for our understanding of the world, reflecting on the dominance of the sense of sight and the repression of the sense of touch. Pallasmaa advanced an idea which I believe is also fundamental for your work: focused vision confronts us with the world while peripheral vision envelops us.

**AU:** When conceiving a new project I usually start off from highly disparate and often abstract ideas. As I create images for each project, it is gradually delimited and starts to take form. This way of addressing projects is directly related with my way of reading the world, images and information. Therein the difficulty of grasping a reading of my work without formulating this mental journey. The information that goes with each project serves as a guideline to visualise the relationships between the images comprised in it. In any case, these keys are never a form of explanation nor do they limit the possible readings; their only function is to prepare this mental journey and to expand the possible readings of each project.

**DB:** If there is anything we can glean from exhibitions like *Mirror Rim*, then that is that the expansion of painting does not always make it bigger. What is important is how the context can be transformed into content with highly diverse gestures. I would insist that your montages are elastic, as if the works were joined together by very fine threads, imperceptible to simple sight. Like a sequence of slides that frames the spectator within an experience, rather than a static contemplation of each picture. They are fragmented sequences and, personally speaking, I don't see them as being very far from the enormous deconstructive painting you presented at the SOS 4.8 Festival in Murcia, or from the fragmented sequences you showed at Guggenheim Bilbao, or when you paint directly on the wall, projecting an almost unembraceable sensation that is more redolent of a "situation" than an "installation". You like to keep the spectator doubting and to submerge him in a state of indecision, in a decision-taking process. I am also thinking of the proposal you presented for Kunsthalle Sao Paulo, where you showed paintings that seemed like pictures but were mural paintings. Although I am more and more convinced that there is less trickery and more truth in the recourses you use to get there. But that's a whole other conversation... maybe in another five years.

## HOLD ME

### TAYLOR LE MELLE

One hand reaches out to hold another, a gesture as quotidian as it is intimate. The content of Alain Urrutia's *Hold Me* (2014) does not reveal much concrete narrative, yet implies a plethora of possible backstories. Many of Urrutia's paintings depict enigmatic and mysterious scenarios that aim to open up possibilities for a multitude of meanings rather than communicate an empirical truth. In this particular painting, the simple gesture of hand-holding provides a wellspring of connotations – but no answers.

*Hold Me* has the appearance of a close-cropped film still. Black and white with a wide range of tonal variation, this painting could depict snapshot from one of Hollywood's golden age films: one with confounding plot twists, men who talk out of the side of the mouth, and women who talk as if on the verge of fainting.

The grid lines that have been left visible recall, of course, the compositional tool behind many classical paintings, and may have been used to that end. But also, the lines recall the reign of the modernist grid, a style contemporaneous with the golden age of Hollywood. Thus, the exposed grid lines also suggest that this image has been or will be edited, post-production. In fact, Urrutia has been known to do exactly that – edit a once-finished painting by physically cropping it (unstretch, cut, restretch) as one might have done with an analogue photograph taken from a film.

What remains of this picture blurs against stark black edges that frame the image on all sides. The intense light that falls upon it blows out the detail of the top hand. Yet, there is enough in its shadowed dorsal edge to suggest that this hand might belong to someone who is not young. Extending itself from what looks like a suited arm, the hand could belong to a man. (The first apocryphal connotation that will inform all the rest: suits are usually worn by men.) The type of man who wears suits today might be implicated as corporate, serious, or wealthy. Another possibility is that this man is looking to impersonate serious, wealthy, or corporate men, perhaps for an important occasion. On the other hand, Hollywood-era film might lead one to believe that all men wear suits, regardless of their status or the occasion.

The hand being grasped is all but limp, resting on a soft-looking surface. It doesn't signify a particular gender as much as it implies age. After all, its rough-knuckled fingers look as if they belong to a worn, overworked person past the point of feigning delicacy. This flaccid hand suggests its wearer might be sad, solemn, sleeping, or even dead. The embrace – one hand on top of the other – first reads as an attempt to comfort, for example, the big city businessman goes back to his hometown to comfort a dying childhood friend. However, (plot twist – if you will) this embrace could also be a warning. The big city businessman might have gone back to ensure his childhood friend won't be revealing any details of their humble beginnings. Even still, the hands could belong to two nuns, or a nun and a remorseful sinner, begging to be forgiven. And so the depiction of this gesture, mundane in its content, but intriguing for its plethora of possible significations, leaves almost everything to the viewer's imagination. We have no idea what we are actually looking at, and so we are allowed to invent it.

In real life, hands aid the voice and the body in the elocution of expressive language. But here in Urrutia's painted world, in the absence of either of those – the voice or the body – these hands don't communicate a specific thing. They communicate any thing. Urrutia gives so little contextual detail in the painting that viewers are allowed to run away with their own individual fantastical connotations. These connotations are residues of assumptions left behind by

ALAIN URRUTIA

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societal norms force fed through mass media imagery, embedded within specific cultural contexts. For example, the top hand could belong to Humphrey Bogart in *The Barefoot Contessa* in 1954. It could just as well belong to Isabella Rosellini, as herself, today. (Popular biology purports a sexual dimorphism between a male and a female hand based on the length of each finger and the ratio of those individual lengths to each other – but Urrutia doesn't even give us that much information to extrapolate with.) But even those options, Bogart of the 1950s or Rosellini today, rest on a reading of the image that situates it within the cultural codes pumped out by the American film industry.

Age, epoch, gender and nationality all are categories that provide order but none are strictly empirical or essential. All can be – and should be – obscured, twisted, and freed from their normative trappings. *Detach yourself from the need to make sense of things*, the painting almost begs. And so what's most interesting perhaps is to reflect upon the assumptions one has built in order to construct an entire narrative from a vague tidbit. Urrutia capitalizes on this tendency, or as Barthes might argue, this inevitability, of a reader bringing previous experiences and therefore assumptions to a text.

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## BEFORE EVERYTHING

### TANIA PARDO

It is not pictorial technique in itself that concerns Alain Urrutia, but rather investigating through image. His figurative compositions often make use of large formats and limited chromatic spectra (grays, blacks and whites). With their references to the daily and scenes taken from Urrutia's own experience or surrounding reality (newspapers, television, etc.), his images suggest a de-codified, and wholly non-nostalgic, collective memory that look like extracts from feature films. They constitute a metaphor for representation itself. Intersecting stories that form a group of fragmented scenes both intrinsically linked and independent. In the end, his major pictorial installations are understood as an uninterrupted set of images.

The scenes he depicts have been blurred and veiled with sweeping brushstrokes, as if the artist were in fact referring to memories erased with the passage of time. The evocative beauty of these canvases is due to their very fragmentedness, suggestive of the pictorial conception of the Belgium artist Luc Tuymans: close-ups, isolated frames, discontinuous scenes, that is, references to the world of film, television and photography. This is evident, for instance, in the series *Stalker* (2007), whose title makes reference to a film by Tarkovski.

Through this figuration, the artist shows how representation is necessarily partial and subjective once its meaning has been reconstructed. Hence, by means of erasing image and superimposing paint, he attempts to mask the motifs represented, encumbering always partial vision and implicitly generating a disturbing and mysterious violence. In his eagerness to blur images, he seems less concerned with what is represented than how it is represented, contrasting the supposed slowness of painting with the immediacy of photography and repetition in photocopies. There is something of melancholy and unreality in all of these works: in the midst of this sort of blurring, supposed daily experience is conveyed. It is no longer a question of vindicating classic beauty in the final paintings, which are reminiscent of the work of Marcel van Eeden, but rather of constructing an unreal, dreamlike atmosphere in the very conception of the images.

For this artist, fragmented frames are also emotional breaking points, the ruptures of someone who has become an observer of a daily life contaminated by countless stimuli. In works where he inserts colors other than those expected — like the painting with two large red planes or the one with a mass of people in black and white on a bluish background — these stimuli are particularly evident. When his surfaces contain what look like photographs piled up like divided narratives, Alain also plays with the notion of the filmic moment that could well be related to the image within the image.

In any case, Alain Urrutia's painting is more an idea than a technique; he does not paint only in terms of implicit operative processes, art history and its notions, or even current tendencies in the art market; instead, his erased images laden with endless unfinished stories undergo a complex process, inventing another reality.