

Paolo Chiasera

*Pollai Volanti & Glory Holes*

Text by Lorenzo Benedetti

5 June - 12 July 2024

Opening 4 June, 6 - 9 pm

Simeti Project Space  
Via Seneca 4/6 - Milan

Martina Simeti is pleased to announce *Pollai Volanti & Glory Holes*, a presentation of new works by Paolo Chiasera which will inaugurate the Simeti Project Space.

SPS is a new project space jointly run by Archivio Turi Simeti and Galleria Martina Simeti. It will host initiatives by artists and designers active from 1960 onwards, marking the time Turi first undertook his own practice. Located at Via Seneca 4/6, the space will be viewable from the street at all times and open by appointment.

---

In a large studio inside an ancient abbey in northern France, Paolo Chiasera created a series of works on canvas in which the presence of the body and space become a dominant feature. The studio and the artist are two coordinates present in these large-format paintings that refer to a metaphysical stage that harks back to fifteenth-century Italian painting, yet in the three works in this exhibition, there is no trace of them. This absence plays on a biographical aspect of the artist himself, having retired some years ago in search of a new artistic vein that would provide a segue from the conceptual elaborations of his work over the past decades. Themes such as the elaboration process of the work, its metamorphoses and the invisible are always key to his production.

With these three canvases, Chiasera exhibits in Italy after a period of reflection and concentration, during which the artist made a further foray into painting. A synthesis of the works the artist created over recent decades, with a focus on the quality of his paint material. Looking at one of Chiasera's paintings places the observer before a temporal dogma: one that links painting to its origins, to its development and diffusion.

The three works in this exhibition dialectically highlight the theme of absence. *Glory Hole*, a repainted canvas, affords a glimpse of a helmeted figure in a garden; a hole appears at eye level. Along with the diaphanous presence of the previous portrait, the figure – almost completely removed – displays this detail. This generates a three-dimensionality of the work and its relationship to space. Of the silhouette, only his gaze remains, piercing the surface. Like a gaze in reverse, the work looks at us from within the painting itself.

In *Pollai volanti*, a tent suspended in mid-air evokes a transitory space, a passage, a nomadic element. Eggs descend from the tent, offering a clear reference to Piero della Francesca's altarpiece in Montefeltro del Brera and his *Constantine's Dream* in Arezzo. Eggs are also at the heart of the painting that Chiasera produces with such methodological care.

Looking at these canvases means entering a different time generated by ancient pictorial materials. In fact, the choice of colours is closely linked to the early Renaissance period that inspired Chiasera. A philological journey in search of the original colours made by studying reports published by the National Gallery in London during major restoration work, as well as ancient medieval manuscripts written by monks. There is no single book, but several long-lost documents, troves of knowledge. Colours such as azurite obtained from copper residue from bronze smelting; malachite from copper ores; copper resin to provide the same green as Paolo Veronese; bone black, obtained from cooking animal bones for twenty hours, aloe from Mossel Bay South Africa, cinnabar obtained from mercury extracted from Mount Amiata, an ancient dormant volcano. And indeed, sulphur from mercury was one of the main ingredients in alchemy. Lake madder from the roots of the rubia tinctorum plant. Poppy oil, walnut oil, linseed oil, egg and dammar, all used as colour binders. The third painting shows a feather 'coming out' of the frame. The colour seems to retrace a gust of wind carrying a feather from the henhouse to the very edge of the image.

Lorenzo Benedetti

Paolo Chiasera's multi-disciplinary work involves installation, video, painting, performance, architecture, curating and writing. These mediums often overlap in Chiasera's analysis and staging of collective myths, cultural symbols and icons. Through manifold narratives the artist retraces the interactions between history and power, social groups, and the loss of control. Solo presentations of Paolo Chiasera at international institutions include Museum of Contemporary Art Sion, Museum d'Iserables, Museum de Lostschental, Museum Olsommer, Museum valaisan de la Vigne et du Vin, Valais, Switzerland (2019), Villa Medici Rome, Italy (2016), Vleeshal Center for Contemporary Art, Middelburg, The Netherlands (2014), MAN Museo Arte Nuoro, Nuoro, Italy (2014), SMAK Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent, Belgium (2010), MARTa Herford, Germany (2009), MACRO, Museo Arte Contemporanea Roma, Rome, Italy (2008), MAMBO, Museo d'Arte Moderna Bologna, Bologna Italy (2006), GAM, Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna Torino, Turin, Italy (2002). Chiasera lives and works in Bologna, Italy.