

## *Louisa Gagliardi*

Louisa Gagliardi's paintings exist as reflections: internally, of artist and viewer, and of the rapid acceleration of technology in our visualized and socialized worlds. Their liminal status, as both digitally rendered images and physically confronting objects, speaks as much to contemporary concerns of self-mediated personas as they do to the compositions and narratives of the classics of art history. Current directions in graphic design meet the unspoken codes of social media platforms, which are forced to confront and collaborate with a deep heritage and reinvention of the craft of painting running through Francisco Goya and Leonora Carrington into the present.

At its heart, Gagliardi's oeuvre plays with expectations, fulfilling and subverting them simultaneously. When one views the work, ideas of authenticity and authorship are begged for and rebuffed; the smooth digital surfaces of the paintings blossom into echoes and refractions of their handworked surfaces as they are approached and circled. Brushstrokes exist physically and printed, as clear gel medium creates texture and melodrama, forcing the signature marks of the artist executed with mouse on screen to confront total issues of reality within painting. What truths and illusions painted work can project are questions as old as the medium itself, and here they are constantly upended as her imagery populates and is printed on thick synthetics, shiny aluminum, and reflective mirrors.

Gagliardi insists on the importance of the physical as consistently as she reaches back into the past for its motifs and themes, moments of drama that are indirectly repositioned in her contemporary mix. In a big way, this is work about portraiture and, therefore, exists at a line of the past meeting the total present. Her reinvention of this genre comes at a time when every camera on earth has made its amateur holder a professional at the presentation of self. These paintings adapt social mores to comment on the now while seemingly erasing individual and collective divisions. They are portraits of no one specifically and, therefore, are allowed to be of anyone the viewer imagines. Like avatars in the metaverse, they are empty vessels on which viewers place their own anecdotes, personal chronicles, dreams, and hang-ups.

Existing beyond traditional ideas of race and gender roles, the subjects are similar to the attempts artificial intelligence has made at visual fabrications of human faces, but without any uncanny valley and its connected creepiness. Still, we rarely glimpse the figures frontally. Gagliardi likes to interrupt the perceived space of her works with ideas and imagery of clear pools of reflection: glass, water, inky shadows. Light, the central compositional force of great painting since Caravaggio, exposes and abstracts what is shown and seen. One glimpses these figures in mediated screens, as they pose and preen for the artist and, perhaps, themselves: hiding and exposing in equal measure.

One of the great successes of the exhibited work is the way it analogically captures the backlit glow of the screens that fill our lives. With a mix of digital composition and color theory and the physical additions that break and deepen their silky surfaces, the paintings emit a collected radiance that speaks to the sublime as much as the iPhone. Like a magpie, Gagliardi collects lustrous objects and images and assembles them in presentations of the singular and the group, almost always at moments that suggest recent or oncoming chaos. It is a balance of strength and courageous vulnerability. By dealing with personas and open narratives, Gagliardi speaks to the curation of oneself both online and off. In doing so, she reaches for the timeless, how all figures interact in any form of society where one must be an individual within a whole. For a narrative as old as civilization, it feels incredibly prescient.

— Mitchell Anderson

Louisa Gagliardi was born in 1989 in Sion, CH, and currently lives and work in Zurich, CH. She has had solo shows at Antenna Space, Shanghai, CN; Dawid Radziszewski, Warsaw, PL; Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels, BE; McNamara Art Projects, Hong Kong, HK; MOSTYN, Llandudno, UK; Plymouth Rock, Zurich, CH; and Pilar Corrias, London, UK. She has participated in group exhibitions at the National Gallery Prague, Prague, CZ; Centre d'art contemporain Genève, Geneva, CH; Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, CH; Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau, CH; Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, St. Gallen, CH; the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, DK; and Istituto Svizzero, Rome, IT.