

# GALLERIA MASSIMO MININI

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## cadavre exquis

REBECCA ACKROYD

LUDOVICA ANVERSA

MARYAM HOSEINI

Finding a title for an exhibition is never easy, but in this particular case it has certainly been fun. Though the connection between the works of Rebecca Ackroyd, Ludovica Anversa and Maryam Hoseini may seem obvious to a degree, all of them use a very different language and can be read in different ways.

Exquisite corpse or "cadavre exquis" is actually a collaborative game that surrealist artists engaged in for the first time in Paris back in 1925. A number of players had to build a sentence without knowing what the others had written, following a noun-adjective-verb-noun-adjective sequence. The sentence that resulted was: *le cadavre exquis boira le vin nouveau* ("the exquisite corpse will drink the new wine"). A meaningful one, though absurd.

Likewise, the three artists on show worked independently, through random associations where an underlying communication seems nonetheless to emerge.

With Rebecca Ackroyd (Cheltenham, UK, 1987) we are projected into a dreamlike scenario where human presence is captured in the small details. Her genderless figures emerge like findings from archaeological excavations and they all tell fragmented stories that must be imagined or searched for within a collective or individual memory. Interconnected or interpreted as glimpses of sudden memories, such as when we wake up from a dream and only a few memories resurface.

The line between reality and imagination gets increasingly thinner in Ackroyd's work and, as we gaze at it, a torn stocking, an enlarged ear on fire or an eye nearly tortured by an eyelash curler become more and more familiar. The altered scale in the works confuses our gaze and we are overwhelmed by intimate images. A not only visual but indeed erotic charge extends into the narrative space of the works which, in a covert way, conceal a criticism of the so-called *male gaze*.

Always feeding the collective imagination, Ludovica Anversa (Milano, IT, 1996) narrates through her paintings how humans have felt the need to imitate reality ever since the Lascaux caves, placing animal footprints side by side with false tracks designed by them. Her paintings contain layered and overlapped elements from the human, animal and plant kingdoms; these elements are first painted and then covered, to be later rediscovered through the removal of the surface paint, as in a sort of archaeological operation. Visceral forms and fragments emerge from beneath milky mists, again as if arising from a dream. What we see is not real, but it actually looks familiar. Potential images and their antithesis. Veiled bodies, contradictory and metaphorical, stand out like wounds over other hybrid images.

Just as hybrid as the narratives of Maryam Hoseini (Tehran, IR, 1988), who depicts collective scenes representing grotesque and unsettling actions. Interior architectures and stylized bodies emphasize the duality between the tenderness of a homosocial imaginary and the violence of an alienating scenario. Hoseini tackles issues related to politics, identity and gender, setting the tragedy of the human condition in environments where primordial desires appear to be free from conventions. The protagonists of these unsettling scenes look yet again familiar, while maintaining their unknown nature.

Scenes that appear to depict intimate play, struggle and pleasure actually hide erotic, sinister and apparently violent narratives. And we observe every minute detail in an almost obsessive way. Who knows, we ourselves may be exerting violence through our voyeuristic gaze!

Text written by Giulia Gelmini