

PIETRO MORETTI

Le storture del cactus

April 12 –
May 10, 2023

Opening hours

Thursday – Saturday
from 3 – 7 pm
and on appointment

The works of Pietro Moretti, which interweave stories of the mundane and the imaginary, question the ambivalence of feelings in intimate relationships, the complexity of the desire to belong, the male identity and the way the unspoken resurfaces through the body, revealing the illusions, pain, fragility and contradictory nature of desire.

Inspired by the atmosphere in fairy tales and myths, the signature features of comic books and elements of the grotesque, the works shown in this exhibition are linked by a tension between the individual and the collective, and by an emphasis on desire in situations of loneliness and lack of intimacy. The characters that populate the visual world of these paintings are trying to escape the emptiness that lurks as a real possibility in every life, but they stumble over their own urges and bodies. They are often caught in branching gestures: Bodies that hold, entangle, fall, embrace, transform, touch and escape. For Moretti, the body is the expression of one's self and one's psychological reality, the means by which we enter into a relationship, dialogue and conflict with the values and expectations of a particular social context. Gestures become carriers of the relationship between the interior and exterior of the subjects, just as they suggest a flow of different temporalities between something that takes shape and something that loses it.

In Moretti's work, time is porous, in constant transition between two things, the night and the morning, the day and the evening, just as the painting eludes clear contours and a definite perspective, and one sees the different levels of the picture, the afterthoughts and the unfinished parts. Engaging in a dialogue between the figurative and the abstract, the artist explores how the materiality of the various surfaces and the non-naturalistic use of colour can suggest the transparency between the physical and psychological states of the painted figures, as well as the elusiveness of narratives.

The depicted scenes in *The Crooked Cactus*, first solo exhibition of the artist in Milan, bring a familiar environment to life that is at once alienated and dreamlike: a couple floats on a construction of chairs, each entangled in the other's deflated body. Cigarettes dangle like so many tiny fingers from a narrow wall in the psychiatric ward, where a cactus stands crooked and lonely, a plant that grows in harsh climatic conditions and aligns its shape with that of the sun, causing it to deform. In *The Voices' Imitator*, a Lou Reed tribute artist undresses after returning at dawn from a concert, his jacket is a second skin weighing down his disembodied shoulders.

One of the central works in the exhibition is *The Earth Beneath Her Feet*, details of which can be seen in other works on display. The painting is a free adaptation of the short story *Ragazza che precipita* by Dino Buzzati. In the painting, a group of people fall and float simultaneously in a sky full of shimmering bubbles, while a woman leans from a glass balcony - where a party is taking place - to hand a glass of prosecco to one of the parachutists. Buzzati's story is about a woman, Marta, who falls from a skyscraper in Milan and, during the fall, looks at all the floors and flats without being able to enter them. Night falls, morning comes, and she notices that while she is falling slowly, almost floating in the air, other people are faster, more elegant and distinguished as they fall towards a big party on the ground floor. So she wants to hurry, but eventually arrives at the ground floor, having already aged as her

body has withered, nearly debilitated. Buzzati's text, like Moretti's painting, cannot be pinned down to a single interpretation: social parable, existential metaphor, dream, nightmare or sober realism. The falling woman, imagined by Moretti as a catering waitress, is so caught up in the desire to grab the glass of prosecco that the lady on the balcony hands her, that she hardly notices her falling, as knotted up as she is with herself. Both long for contact, but both remain alone.

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Pietro Moretti was born in 1996 in Rome, where he lives and works. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts at the Slade School of Art, University College, London. Since 2017 he has exhibited his work in several group exhibitions in the UK and Italy, including Hackney Central Space in London, Spazio Amanita in Florence and Unosunove in Rome. In 2022 he exhibited for the first time in the GARASC space of the Galleria Doris Ghetta in Ortisei, participated in the Sicily Artists Residency Program and was acquired by public collections such as Collezione del Castello di Rivoli, Rivoli and Collezione Giuseppe Iannaccone, Milan.