

# the goma

## ***Material Life***

Riccardo Baruzzi, Michael Bauer, Luca Bertolo, Merlin James, David Schutter.

Curated by Davide Ferri.

21/01/2017 - 12/03/2017

*Material Life* is an exhibition of paintings selected with a set of unrelated things in mind: a book by Marguerite Duras (from which the show takes its name) in which the authoress re-frames the practice of writing against a backdrop of dense materiality and objects of everyday life; a painting by a 17th century Flemish artist, Cornelis Gijsbrechts, *The Reverse of a Framed Painting*, a true copy of the back of a painting and its material ramifications – including its shadows, impurities, wear, and dirt – all depicted as if the artist were looking through it from behind; and an essay by Victor Stoichita, *L'Instauration du tableau*, which narrates the progressive coming to terms with a painting's physicality in 16th century Flanders.

From these points of departure, the exhibition aims to provide cause for reflection – through allusion and notes – on certain aspects of contemporary representation, on the idea of a figuration that coexists with the end of painting as window – a coherent and complete place of representation and narration – which continues to survive as inevitable drive. This troubled and fragmentary figuration dialogues with and reinterprets the entity of a painting as an objective presence, taking up a position in its meanders, even in the pores and the creases of its canvas.

*Material Life* is therefore a presentation of figures, albeit figures in a certain sense indescribable, fragile or unresolved that may also make vague reference to elements of reality or appear as potential images or fleeting epiphanies in a landscape thick with materiality tending towards abstraction or monochrome. The show also bespeaks genres, of painting's inevitable tendency to return to classical – landscapes, still lifes, portraits – even in the uneven and disjointed space of the canvas.

The exhibition includes landscapes by **Merlin James**, where certain gestures (rips and tears in the canvas, the incorporation of hairs and sawdust) interfere/interact with the painted image, moving it into a dimension that cannot be detached from the painting's corporeality; recent paintings by **Luca Bertolo** that seem to be monochromes from afar but appear more as trompe l'oeil inspired by the Veil of Veronica (the cloth on which the visage of Christ was imprinted) when viewed close up, sites of potential image, but also veils that virtually double the material presence of the canvas; a painting by **David Schutter**, with a vibrant surface that is resulting of an extended period of frequentation (between the artist and a painting by an old master), his attempt to re-create a painting by Gaspard Dughet (at Galleria Corsini in Rome) "by heart" after memorizing the quality of the tones and brushstrokes and the variations in light and space; works by **Michael Bauer**, free proliferations of form (splats, doodles, erasing, brushstrokes) that may also become fragments of bodies and faces, shimmering, multi-form conglomerations capable of re-composing around the idea of portraiture; and the still lifes by **Riccardo Baruzzi** painted on both sides of the canvas (lines on one side, color on the other side, in the form of patches or fields, emerging from the weave of the canvas) that give way to figuration and images of pieces of fruit that seem to hold the ultimate spark of life and presage their own decay.

Riccardo Baruzzi (Lugo, Ravenna, 1976) lives and works in Bologna, Italy. Recent solo shows include: *Del disegno disposto alla pittura*, P420, Bologna (2016); *Plantel Renovado*, Spazio O', Milan (2014); *Mini Strutture sparse*, Careof, Milan (2012); *Curva Sopra Lama*, Arcade Gallery, London (2010); he has also shown at Neon Campobase, Bologna (2011); Ceri Hand Gallery, Liverpool (2011); Lucie Fontaine, Milan (2014); Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London (2010). In 2016 he won the Premio Termoli.

Michael Bauer (b. 1973, Erkelenz, Germany) studied at the Hochschule für Bildende Kunst in Braunschweig. Recent exhibitions include *Men in pain (pool Party)*, Norma Mangione Gallery, Torino (2016), *Dead Design (He Paints, She Paints)*, Peter Kilchmann, Zurich (2015); *Michael Bauer: Butter Bebob (Transatlantic Creme Dreams)*, Alison Jacques Gallery, London (2015); *Creme Wars - Snoopie*, Lisa Cooley Gallery, New York (2014).

Luca Bertolo (b. 1968, Milano) currently lives and works in the Tuscan Apuan Alps area. Recent solo shows include: *Everybody is always right*, Arcade, London (2017); *If Anything*, Marc Foxx, Los Angeles (2016); *Guerre Pace*, SpazioA, Pistoia (2015); *A Painting Cycle*, Nomas Foundation, Roma (2012). Recent group exhibitions include: *Recto Verso*, Fondazione Prada, Milano, (2015); *Souvenir*, organised by Lucie Fontaine, Galerie Perrotin, Paris (2013).

Merlin James (b. 1960, Cardiff, Wales) studied in London at the Central School of Art and the Royal College of Art. He currently lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland. James' work has been exhibited widely, including in recent solo shows at CCA Glasgow (2016); Kunstverein Freiburg (2014); Parasol Unit, London; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2013). In 2007 James represented Wales at the 52nd Venice Biennale.

David Schutter (b. 1974; lives and works in Chicago) has had solo exhibitions at the Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (2012); the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (2009); the Istituto Centrale per la Grafica, Rome (2016); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2007); with Magazzino, Rome (2016); Aurel Scheibler, Berlin (2015); Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York (2009); and Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago (2014). His work has been included in exhibitions at the Fondazione Memmo, Rome (2016); the David Roberts Art Foundation, London (2012), among others.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the artists and the galleries Magazzino, Norma Mangione, P420 and SpazioA for their collaboration.