

AFFINITÀ ELETTIVE

Nov. 6, 2020 - Nov. 20, 2020

With works by

Fabien Adele, Grgur Akrap, Patricia Ayres, Giovanni Leonardo Bassan, Gabriel Mills and Elinor Stanley

Samuele Visentin is proud to present *Affinità Elettive*, an online group-show comprising 6 contemporary artists: Fabien Adele, Grgur Akrap, Patricia Ayres, Giovanni Leonardo Bassan, Gabriel Mills and Elinor Stanley. The show will go live on November 6th, 2020 at 12pm and will run until November 20th, 2020 at 12am.

The group show *Affinità Elettive* (or *Chemical Affinities*) takes its title from the phenomenon whereby certain atoms or molecules have the tendency to aggregate or bond with certain atoms or molecules to the exclusion of others. In the conception of this group show, I conceived these artists as atoms that attract each other based on their core purpose and interest: to materialise aspects of the contemporary human experience onto tangible works of art in a way that turns the personal into a collective language, however different in style and medium.

Patricia Ayres (b. New York) creates sculptures that evoke deformed archetypes of femininity, their lumpen shapes reminiscing of the Venus of Willendorf and her Palaeolithic expression of femininity. Unlike the notable Venus, Patricia Ayres's humanoid figures concretise the deforming effects of a patriarchal society, laying bare the powerful complexities of how it feels to be a woman in modern society.

A background in fashion design gave the artist the practical skills to own her craft and a voice for her deeply-felt personal language. The two works presented for the exhibition represent heads as torsos, referencing the demeaning male conception of women in society. Layers of skin-coloured bandages restrain the bulging heads, further kept in place by hooks, carabiners and stitches. They are stained with coffee, dye, iodine, coconut oil, liquid latex and stand on pedestals made of painted concrete blocks stacked on top of each other.

Patricia Ayres's heads are made motionless, but nonetheless vibrate with a power bursting from within, creating a tension that reverberates and seems to contrast the tightness of the stitches in a leap towards liberation. In this tension one might see a reference to Giovanni Anselmo's *Torsioni* series from the 60's, but unlike the Arte Povera artist, Patricia Ayres's energy is charged with the intensity of the current American political and social situation. As a woman, the personal inevitably becomes political and the female body and mind become the ground on which the fight against the patriarchy is fought.

Fabien Adele (b. 1993, Bordeaux, France) paints intimate scenes animated by vulnerable figures, where the familiar and the completely unknown converge into a surreal narrative. In these new works, Fabien Adele takes us deeper his imaginary world, walking the line between dream-like settings and experiences of reality.

In *Ultramarine*, 2020 an oneiric influence permeates the scene. A swim in the sea turns into a surreal and calming composition where the figure's head rises above a liquefied landscape. The bright reds of his latest body of work *What I Have Learnt From Us* leave space to less alarming and more soothing colours. By blending yellow and brown tones into the liquid nature of the environment, Fabien Adele erases the horizon line and the boundaries that separate reality from imagination.

In *Écran Bleu*, 2020 the scene moves to a domestic setting where two figures are portrayed looking out towards a clear sky. Time appears frozen in a moment of waiting: who or what they are waiting for is unknown to us. If time is running, it's on a psychological level - in the expectancy of something supposed to take place. The concept of liminal space comes to mind, where clarity and straightforwardness falter and the figures are caught between what has been and what is going to be.

Elinor Stanley (b. London, 1992) is a British artist currently studying at the Royal Academy of Art in London. She works with performance, drawing and painting to explore how humans use myth and illusionary narratives to make sense of the world.

The series *Constellation heads* presents human heads as ambiguous presences that spark contrasting feelings. They are both brutal and tender, showing an odd and intimate viewpoint of the human figure; the head is vulnerable in its lack of self-consciousness, but at the same time unforgiving in its disregard of our attention; they have an object-like appearance, but simultaneously we are aware that one's skull is the dome of an individual's inner tumults. The elaborate glasses represent another layer of ambivalence, in their ability to bend light and distort reality.

In Elinor Stanley's works, hair scream for human interpretation. Lines, shapes and figures outline in its disposition, presenting an imaginary projection as tangible reality. Positioning the subjects close to the viewers on the foreground, the scenes are psychologically charged, further intensified by the cold neutral background and the unconventional presence of elaborate glasses.

Grgur Akrap was born in 1988 in Zagreb, Croatia, where he graduated in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts in 2013. Painting is a way for Grgur Akrap to express a reality that is not so visible, deceptive and intrusive as the physical reality we live in. Grgur Akrap refers to these scenes as "reflections of the spirit".

All of the scenes in his paintings take place, without exception, in exterior settings. Landscapes become a mirror of the actions that unfold within them: human figures and nature - both land and sky - create an inextricable relationship, both visually and in terms of content. The colour palette chosen acts as binding force: it can be either dirty or clean, but in every case it contributes to the expression of the distinctly surreal moods presented, even taking on certain symbolic connotations. The effect of otherworldliness is further imprinted in the paintings by inspired scenarios of unspoiled Edens and mythic narratives.

However, it is important to say that he doesn't paint to tell a story: the intention is to bypass the language of words and completely indulge in the language of painting. As for interpretation, Grgur Akrap intends to let everyone see what they want or can see, as if they were reading his painting as visual poetry.

Giovanni Leonardo Bassan (b. 1989, Vicenza, Italy) lends a European voice to the expressionism of the new figurative painting, breaking down the distinction between high and low culture. As an observer of the quotidian, his paintings are a journey through Parisian queer sub-cultures and underground party scenes. The artist acts as a voyeur, a portraitist and a participant in these rapidly shifting urban landscapes.

In painting these scenes, Giovanni Leonardo Bassan doesn't simply describe them, but translates the experience itself by layering otherwise unrelated images of revellers in various states of escapism. Lines, colour, texture, and form merge and mingle to articulate the multi-layered sensations of nightlife. In applying and removing layers of narrative, the artist embodies the chaotic, transitory sense of our (now gone) present-day reality.

Gabriel Mills (b. 1992, New Rochelle, NY) is an American artist currently pursuing an MFA in Painting and Printmaking at Yale School of Art. His artworks are grounded in spirituality and the iconography attached to it and through them he engages with his personal history and ancestry. Through a versatile use of visual languages, he looks deeper into the structure of the world and the modes in which it is, was and possibly will be built.

Gabriel Mills questions accepted paradigms and puts into question the game of preservation that is at the base of history: who gets to tell what story? He aims to understand his personal journey as both an individual and part of a collective of people and ultimately feel liberated by the constraints of a pre-determined box, both on a personal and an artistic level.

In *MOONROCK*, 2020 and *6KISS*, 2020 Gabriel Mills adopts a conservative portrait pose against an amalgamation of brushstrokes, which prompts its exodus for new territory. The works shift between a dual path of terror and composure. He directs his personal investigation towards a better understanding of individuality and the True self and the complex open-ended path that will lead him there.