

Lyles & King

Paola Angelini & Alessandro Fogo

Black Morning

February 12 - March 11, 2022

Lyles & King is pleased to present *Black Morning*, a two-artist exhibition with Paola Angelini and Alessandro Fogo. This marks the Italian artists' first time exhibiting in the United States.

Paola Angelini and Alessandro Fogo's paintings combine dreamlike visions, references to personal life, and symbolic elements and quotes from the art history. The exhibition was created during a residency in Norway and its title, *Black Morning*, evokes the fleeting moment in which the darkness of night stretches up to the moment when the morning light should prevail.

Paola Angelini's devises thoughtful compositions within which it's difficult to identify a priority scale: each figure has the same importance as another and becomes one of the cornerstones of the image. Often her works have a predominant, sometimes somber, hue consisting of brown, reddish, green colors, which permeates them with its atmosphere. The depicted scenes seem immersed in a substantial silence.

Her brushstrokes are frequently small and slightly elongated which create a stratified, magmatic surface and complex sense of reality. The canvas is often treated with ancient techniques in conjunction with contemporary materials such as rabbit skin glue and plaster. These methods of preparing surfaces allows the artist to reverse the canvas and obtain a cracked, thick, and very rigid surface; an intuition that stems from the close observation of antique tapestries.

The proportions within the work are out of phase and the point of view is often anomalous, as in dreams. Different techniques and materials coexist: for example, a macabre dance inspired by Medieval iconography seems to hang from above, flowing against the background of human figures and images of sculptures with a strongly three-dimensional volumetric presence. The graphical element of drawing is essential and is mixed with painting, just as pastels are mixed with oil.

Paola's works often revolve around recurring motifs, *in primis*, such as those of the mother and the father that become rich symbolic figures. She also derives references from the history of art, both through homages to great masters, such as Giorgio de Chirico or Felice Casorati, and through the representation of sculptures by little-known artists of the recent past. The final result is dense, theatrical, and profound, and in it, personal and collective memory overlap without any distinction. Angelini's paintings emanate light from within the pictorial matter.

Light plays a crucial role for both artists, it is very much a central element to each of their painting styles and tones, even if in opposing ways. For Alessandro Fogo the works become illuminated by external light. His painting is chiefly visionary and allegorical. There's a large presence of animals in his work: insects, birds, and snakes emerge as vital elements. They function symbolically as the eternal archetype on which human culture has been based over the millennia. They are portals of knowledge, activators of the pictorial image, connections to a divine and metaphysical dimension—above all they are the spark that can ignite the highly evocative nature of these works. One painting is crowded with scarabs, shiny in their precious armor made of metallic greens with golden reflections, moving slowly on a decorated blanket, apparently intent on waking up the female protagonist of the work.

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Alessandro also utilizes characteristics typical of a mythological narrative. Each painting is a possible beginning or a crucial moment in a story displaced from time and space. The scenes are always nocturnal, or perhaps set in some strange interior where sunlight hardly enters, and the shadows are cast by unnatural light. Everyday objects alongside the animals are also charged with a strong symbolic value.

In these latest works, his style has evolved and new elements have emerged. The human figure, once imaginary and unreal—sculptural—here begins to present itself as a portrait and as a representation of something real and existing. The model (always the same person) starts to come to life. The style is less pictorial, the images are rendered in a less material manner; the brushstrokes, once more evident, have gradually become more controlled and less visible. The scenes depicted begin to embody something plausible, less unreal, and less fantastic, but the effect of general absurdity and eccentricity is stronger than ever before.

In our contemporary moment in which painting is often seen as a cynical experiment, or as a recombination of elements already known, or a provocation linked to bad taste, Paola Angelini and Alessandro Fogo reaffirm the centrality of painting as a living language in which there's still much to be discovered and invented.

—Antonio Grulli, 2022
(Translated from Italian)