

Up in the Clouds with Matteo Montani

Benedetta Grasso (March 22, 2010)



On March 18 Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò opened an exhibit of Matteo Montani's paintings, an innovative Italian painter whose inspired works are finally on view in New York. The majority of his oil paintings incorporate the mixing together of shades of blue, white, black and grey, with a few exceptions, such as the "explosion" of red in the painting titled "Autumn Tale".

The reddish and orange light of the sunset tinges the charming brick walls of the Greenwich Village's buildings, and the rays of light graciously illuminate a very unique garden in the very heart of this neighborhood.

It's a gorgeous spring day at the [Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò](#) [2] on West 12th street, and a warm wind follows the glimpses of twilight, giving a feeling of lightness, like being immersed in a dreamlike



atmosphere.

The little garden inside this famous NYU cultural facility dedicated to Italian Culture is filled with people chatting, who seem relaxed, yet are somewhat surprised at this unusual warmth; they seem to be almost floating around between the pretty tables and chairs, the statues and the greenery, eagerly peeking inside to look at the paintings on the walls in the hallways.

This surreal atmosphere, where the colors blend together and the objects seem not to have borders, in which time is suspended for a moment and the light wraps the audience in an eye-deceiving and almost hallucinatory embrace, might not just be the effect of this magical New York spring sunset; it has a lot more to do with the artist behind this event, Matteo Montani.

“Walking through the door of the Abstract, of the non-real, the artist is like an alchemist or a Shaman, guiding the onlooker into a world where the images on display are either redolent of a known image, or alternatively take the onlooker into a world of pure perception and visual emotion.” Riccardo Miracco, Art Director and former Director of the [Italian Cultural Institute](#) [3], writes these words in the introduction to the very beautiful catalog that accompanies Matteo Montani’s exhibit, which showcases his work captures well that which Montani’s work aims to accomplish.

The majority of his oil paintings incorporate the mixing together of shades of blue, white, black and grey, with a few exceptions, such as the “explosion” of red in the painting titled “Autumn Tale”. These techniques create an oneiric quality diffused with a scientific one, as if we were looking at pictures of microscopic research data.

Some paintings look like snapshots of internal visions, nocturnal dreams where images are not always well defined, and the things that happen or we see lack a clear logic and definite beginning and end; some are like quick flashes, as if one were to close his/her eyes with the sun beating on the eye-lids, with only spots of coloring remaining visible.

Other paintings by Montani seem to evoke pre-cellular activity: nature before it is actually the nature that we see. Yet other pieces are dimmer, more ghostly, and appear like cerebral activity’s transcripts, radiographies, or a heart monitor’s line going up and down; others simply immerse the viewer in a blurred natural phenomenon, or evoke a landscape that literally leads one to feel immersed in the clouds.

Matteo Montani is a young artist from Rome who uses innovative painting techniques. Stefano Albertini, the Director of Casa Italiana shared some of his personal impressions on the artist and the exhibit:

“I came to discover Matteo Montani and his work thanks to Isabella del Frate, who is a member of our advisory board and an expert on Contemporary Art. I’ve worked with her for many years and we have come up with a calendar that works on two levels. Our first goal is to showcase the great masters of Italian Contemporary Art, such as the more historical artists from the 20th century. We have had exhibits dedicated to [Alberto Burri](#) [4], [Lucio Fontana](#) [5], Achille Perilli, and a kind of exhibit of homage to [Giorgio De Chirico](#) [6]. Our desire and interest is to bring these artists here in the United States which, for many of them, is where they started or where they are mostly recognized, auctioned and collected; Burri, for example, is one artist who began his career here.”

“At Casa Italiana we also had other, more specifically historical exhibits on women involved with Futurism or on Gerardo Dottori, for example, but our second main goal for our calendar is to allow the Casa to be a venue for young artists.

Matteo Montani, in fact, is a 30-something year-old artist, and he’s producing fantastic works of art in which, within the bi-dimensionality of the canvas, he creates a dimension of movement and the illusion of depth.”

When Albertini was asked what effect these paintings have on him, he said: “I love them. What struck me is that I was favorably surprised by the reaction of the NYU students that are part of the staff or intern here at Casa Italiana, helping the director and the other official members with



organizing and putting together these events. They are all in their early twenties and every one of them came up to me and said that this is the exhibit that they liked the most so far. Maybe there is something more universal about it, more irrational, or maybe it does speak more to people of this younger generation. Everyone's comment reflected that these paintings made you want to jump and dive into them..."

Matteo Montani's exhibit of paintings opened on March 18, 2010 at the Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò, and will be on display through April 29, 2010. Lovers of art and members of important artistic foundations in New York attended the event, including the exhibit's curators and the artist himself.

Matteo Montani is a young Italian artist with a well established career as a painter, acclaiming wide recognition in the United States. Viewing his paintings is a visual and sensory experience that takes the viewer into dream-like landscapes with colorful visions, provoking surreal and pensive states of mind.

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