

MASI Lugano

Museo d'arte
della Svizzera italiana,
Lugano

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Louisa Gagliardi: Many Moons

16 February 2025 – 20 July 2025

Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano

LAC venue

PRESS RELEASE

Lugano, 13 February 2025

MASI Lugano presents "Many Moons", Switzerland's first major museum exhibition dedicated to Louisa Gagliardi. For the occasion, the artist has created two monumental new series of paintings and a number of sculptures, exhibited in a site-specific presentation curated for LAC's lower ground floor. The project also includes a selection of paintings from recent years.

Louisa Gagliardi (1989, Sion, Switzerland, lives and works in Zurich) is one of the most interesting figures on the Swiss contemporary art scene. Her works, whose subject matter taps into artistic movements such as surrealism, metaphysics and magical realism, forge an unsettling yet intriguing imaginary realm that draws on a wide range of aesthetic registers, from the history of art to popular culture. The imaginary worlds dreamt up by Gagliardi reflect on the complexities of modern life and, like inner snapshots of our hyper-connected era, they investigate the meaning of identity, the ongoing social transformations and the relationship between the individual and their environment.

Gagliardi's paintings feature unsettling details and shifts in perception that turn seemingly everyday scenes into dreamlike visions; through a skilful use of *trompe-l'oeil* and painstaking attention to detail, her works force the viewer to look, to go, beyond the painted surface. This layering of meanings and contents is reflected in the innovative approach the artist applies to stretch the limits and possibilities of a traditional genre such as painting. Her works are indeed the outcome of a lengthy, complex procedure: the images are first digitally processed then printed on vinyl and stretched onto frames, before being finished with varnish, gel or glitter.

"The hybrid nature of Louisa Gagliardi's works consummately evokes the space the human experience takes place in today, in which the boundaries between real and virtual, intimacy and visibility, belonging and alienation, voyeurism and exhibitionism, are blurred," explains Francesca Benini, curator of the exhibition.

Louisa Gagliardi's show at MASl unfolds through a path that initially seems to follow the conventions of a classic presentation of paintings, but once you cross the threshold, it reveals unexpected twists.

The large frameless paintings that inhabit the space, like openings or windows onto other dimensions, create a subtle sensation of unease. Nature invades urban scenarios with a retrofuturistic flavour in the form of vaguely jarring, seemingly random details such as the peaches scattered on the ground in *Climbing* (2024), or the blue tits that appear around a couple seen from behind in *Birds of a Feather* (2023). Other paintings engage more boldly with the absurd; while in some nature dominates the human element, subverting the anthropized perspective, as in the

dystopian vision of the car in *Swamped* (2024), literally submerged in water and surrounded by herons.

But it is in the representation of domestic spaces that Louisa Gagliardi finds the ideal context to express a sense of uncanny. *Chaperons* (2023) mingles the familiar and the anomalous: two giant hands in purple gloves invade a high-security, metal-clad interior. In other works, the domestic space becomes a sterile backdrop inhabited by dehumanised figures that look like vacuous automata, as in *Roundabout* (2023), and *Green Room* (2023), in which the figures on the sofa, whose faces are acid green or purple, seem to be numb to any kind of relationship or interaction. There are two dogs, which appear to be on the other side of a large window, but on a closer look turn out to be merely a painting in the painting.

This kind of perceptual *mise en abyme*, a central theme in Louisa Gagliardi's practice, is expressed monumentally in the new series of site-specific paintings created by the artist for the MASI show, and presented in two smaller, more intimate spaces. The first consists of a curtain-room in which viewers find themselves immersed in the representation of a non-place, an unspecified interior, perhaps a waiting room. The space is inhabited by pigeons, shadows holding dogs on leashes, immobile, anonymous figures and the famous LC2 black armchairs designed by Le Corbusier. The design pieces are depicted in the paintings, but they are also present in the physical space, while *trompe-l'œil* interventions printed on the cushions further blur the dividing line between the dimensions.

The perceptual distortion appears different in the second series, entitled *Streaming*, where visitors encounter two huge recumbent figures, fast asleep. The masterful use of perspective and the drapes covering the bodies recall famous Renaissance models of the past and the solemnity of religious art - elements that nonetheless are at odds with the intimacy of the scene. Further visual enigmas include large discs/sculptures of wristwatches alongside the sleeping giants. By emphasising our lack of awareness in sleep, the artist elicits reflections on our constant desire for control and to manage our image in the digital era, an age in which some objects, such as watches, continue to have meaning solely by virtue of their physical presence.

"The ambiguity between reality and representation is a central theme in Gagliardi's art. The act of creating an alternative world through painting, which can be visually entered, is inevitably linked to the ability of digital media to extend our living space and generate a parallel reality that can be inhabited not only mentally", underlines the curator Francesca Benini.

The catalogue

On the occasion of the exhibition, Mousse Publisher is producing a catalogue in English and Italian that puts the works of Louisa Gagliardi in dialogue with literary texts. In close collaboration with the artist, MASI Lugano invited three young authors to discuss her work and write a new piece for the book. The stories by Noëmi Lerch and Sara Catella and the poems by Micah Schippa-Wildfong alternate with the artist's works, creating an interdisciplinary publication that offers an interpretation of the contemporary *Zeitgeist*, a visual and literary landscape we can explore and identify with. The book also includes a critical text by Francesca Benini and some special inserts with three works presented on multiple pages to highlight their details.

Louisa Gagliardi

Louisa Gagliardi has exhibited in solo exhibitions at: Cultuurcentrum Strombeek, Grimbergen; Taxa, Seoul; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich; Dawid Radziszewski Gallery, Warsaw; rodolphe janssen, Brussels, and Antenna Space, Shanghai. She has also taken part in group shows at The Swiss Institute, New York; Museo Villa dei Cedri, Bellinzona; Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Geneva; McNamara Art Projects, Hong Kong; Aargauer Kunsthau, Aarau; CAN Centre d'art de Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel; Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, St. Gallen; MOSTYN, Llandudno; Open Forum, Berlin; Plymouth Rock, Zurich; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; Pilar Corrias, London; The Cabin, Los Angeles; Tomorrow Gallery, New York; The Swiss Institute, Rome, and König Galerie, Berlin.

Event:

Louisa Gagliardi - Artist Talk

Thursday, 27th March 2025, 18:00

Language: English

On the occasion of the exhibition "Louisa Gagliardi: Many Moons", MASI Lugano is pleased to organise a conversation between Louisa Gagliardi and Francesca Benini, curator of the exhibition.

The event will take place within the exhibition space and will be held in English. The conversation will focus on the exploration of Louisa Gagliardi's works. Admission is free, advance booking is recommended.

Press contacts

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Exhibition venues

LAC
Piazza Bernardino Luini 6
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Palazzo Reali
Via Canova 10
CH – 6900 Lugano

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Press images

01.

Louisa Gagliardi

Night Caps

2022

Gel medium, ink on PVC

Private Collection, Basel

© the artist

Photo: Stefan Altenburger Photography,
Zürich



02.

Louisa Gagliardi

Roundabout

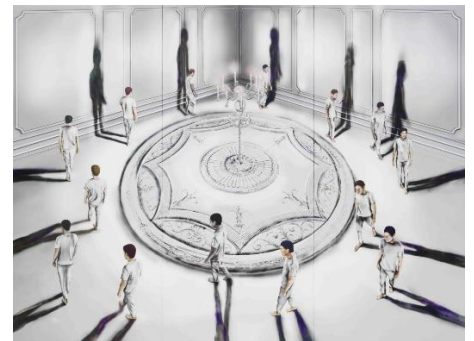
2023

Nail polish, gel medium, ink on PVC

Ringier Collection, Switzerland

© the artist

Photo: Stefan Altenburger Photography,
Zürich



03.

Louisa Gagliardi

Swamped

2024

Gel medium, nail polish, ink on PVC

Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Dawid

Radziszewski, Warsaw / Vienna

© the artist

Photo: Bartosz Zalewski



04.

Louisa Gagliardi

Visitors

2024

Gel medium, ink on PVC

Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Eva Presenhuber,

Zürich

© the artist

Photo: Stefan Altenburger Photography,

Zürich



05.

Louisa Gagliardi

Cascade

2023

Gel medium, ink on PVC

Collection Pictet

© the artist

Photo: Stefan Altenburger Photography,

Zürich



06.

Louisa Gagliardi

Revealing

2022

Gel medium, nail polish, ink on PVC

Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano.

Collezione Città di Lugano

© the artist

Photo: Stefan Altenburger Photography,

Zürich



07.

Louisa Gagliardi

Birds of a Feather

2023

Nail polish, ink on PVC

Private Collection, Austria

© the artist

Photo: Stefan Altenburger Photography,
Zürich



08.

Louisa Gagliardi

Chaperons

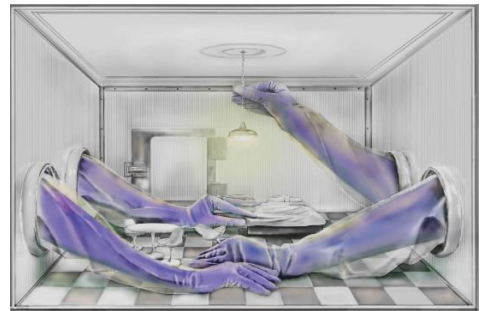
2023

Gel medium, ink on PVC

Ringier Collection, Switzerland

© the artist

Photo: Stefan Altenburger Photography,
Zürich



09.

Installation view,

"Louisa Gagliardi: Many Moons",
MASI Lugano, Svizzera.

Photo Luca Meneghel

© the artist



10.
Installation view,
"Louisa Gagliardi: Many Moons",
MASI Lugano, Svizzera.
Photo Luca Meneghel
© the artist



11.
Installation view,
"Louisa Gagliardi: Many Moons",
MASI Lugano, Svizzera.
Photo Luca Meneghel
© the artist



12.
Installation view,
"Louisa Gagliardi: Many Moons",
MASI Lugano, Svizzera.
Photo Luca Meneghel
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