

Urs Lüthi

LONTANO IL REALE TEMPO UMANO
(Homage to Pier Paolo Pasolini)

Galerie Urs Meile Zürich

April 12 - May 25, 2024

Opening: Friday, April 12, 2024; 11 am - 8 pm

Reception: Friday, April 12, 2024; 6 pm - 8 pm

The artist will be present.

With his solo exhibition *LONTANO IL REALE TEMPO UMANO* (Homage to Pier Paolo Pasolini) at Galerie Urs Meile Zürich, Swiss artist Urs Lüthi (born 1947 in Kriens) once again invites viewers to find comfort in an uncomfortable world. The constant reference to his person and biography is characteristic of his work – his self-portraits create an almost classical and hyperrealistic aura. The dialectical play of form and content invites viewers to a distant, emotional, and simultaneously intellectual experience, which is crucial for his artistic creation. This is also the case with the works presented in the exhibition: the current series *Selfportrait*, “*LONTANO IL REALE TEMPO UMANO*” (acrylic paint on canvas, each 200 x 150 cm and 70 x 50 cm), which forms his latest work on the theme of self-portraiture.

Precisely painted squares on canvas align geometrically in delicate, pallid shades, forming a harmonious composition reminiscent of the pixels of a subsequently censored photo. The work presents itself as abstract, constructivist painting on one hand, yet from a distance, a figurative, naturalistic portrait can be discerned. This ambivalence forms one of the basic components of Lüthi’s work.

By consciously choosing to realize this series of works in the medium of painting, the artist imparts a personal component to the works, and although he deliberately dissolves the motif into pixels, they still bear his characteristic signature. Upon closer inspection, subtle imperfections can be discerned on the painted surface, pointing to human imperfection. These paintings thus reflect, in a subtle manner, human nature, rather than presenting a perfected image as would be possible through photography, the basis on which the works were created. Like classical portraiture, the works are created through time-consuming craftsmanship, attempting to capture the essence of their subjects. The paintings are self-portraits, yet they are so estranged – at first glance, they could be anyone – thus raising the question: what actually makes us unique if we disappear in such a radical way?

With the dissolution of the motif, the series connects with Lüthi’s previous series *Selfportrait* (*TRANSMISSION ERROR*) (Ultrachrome prints, plexiglass, aluminum, unique pieces, each 200 x 149 x 5 cm) from 2022, in which the artist already elevated his photographed self-portrait to another level through deliberate and tactical digital editing to create complete anonymization. However, with *Selfportrait* “*LONTANO IL REALE TEMPO UMANO*” the artist introduces a hitherto unprecedented interplay between recognition and non-recognition, consciously juggling with the autofocus of the human eye. Like many of Lüthi’s works, he addresses deep-seated human emotions here, not only through the chosen color tones of the squares or the technical execution of the painting, which in their colorfulness and texture evoke human skin. Also, the quest for the answer to the question: What do I perceive? triggers a possible emotional reaction in viewers, with subtle irritation being quite intentional.

The works *SUNSET 1-3* “*LONTANO IL REALE TEMPO UMANO*” (2023, acrylic on canvas, each 200 x 300 cm) differ in their color scheme and ostensibly their motif, but not in their execution and statement from their predecessors. Here, the artist chooses the warm color tones of various sunset scenarios to immerse viewers in his world. They are just as much a part of his self-portrait series as the other works in the Lontano series. Here, too, the focus is on the ambivalence of disappearance, of assimilating, of becoming one with the whole, and the resulting emotions such as security and comfort. Lüthi thus succeeds in creating a conceptual sentimentality and in telling his story from different perspectives.

The subtitle of the exhibited series, which also forms the title of the exhibition – “*LONTANO IL REALE TEMPO UMANO*” – refers to a line from the poem *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (1954) by Italian poet and film director Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975) and roughly translates to “far is a real human time.”

Pasolini, who represents a kind of father figure of Lüthi's youth and is known, among other things, as the author of profound works, inspires him here not for the first time: Already in 1987, he created a large work on the same Pasolini quote (*Aus der Serie der vertauschten Träume*, 1987, pigments and casein on canvas, 250 x 620 cm). In *Le ceneri di Gramsci*, Pasolini depicts a bleak view of life in urban outskirts, where despite suffering and desolation, moments of joy and happiness can still be found. While working on the current series of works, this particular line kept coming to him, and its significance struck him as enormously visionary.

The deliberate play with art historical references is also intentional. At first glance, the paintings may evoke the Zurich Concretists around Max Bill, but on closer inspection, they reveal themselves as figurative. Urs Lüthi intends to reveal how different and yet similar we humans are, entirely according to his conviction that "there is not one truth."

Urs Lüthi was born in 1947 in Kriens, Switzerland. He currently lives and works in Munich, Germany. His works are represented in numerous public and private collections, including the collection of the Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, Switzerland; Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland; mamco, Geneva, Switzerland; Kunsthau Aarau, Switzerland; Kunsthau Zürich, Switzerland; Kunsthau Glarus, Switzerland; Museum Chur, Switzerland; Musée Rath Genève, Geneva, Switzerland; Museum Winterthur, Switzerland; Museum Stuttgart, Germany; Kunstmuseum Hamburg, Germany; Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg, Germany; Museum Kassel, Kassel, Germany; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; MoMA New York, USA; MoMA San Francisco, USA; Fondazione Brodbeck, Catania, Italy; Museum Arte Moderna Roma, Rome, Italy; Museum Dell' Novencento, Milan, Italy, and many others.