



Exhibition title

Antonio Milano. Epifanie

curated by Ilaria Bignorri

Exhibition venue

IAGA Contemporary Art

Strada Cloșca n. 9-11, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

From Thursday 21 March 2024, to Saturday, April 20, 2024

Opening

Thursday 21 March 2024 from 6.00 pm

The exhibition can be visited for free from Tuesday to Saturday, from 2.00 to 6.00 pm and by appointment.

For further information:

Website: www.iagacontemporaryart.com

Email address: info@iagacontemporaryart.com

Tel: +40 724059844

FB: [@iagacontemporaryart](https://www.facebook.com/iagacontemporaryart)

IG: [@iagacontemporaryart](https://www.instagram.com/iagacontemporaryart)

IAGA Contemporary Art is glad to announce **the opening of the first solo exhibition signed by Italian artist Antonio Milano** with the title ***EPIFANIE (Epiphanies)*** curated by Ilaria Bignotti. The exhibition project, a completely new and site-specific journey meticulously planned by the artist and the curator, entails an immersive experience for the viewer who will be guided through Milano's pictorial language across three exhibition stages unfolding within the gallery spaces. In fact, the artist conceives the IAGA premises as a tripartite place, to interpret the three stages of body, mind and spirit, **'as if the gallery space were the space of a man's life, thus matching with time. Therefore, matter, time and space become a unitary whole, as I try to do in my works,'** he said in one of the dialogues we had. But also in churches, he recalled, the altars are

divided into three, based on the verse from John 1:14: 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us'.

On the path of the exhibition, the visitor is therefore greeted by about ten drawings of new production, displayed on the wall, made on Rosaspina paper - one of the supports chosen by the artist, on whose characteristics we will return to later - which interpret the VERB, whose Substance is the WORD.

This first stage of the exhibition and of the spiritual journey is followed by a second stage which interprets the phrase: SI FECE CARNE ('*Was made flesh*'). Here, Milano, in the central room of the gallery, presents six works on cotton, made with a technique that makes them usable both from the front and from the back - we will return to this aspect later -, mounted in an ambient and sculptural installation: The Substance is the BODY.

The third and last phase, which corresponds to the longitudinal room and the small 'dark room' of the gallery, is dedicated to the motto E VENNE AD ABITARE IN MEZZO A NOI, ('*and dwelt among us*'), the Substance is the SPIRIT.

Another painting will be displayed on the wall and, thus, it will only be visible from the front, and video material will be projected in the small room.

The seven paintings on cotton that the artist made for this project are defined by him as 'faces and bodies of incorrupt Saints': it is, indeed, about seven portraits of Saints of the Christian religion, namely six faces of St. Curé d'Ars, St. Pio of Pietralcina, St. Rita of Cascia, St. Pius X, St. Maria of Agreda, St. Veronica Giuliani, and a body, that of St. Teresa of Avila, a tribute, as a matter of fact, to Bernini's famous sculpture.

The Saints are painted on cotton, using a painting technique developed long ago by Milano, which, thanks to the chemical processes triggered by the mixing of materials, allows an image **to be printed on the back of the painting, which, over time, undergoes a rather intense process of change**, dissolving and purifying the clearest and most defined traits and making it a dissolving icon, an image that has come down from somewhere else and seems to be looking at us.

Seven pictorial shrouds, six of which will be revealed in their double identity, thanks to the installation in the central room of the gallery: the visitor will be able to truly observe the face of each work, confronting the slow and complex painting of Milano, and then to be in the presence of what is not usually accessible, the back of the painting, where the process of transformation of the pictorial matter takes place.

A process that finally translates into the last room, where even the supports and materials of the painting have disappeared, giving way to the digital evanescence of the video, which, again, resumes and leads to a further exploration of the relationship between the appearance and transformation of the sacred icon.

Instead, in the first room, the ten **drawings on Rosaspina paper** assert a presence, a corporeality, which gradually rises to become spirituality: the special type of this support, usually

used for engraving, evokes, by its name, the great Italian engraver Francesco Rosaspina (1762-1841), who had the merit of popularizing many works of art of his time, through a skilful interpretation of the original, managing to translate the pictorial language, made up of colours, into a chiaroscuro sign language: a true translation.

Thus, Antonio Milano also tries to translate, on Rosaspina paper, the faces of the sacred, the transcendent passage from Word to Body and to Spirit.

As highlighted by the curator in the critical text of the catalog, Antonio Milano's work is situated along a historicized trajectory that, over the centuries, has illuminated the creative path of the young artist, from Andrei Rublev to Cimabue, from Claudio Parmiggiani to Bill Viola: "the pictorial material so carefully dosed is a Janus Bifrons pictorial material: behind the apparition, beyond the epiphany, there is a second image, in the negative, which nevertheless affirms the possibility of someone else, of somewhere else. Of a spirituality that must go beyond the flesh, to overcome the body. Everything happens in the simplest possible way: the image passes through its support, something happens beyond it. We, in front of each painting, are waiting to discover its impermanence. Thus we make it incorruptible, in time and space".

The artist, Antonio Milano

Antonio Milano (1994, Putignano, Italy) is a visual artist who currently lives and works in Gioia del Colle (Bari). In 2024 – after an experience with the Erasmus+ project at the Università de Artă și Design in Cluj-Napoca that ended the same year - has obtained the Bachelor Degree in Painting to the Academy of Fine Arts in Bari. He exhibited his works in different group exhibitions, among which, for example: *La pittura ovunque – IV Edizione* (2023), *Crimes of the Present* (2023), *Il mattino ha Lory in bocca* (2022), *È solo ciò che è stato*, curated by ZNS Project (2022), *TreSette – Esposizione d'arte in tre atti* (2022) of which he shared the curatorship together with Pierluca Cetera and Maurizio Di Feo. It is also worth mentioning the installation exhibited at the Wall of Bari in 2017, *Per gioco e per amore*, curated by ARCI territoriale Bari. In 2023 took part in an intensive painting program at Colonia Pictorilor, Baia Mare, Romania and in 2024 he joined the roster of artists represented by IAGA Contemporary Art. His research focuses on the language and sacredness of the image in relation to matter, space and time.

The experimentation of materials and chemical reactions leads him to develop an idea of autonomous and free image, in which the chosen techniques and materials actively contribute to the creation of the works.

Ilaria Bignotti

Born in Brescia in January 1979, Ilaria Bignotti holds a Ph.D. in Theories and History of Arts and serves as a Scientific Curator of Artist Archives and Estates; she is an independent curator and art critic. She is a member of the Curatorial Committee of ArteJeans, a project focused on contemporary arts for the establishment of a Museum-Archive of Jeans in Genoa (since 2020). She is also on the Scientific Committee of the MoRE Museum, a museum of refused and unrealized art projects (since 2011). Specializing in modern and contemporary art history (XIX, XX, and XXI centuries), she contributes to the new five-year course "Dell'Arte" by DeAgostini Scuola for Secondary Schools and Universities, authored by Ernesto Luciano Francalanci (first edition 2021). Since 2003, she has conceived, organized, and curated international exhibition projects, working for extended periods with Museums, Institutions, and Foundations in Italy and abroad. She serves as a Visiting Professor and Adjunct Faculty at Italian and international universities. She is also a Court Expert in modern and contemporary art for the Brescia Court. From 2003 to the present, she has authored over a hundred books, including catalogs of modern and contemporary art for curated exhibitions, and has written numerous essays and contributions in scientific monographs and reasoned catalogs.

IAGA Contemporary Art

IAGA Contemporary Art Gallery was founded in 2014, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, in the Transylvanian region, by Alberto Perobelli, entrepreneur and collector of modern and contemporary art: starting from the acquisition of the works of the great masters of the Italian post-war period after the Second World War, through his activity in Romania, began to deepen the research and languages of young local artists and founded the project of a gallery to give voice to their works, in a careful and original dialogue with artists from other Eastern European countries, without forgetting the young Italians and the middle-aged.

From 2014 until now, the result is an intense activity of the gallery, coordinated by Rosalba Di Pierro, Gallery Manager, hosting six exhibitions a year and with an active participation in art fairs in Northeast European countries, with a careful presence at Italian fairs.