

PRESS RELEASE

Ritratto di donne

Alessandra Ariatti | Legami
Chantal Joffe | Moll

12 October 2014 – 12 April 2015



Alessandra Ariatti and Chantal Joffe have focused their artistic research on portraiture, a figurative tradition which has been constantly part of Western art (but not solely) since the 15th century. Way before the modern era portraiture as an exploration of the inner self and other traits of an individual or personality, dates back to the Greek and Roman marble portraits; although adjusting itself to the evolution of styles and shapes, it has always been true to the historical need to bear witness to demands for social cohesion or dissociation.

The work of many contemporary artists (such as Alice Neel, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Andy Warhol, Alex Katz, Chuck Close) is permeated by, and inseparable from, the practice and re-invention of portrait.

The portraits of these two artists, placed in a sort of mutual dialogue in the exhibition, are rooted on the one hand to the

aesthetics, or better still, the culture of contemporary art, and on the other hand – and perhaps more intimately than for artists from the past – to the *milieu* where they live and work. Their formal connection, however, ends here.

Ariatti paints groups of figures with a hyper-photographic precision functional to the possibility of probing their psychological depth and the intensity of human interrelations. The artist focuses mostly on faces and their turning into a micro-social group, as also underlined by the general title given to her group of works: *Legami* - Ties. What interests the artist in her painting, is the possibility of highlighting a relationship between the subjects of the work and the artist, and fostering a dialogue with the viewer.

In the four pieces on exhibit, instead, Joffe represents constantly, rather obsessively, a large single figure – full length or close to, plunged into a well-defined space – with extremely loose brush strokes, blurring the details of the face, dresses and setting into a single pictorial flow. In this group of works where the artist openly evokes the paintings on puberty by Edvard Munch, and has titled them *Moll*, the subject is her now 16-year-old niece – being portrayed since her birth – who has reached an age when the inner dimension is full of dreams and at the same time of unfathomable mystery. This life condition may be extended to the modes through which the artist presents the female identity in general in her other works, with an “ambiguity” generating complexity.

Moll's eyes avoid scrutiny, her gaze points elsewhere, while the eyes of Ariatti's women constantly search for a reflection and a visual contact, while at the same time conveying an ethical model of life which the artist aspires to and draws inspiration from.

If from a stylistic point of view Joffe's emotionally dense and fast painting recalls the *all-over*, the *soft* contours, the decorative values of fabrics found in Matisse; Ariatti aspires instead to the *hard-edged* intensity of Renaissance saints. The polarity of these painting strategies emerges also from the time required to complete their works: while for Chantal Joffe it has taken five months to paint the four portraits of her niece Moll, Alessandra Ariatti has dedicated four years of her artistic life to portray the three family groups presented in *Legami*.

Private view, by invitation: 11 October 2014 at 6.00pm. The artists will be present.

12 October 2014 – 12 April 2015

The exhibition can be visited free of charge during the opening hours of the permanent collection.

Thursday and Friday 2.30pm – 6.30pm

Saturday and Sunday 10.30am – 6.30pm

Closed: 25-26 December, 1 and 6 January

Info

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Biographical infos

Alessandra Ariatti (1969, Reggio Emilia)

Lives and works in Borzano di Albinea (RE).

Has participated in several group exhibitions, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2009); Palazzo del Podestà, Rimini (2009); Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2008); City Art Gallery, Ljubijana (2006); Villa Manin, Codroipo (2006, 2004); 50th Venice Biennale (2003).

Chantal Joffe (1969, St Alban's, Vermont, US)

Lives and works in London.

Master in Fine Art at the Royal College of Art in London.

Has received several awards, such as the Wollaston Prize of the Royal Academy, and a scholarship at the British School in Rome. Her solo exhibitions comprise: Galerie Forsblom, Helsinki (2013); Cheim & Read, New York (2012; 2009); Victoria Miro Gallery, London (2011, 2008, 2005, 2003, 2000); Monica de Cardenas, Milan (2009, 2007, 2001). Her group exhibitions: Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague (2013); Mackintosh Museum, Glasgow (2012); Royal Academy of Arts, London (2006, 2002); Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna (2000); Whitechapel Gallery, London (1998); Tate Gallery, London (1996).

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