

Studio Visit

Thoughts and practices
surrounding ten artist's studios



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Andy Cross, Benjamin Degen,
Matthew Day Jackson, Mark Manders,
Enoc Perez, Luisa Rabbia, Daniel Rich,
Tom Sachs, TARWUK, Barry X Ball

17.10.2021 – 20.02.2022

Studio Visit. Thoughts and practices surrounding ten artist's studios is a group exhibition stemming from collaboration with ten artists whose work is already on display at Collezione Maramotti, and who accepted an invitation to discuss and present their ideas on studios: Andy Cross, Benjamin Degen, Matthew Day Jackson, Mark Manders, Enoc Perez, Luisa Rabbia, Daniel Rich, Tom Sachs, TARWUK (Bruno Pogačnik Tremow and Ivana Vukšić) and Barry X Ball.

A studio is a place of creation and production, a workshop or factory, but it is also a space for personal reflection and a sort of interior landscape representing multiple physical and creative dimensions, a complex, densely packed space, whose various elements can form an outline self-portrait of the artist who works there.

Starting with Claudio Parmiggiani's 1976 work *Sineddoche*, the exhibition takes visitors on a winding route through artworks and archive materials that are already part of the collection and others shared or created specifically for the occasion, giving rise to a display developed through direct dialogue with the artists, and at the same time a form of archive of the present.

Jackson

Manders

TARWUK

X Ball

Cross

Rich

Perez

Rabbia

Sachs

Degen

Parmiggiani

Studio Visit

CLAUDIO PARMIGGIANI

The Collezione Maramotti comprises over forty works and numerous artist's books by Claudio Parmiggiani, to whom the permanent collection devotes an entire room and a large double space housing the imposing suspended artwork entitled *Caspar David Friedrich* (1989).

Seamlessly continuing from Parmiggiani's exploration of the dissolution of the object in memory, *Sineddoche* (1976) is an intriguing example of the artist's attempt to allow the past to live again in his works and in his own times.

Parmiggiani's art often features echoes of distant figures drawn from mythology and art history; different iconographies that, connected by symbolic meanings and affinities, suggest enigmatic worlds, suspended in their silent mirroring.

In *Sineddoche* the artist places several elements from *Jupiter Painting Butterflies, Mercury and Virtue*, painted by Dosso Dossi between 1523 and 1524, outside the painting itself, in the viewer's space. Parmiggiani thus presents a "sculpted painting", in which the citation rebounds infinitely in a chain of mental associations evoked by the elements of the artwork. In this case, the artist not only reproduces Dossi's painting on a photographic plate, but also recreates the same scene depicted in it, presenting the stool on which Jupiter ideally sits to paint, the canvas with three butterflies on a blue background, the palette and the brushes.

The title of the work (in English, "synecdoche") – a figure of speech materialized in real space – is a direct reference to the mental process that is activated when viewing it. Indeed, by associating two realities that are different but dependent or connected in logical, formal and spatial terms, the part becomes a reference for the whole.

Born in Luzzara (Reggio Emilia) in 1943

Lives and works in the province of Parma

Belonging to the Collezione Maramotti archive and on display for the first time in this venue, the work is an introduction to the theme of *Studio Visit*, the place of artistic creation and its manifestation through several emblematic elements, while at the same time evoking the possible links between painting, sculpture and installation, and revealing the relationship between past and present, reality and imaginary in artistic practice.

Claudio Parmiggiani

Sineddoche

1976

chromogenic print on paper on panel,
acrylic on canvas, footstool, palette, paint brushes
variable dimension

Courtesy Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia

© Claudio Parmiggiani

LUISA RABBIA

Luisa Rabbia displayed her work in a solo exhibition at Collezione Maramotti in 2017. The collection features several of her pieces produced between 2009 and 2017, along with two artist's books housed in our library. Her large canvas entitled *Love* established a dialogue with the dancers of the Fondazione Nazionale della Danza/ Aterballetto and the musicians of La Toscanini in the (video)creation entitled *The Other Side*, spawned by the experience of isolating in the summer of 2020.

Rabbia ponders the existential condition, the connection between human beings and the surrounding environment through organic images that constantly oscillate between the collective and the individual dimensions, expanding landscapes and huddled bodies, cosmic space and cellular processes. In her works, the human figure – often captured during an apparent and incessant mutation and immersed in an undefined primordial amniotic material – becomes a transformative and transitional element to access other worlds.

In her attempt to give shape to the invisible, Rabbia renders her pictorial process perceptible, proceeding via meticulous stratifications and removal of paint: the traces of the artist's fingerprints and the marks created on the pictorial surface with a metal tip confer and reinforce a sense of movement, a shift of physical energy within the work.

Self-Portrait (Swimmer) (2021) belongs to the artist's more recent pictorial exploration, characterized by a variegated palette of bright, light colours. The figure, a human-plant hybrid creature, originates from a central mandorla and bursts out into the surrounding space, which appears to form by propagation. Rooted in the lower part of the painting, with her arms stretched upwards, she dissolves in the centre in a fluid, generative movement.

Born in Pinerolo (province of Turin) in 1970

Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York

There are echoes of a similar iconography in the small black ceramic work on display, entitled *I Will Bring You Flowers 5* (2021), which is imbued with great intensity and delicate beauty. Here, instead of hands, we see two feet grafted onto a body-landscape that is expressed by carving and imprinting the material, edged by a composition of soft open petals that recall the fluid lines of the artist's painted *Self-Portrait*.

Rabbia produces her paintings in her Brooklyn studio and her ceramics at her base in the Barriera district of Turin. Almost as if following a process of cellular mitosis – a recurrent principle in her work – her artistic practice is divided between two places, two microcosms, each associated with a different technique, but both full expressions of the visual and conceptual imaginary of the artist, who ultimately considers these spaces as self-portraits.

Alongside her artworks, the exhibition also presents a series of photographs of the two locations, several drawings and studies (on paper and on canvas), and a video made in the artist's New York studio in 2020.

Luisa Rabbia

Self-Portrait (Swimmer)

2021

oil on canvas

226,5 x 150 cm

detail

Courtesy Peter Blum Gallery, New York

Ph. Dario Lasagni

© Luisa Rabbia

BENJAMIN DEGEN

Benjamin Degen's work has been displayed in two collective exhibitions hosted by Collezione Maramotti: *Transitions* (2009) and *Painting as a Radical Form* (2013). Our archive contains several of his paintings and a drawing.

Degen's artworks, influenced by early Renaissance and Chinese landscapes depicting contemplative, solitary worlds, are meticulously prepared. Technique and the dimension of craftsmanship and manual skill are very important in his work, which features parts characterized by computer graphic design and painted parts resembling engravings.

His paintings have a luminosity that gives the image a certain immateriality, but the oblique composition, soft, naturalistic Pop elements, unnatural colours and intentionally primitive forms lead his work in an almost symbolic direction.

In *Way* (2020) and *Navagatrix* (2019) – among Collezione Maramotti's recent acquisitions – the subject is a mysterious solid female figure, completely nude and set in a marine landscape surmounted by the numerous lights of a densely star-studded sky. This archetypal figure, embodying the lunar and feminine generative potential and the divinatory ability of a major arcanum, is holding the hand of a second figure hidden from view, pointing out something to them, or perhaps indicating the direction to take together.

The coronavirus pandemic has substantially changed Degen's studio work. Indeed, during the first lockdown in 2020, he left his previous studio in Astoria, NY, and moved to Beacon, NY, to live and work in the apartment owned by his wife, the painter Hope Gangloff. The entire apartment, featured in several photographs in the exhibition, has been transformed into a small shared work-

Born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1976

Lives and works in Beacon, New York

space, to which Degen has brought the essential elements to recreate a synthesis of his studio occupying a single table, which is the focus of his work.

The reconstruction of his table-studio at Collezione Maramotti is an open invitation to visitors to use it as a workbench, deploying materials, objects and processes that are fundamental to the artist, for whom the finished work is the result of numerous drawings and versions in which his ideas evolve and are transformed.

The composition of sketches and notes relating to the two works by Degen on display is available to visitors, who can use it as an open-source system, remixing the artist's ideas. They can also create their own version of the work, or cut and assemble the sheets of paper and incorporate them in a completely new one. They can take the sheets home with them as if they were posters, or use their smartphones to photograph themselves while they work seated at the table and post their pictures to the Instagram accounts @collezione_maramotti and @benjamindegenstudio #instudiowithben.

Benjamin Degen

Way

2020

oil and enamel spray on canvas on panel

213,4 x 152,4 cm

detail

Courtesy Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia

© Benjamin Degen

ENOC PEREZ

Enoc Perez, known to Collezione Maramotti's visitors since his 2008 solo exhibition, *Casa Malaparte* – whose large canvases mark the beginning of the Rehang section on the second floor of the permanent collection – is featured in *Studio Visit* with works and materials presented for the first time at our venue. The collection comprises a total of nine works by Perez, some of which were displayed in the *Transitions* collective exhibition (2009) and the *Mollino/Insides* project (2020–21).

Inspired by the artists he admires, including Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, over the years Perez has developed a personal technique in which he superimposes layers of colour using a paper template/stencil. Each colour requires its own sheet of paper onto which the artist projects the image and then traces the outlines of the subject in pencil. The different colours are not then painted on, but impressed one by one onto the surface of the canvas: the image is thus constructed via a sort of “manual printing” process, without the use of brushes.

However, Perez's originality lies not only in the technique that he uses, but also in the subjects that he chooses to depict. Taking architecture as a focal point, he concentrates on emblematic buildings and their transfiguration within the collective imagination into metaphors of power, fascination and beauty. Principally derived from photographs or films and carefully selected to find the desired perspective, these architectural icons, which have frequently failed to deliver the utopias and dreams they expressed, convey a sense of nostalgia and disillusionment.

As the title suggests, the subject of *TWA Terminal, Kennedy Airport, New York* (2006) is the TWA Flight Center at JFK airport, designed by Eero Saarinen and built between 1959 and 1962.

Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1967
Lives and works in Long Island City, New York

The technique and colours used by Perez give the depiction an old-fashioned and almost evanescent, ghostly appeal. A preparatory study on canvas for the same work, on loan from the artist, is displayed in the centre of the room.

On the walls are two large preparatory drawings for the paintings entitled *Casa Malaparte* and *Pan-American Terminal*, while a video recently recorded in Perez's studio offers a visual foray into the physical spaces in which he works and develops his ideas, accompanied by the words of the artist himself, recounting his vision of the studio as an internal organ and showing several particular elements of it.

Enoc Perez

TWA Terminal, Kennedy Airport

2006

oil on canvas

76,2 x 106,7 cm

detail

Courtesy and © Enoc Perez

DANIEL RICH

Collezione Maramotti's storage comprises seven works by Daniel Rich, including three paintings displayed in the 2009 exhibition *Transitions*.

Like Enoc Perez, Rich's preferred subjects are buildings and architecture, characterized by specific political and social connotations: architectural landscapes that recall the photographs of Bernd and Hilla Becher or the paintings of Gerhard Richter. However, stripped of human presence, for the artist they become a means "to talk about history and politics". Drawing inspiration from photographs cut out of newspapers and magazines, Rich uses an extremely meticulous procedure to accurately reproduce the architectural subjects that he selects. He commences with a photocopy of a picture of his subject of the dimensions chosen for the artwork, and creates a *maquette* from it, which he uses to depict the tiniest details of the compositional elements of the image, aided by an extensive numbering system, on a Dibond aluminium composite panel – a material also often used for photographs or posters and billboards. The countless details traced using the *maquette* are subsequently painted with enamel or acrylic paints, and identified by means of an accurate numerical and chromatic classification system.

The various stages in this analytical technique are clearly illustrated here by the newspaper cuttings, the sketches with the *maquettes* made from the photographs, the test pieces, the colour palettes and the paintings in the exhibition.

In *Torre Velasca* (2006) – the emblem of post-war Italy and its economic revival – the architectural image shows the artist's interest in "the highly symbolic role architecture plays in politics" and in its power as an "icon". *East Jerusalem* (2008) depicts an

Born in Ulm, Germany, in 1977

Lives and works in Berlin

Israeli settlement in the eastern part of Jerusalem, which was inhabited by the Palestinian community prior to its annexation by Israel during the Six Day War in 1967. Rich's painted architectures become symbolic elements of the relationships between utopias and dystopias, or images that cement tensions and political and social issues, determined by the historical moment in which a society exists and expresses itself.

Rich's current studio in Berlin, which he moved into in 2018 following an extended period in the United States, is housed in a building that once belonged to the East German government, a further paradigm of the possible different social functions that architecture can embody due to historical changes.

The artist also offers visitors a musical playlist that he routinely listens to whilst working in his studio, as a form of company, but also as a symbolic recovery of the moments of deep reflection experienced during the lockdown of 2020.

Daniel Rich

Torre Velasca (Velasca Tower)

2006

enamel on panel

213,5 x 153 cm

detail

Courtesy Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia

© Daniel Rich

BARRY X BALL

The Collezione Maramotti comprises four works by Barry X Ball, two of which are currently displayed on the second floor of the permanent collection: *Sculpture 10/11* (1996–97) and *Matthew Barney* (2000–03), whose production is illustrated here in the sequence of photographs showing the various creative stages of the work.

The artist was also featured in the 2019 exhibition *Rehang: Archives* that focused on the archival material documenting the creative process of several of the collection's artworks, and whose natural progression is *Studio Visit*.

X Ball's study of art history, and Italian art history in particular, is the starting point for his sculptural exploration, which draws on sophisticated digital technologies, computerized tools and artisanal processes to elaborate new works in which the past engages with the present, and the theme of the relationship between the authenticity and the serial nature of the work emerges.

The double portrait (2007–10) on display, from the *Dual-Portrait* series, is made of black Belgian marble with a "gradient" effect accentuated by the raised foliage motifs. This modern two-faced Janus figure with a pensive air becomes food for thought for the artist, as the dual image leads him to engage with the history of sculpture in relation to contemporary practice. Along with the *Matthew Barney* sequence of photographs, the exhibition features a series of images illustrating the creative process of the work on display, commencing with pictures of the New York gallery owner Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn.

The two videos, made by the Fergus McCaffrey gallery in New York, focus on the artist's Brooklyn studio, designed by the architect Andrew Berman. Both videos illustrate not only the monumental nature of the place, but also the artist's modus operandi that involves highly technological tools. The new studio, with an area of almost 10,000 square metres, is a veritable factory that employs a team of digital artists, carpenters and sculptors. Here, X Ball is able to carry out and coordinate each stage of the artistic process, from the storage of the enormous, precious blocks of

Born in Pasadena, California, 1955

Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York

stone, marble and onyx from all over the world to the computerized drafting of all the designs conceived and successively modelled with meticulous care and precision using highly sophisticated equipment, and even the shipping of the works to museums, galleries and collectors.

The videos show the key features of X Ball's current research focusing on the sculpture of Michelangelo and Medardo Rosso, but what stands out in particular in the video featuring the interview by Fergus McCaffrey is the central role that the studio-factory plays in his life: "It is truly inspiring, an extraordinary place to work, and I wanted to make a place for my assistants, that was peaceful, light-filled, beautiful... they give their lives to my work, and I wanted to make a workplace that was exemplary for them."

Barry X Ball

A dual-portrait, realized at 100% scale, in the rare, uniquely un-figured black marble known as 'Belge Noir', exhibiting a layered 'sfumato' surface suffused with miniscule opposed-diagonal fluting overlaying a coincident enveloping foliate relief. In culmination, a glistening "Rorschach" garland - symmetrically splashed, sharply-delineated, avian, sinister - traverses the work's midline. The artist-designed integral / modular base / pedestal unit, its tapering parabolic sweep flowing into the sculpture's glass-polished flute stem (which, in turn, terminates in a silhouetted arboreal fringe), conceived in parallel with the sculpture, precisely-fabricated in stainless steel, acrylic-spray-lacquered aluminum and wood (and a variety of subsidiary materials) by a studio-coordinated consortium of disparate fabricators, is reminiscent, alternately, at its apex, of traditional 'socles' and Saarinen furniture pedestals. Here, in an attempt to reinvent and reinvigorate the sub-genre of romantic portrait sculpture, the artist has conjoined his signature fever-pitch execution intensity and a newfound conceptual tenderness. The resultant bilateral Janusian abstraction, created with deep reverence for and specific focus on the history of sculpture, makes an expansive case for the critical reconsideration of prevailing contemporary practice, while simultaneously probing both the subject's psychology and her complex relationship to the artist. The stony double-surrogate captures, in soft Galatean contravention of its obdurate materiality, a moment of poignant reflection, reflected.

2007-2010

Belgian black marble, aluminum, stainless steel, wood, acrylic lacquer, steel, nylon, plastic
174 x 27,9 x 27,9 cm / detail

Courtesy Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia

© Barry X Ball

MARK MANDERS

Two sculptures by Mark Manders are displayed on the second floor of Collezione Maramotti's permanent collection and a third large-format work, currently housed in our archive, was featured in his solo exhibition *Cose in corso* in 2014.

Manders's works are hieratic and vaguely melancholic, suspended in a metaphysical space. They exist within an ongoing project that the artist has been conducting since 1986: each of his installations represents a fragment of what progressively goes to make up a self-portrait of the artist in the form of a building, or a container theatre in which the images are archived and recombined in different configurations. Manders's self-portrait – not intended in an autobiographical and personal sense – tends towards a "pure construction of the spirit", according to his own words: "After all, what am I? A human being who unfolds into a horrifying amount of objects and language by means of very precise conceptual constructions."

His works are set in a single, unique moment, a temporal "here and now" in which they appear as if frozen, shortly after they were made and suddenly abandoned by their creator.

The studio, located in a former textile factory in Flanders, is at the centre of Manders's artistic practice and his works may spend years there during their gestation process. The artist's book published on occasion of the 2014 exhibition at Collezione Maramotti focuses on his studio in Ronse and features numerous photographs of it. In *Room with Unfired Clay Figure* (2014) it seems that the artist has just left his studio and could return at any moment to continue his work. The fictitious component of Manders's artistic exploration also spills over into his use of materials and the way he perceives them. His human figures appear to be made of clay,

Born in Volkel, Netherlands, in 1968

Lives and works in Ronse, Belgium

a malleable and fragile material. However, they are actually made from bronze or epoxy resin, which is subsequently painted. And although they are mutilated, broken or traversed by pieces of wood, they appear untroubled and at ease.

Manders also creates a sort of “structure of thought” for his drawings, just as he does for his sculptures. Each of them commences as a visual image in the artist’s mind, which he then rapidly elaborates with numerous visual and linguistic associations until they give rise to a poetic form from which the drawing originates. This will subsequently be observed and interpreted by someone else. “A drawing”, Manders wrote, “is a transparent sheet that hangs for comparison between the maker and the viewer”.

Mark Manders

Room with Unfired Clay Figure

2014

painted bronze, wood, iron, plastic, painted ceramic,
chair and painted epoxy (unique installation)

273 x 440 x 620 cm

detail

Courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp

Ph. Peter Cox

© Mark Manders

TARWUK

TARWUK was born in 2014 in New York out of the union of artists Bruno Pogačnik Tremow and Ivana Vukšić. Their first solo exhibition in Italy, *Ante mare et terras*, at Collezione Maramotti's Pattern Room, coincides with *Studio Visit*.

The continuous development of the human figure – its multiple possibilities of existence and the body's fluid expressive quality – is the formal result of an immersion, a deep probing of memory and the marks that memories and unconscious tensions impress upon bodies, physically modelling them.

The two artists that form TARWUK were born in socialist Yugoslavia and grew up in the Balkans during the period of the Croatian War of Independence (1991–95). They consider their sculptures symbolic places of loss and conflict prone to anatomical dissection, but also organisms that potentially encompass a dimension of regeneration and rebirth. Indeed, traces of beauty and a possibility of transcendence emerge among the technological waste materials and signs of devastation.

Their studio is a workshop for the cross-pollination of materials and the imaginary, but also for the shaping of their bond, the ever-changing, undivided condition called TARWUK that, ultimately, represents the Work.

Over the past eight years, the artist duo have changed studio five times, and each of these imposed specific limits that had to be considered in the production of the works.

The five drawings on display here represent the five studios: they were commenced in the very first one in New York and were developed with the addition of new layers upon each move, becoming the material evidence of the artists' itinerant experience in the city.

Bruno Pogačnik Tremow, born in Zagreb, in 1981

Ivana Vukšić, born in Dubrovnik, in 1981

They live and work in Brooklyn, New York

The head sculpture slowly took shape in three different studios (2017–2021), absorbing traces of the places and years and incorporating the materials that TARWUK often uses to create the sculptures, from the relics collected on the BQE (Brooklyn-Queens Expressway) to the aluminium framework, from steel to polyurethane. It is closely linked to the works presented in the Pattern Room and not only shares their materials, but also their original model and several construction principles.

A box contains a series of photographs documenting various scenes of the studios, works in progress and performances. Indeed, TARWUK's work combines various media and means of expression: sculpture, painting, drawing, performance, costumes, stage props and editorial items are perused with great liberty in an art form fully interconnected with the life of the two artists, who have considered themselves a single entity since the moment they immersed themselves together to investigate the boundaries of the Self.

TARWUK

CONFINEMENT

2014-2021

collage, graphite, ballpoint pen, gesso, linocut print on paper

95,2 x 152,4 cm

detail

Courtesy and © TARWUK

MATTHEW DAY JACKSON

The Collezione Maramotti includes six works by Matthew Day Jackson, several of which were featured in the temporary exhibitions *Transitions* (2009), *Painting as a Radical Form* (2013) and *Industrial Imaginary* (2015).

Many of Jackson's works were inspired by some of the most legendary artefacts, icons and figures of American history. His interest in the role that the American past continues to play in the contemporary socio-political sphere and how it may affect the future is expressed in artworks made using mixed media that are full of symbols and cultural references.

Jackson claims that "Art is an action of the imagination and imagination spans everything... I'm trying to give my creativity complete free rein, and acknowledge my location. We are products of this technological age, where things no longer move in a linear pattern. The linear model has changed. In making art I'm trying to communicate many things simultaneously: my political concerns, taking responsibility for the art as a self-portrait... I'm interested in making art that can be a mirror of the time that I'm in, art as a microcosm."

Disburdened Flesh and *Purgatorial Repose* form a diptych that the artist created in 2007. In the former work, a rendering in multi-coloured threads of the slayed skin held by Saint Bartholomew in the *Last Judgement* in the Sistine Chapel hangs from a nail in the branch of a tree. The centre of this modular motif of multicoloured threads, a simulacrum of a skin, is dominated by what is reportedly Michelangelo's self-portrait, which Jackson has appropriated to suggest a relationship between the 16th-century artist's existential martyrdom and the contemporary mind's struggle for artistic identity. *Purgatorial Repose* is an assemblage of wood and metal

Born in Panorama City, California, in 1974

Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York

in the form of a fragmented skeleton. Having lost its skin, the figure lies on a black bench, its anatomical parts recomposed according to a sort of anthropological taxonomy.

In Jackson's artistic quest, the concept of death is associated with the emphasis of creativity as a life force: art has a salvific function, the works offer us the possibility of a transcendence. For the artist, the use of recycled materials, found in the rubbish or among manufacturing waste, is also an ethical gesture, regenerating objects and giving them new life, new beauty and new meaning.

According to Jackson, the studio can exist in every place where an artistic act is born, whether it be a traditional space inside a building, or a van or a racing car. The photographs on display here offer an overview of ten of the artist's studios – almost all in the Brooklyn area – from 2001 to 2020, including the Dean Street premises where the gallery owner and art critic Mario Diacono took the photographs of the two works featured in the exhibition during their creation, and about which he later wrote in the booklet accompanying their first public exhibition in his Boston gallery.

Matthew Day Jackson

Disburdened Flesh

2007

stained wood, acrylic, mother of pearl, abalone, yarn, nail

244 x 183 cm

detail

Courtesy Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia

© Matthew Day Jackson

ANDY CROSS

Andy Cross presented his solo exhibition *House Painter* at the Collezione Maramotti in 2013. The collection comprises numerous drawings and several works by the artist, which he developed for his proposal for the *Studio Visit* exhibition.

Cross's approach breaks down the traditional barriers between styles and disciplines: architecture, sculpture and painting mingle and engage with each other in a dimension of total expressive potential. His painting is direct and the terse use of pigment is accompanied by an elaborate and articulate figurative composition. The artist probes history, particularly American and Western history, via a comprehensive exploration – geographical, political, cultural – placing particular critical emphasis on the role played by his country in international politics. According to Cross, Western society tends to dominate everything that is discovered; therefore, exploration and exploitation are closely linked. His work thus strives to connect the public dimension with the private one, in keeping with his view of painting as an expression of the self and society, and of life as an ongoing “artist residency”.

Cross's most recent studio experiments consist of paintings made on the back of previously painted canvases, whose front is reversed and re-stretched as the new back of the work. These two-sided paintings are then installed on the floor as three-dimensional objects so that both sides can be viewed.

Tracing a bridge between his work of the past and that of today, Cross spent a period of residency in Reggio Emilia in 2021 to rework a painting held in storage at Collezione Maramotti that he had made in 2005–06, entitled *The Greener Side of the Law*, in order to create a “time capsule” illustrating the development of his artistic technique and his vision of the world.

The work takes the form of an American dollar, whose green colour Cross also uses for its symbolic meaning associated with capitalism and consumerism, and combines various episodes from the history of

Born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1979
Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York

Las Vegas in an unbroken narrative. The iconography of the work, now visible on the back of the large canvas, is based on portraits of Bugsy Siegel (the American mobster known for having been the driving force behind the development of Las Vegas), and Antonio Armijo (the Mexican explorer who named the city), and the Las Vegas Strip, with its numerous hotels, casinos, swimming pools and gaming tables.

In *Ruling Sign*, the new front of the work, the central anthropomorphic figure of the Sun God, appropriated from alchemy, is seated on a throne, accompanied by symbols derived from astrology and the hermetic tradition. His smiling face in the form of a sun shines on everyone, without distinction of race or creed. The word "aeons" conjures up an extremely long temporal dimension and refers to both the Platonic notion of the eternal world of ideas and the gnostic concept of emanations of the One.

With Las Vegas's gamblers and gangsters finally placed "behind bars" on the stretcher frame, this new depiction suggests how the laws governing American politics and capitalism are short-lived, in comparison to a wider view of the universal principles that span Time and Space.

Some of the previously undisplayed drawings give a broader view of Cross's work, encompassing different aspects.

Andy Cross

The Greener Side of the Law

2005-2006

oil on canvas

183 x 335 cm

detail

Courtesy Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia

© Andy Cross

TOM SACHS

Tom Sachs's work condenses deep and complex themes associated with contemporary society, while maintaining a provocative, tongue-in-cheek approach as illustrated by the six works belonging to the Collezione Maramotti. One of these can be admired in the open-space area on the second floor: *The Choice (Ghetto-Sculpture Park)* (2001–02). Another of his works was featured in the 2015 collective exhibition *Industrial Imaginary*.

Sachs's subjects are highly diverse, but the themes underlying them are connected by a very strong common thread. For example, through his artistic reworking, themes as seemingly diverse as the use of the Hello Kitty logo or the manufacturing of weapons are revealed as objects full of communicative power, vectors in a critique of the standardization dictated by the consumerist system and the widespread militarization of society.

In recent years, the NASA logo also caught the artist's interest and he placed it at the centre of his work in a complex project entitled *Space Program*, which shows his interest in space exploration, including its commercial and military implications. In his detailed reproduction of various space vehicles, Sachs playfully draws upon a vast array of DIY materials and techniques, such as the ubiquitous duct tape, widely used by hobbyists in the United States.

The variety of tools he deploys is effectively documented in the video *Ten Bullets* (2010) that the artist made to explain his relationship with his studio through ten rules. The orderliness and method necessary for the efficient and safe work of his entire team of assistants conjure up the military rigour of army barracks, which Sachs evokes through the skilled use of scenes from cult films of the Western world. As he explained in an interview with Germano Celant in 2005, his studio is, in many respects, similar to the DIY workshop