



INTORNO ALLA STELLA

January 29th 2025 – March 15th 2025

Curated by Luigi Presicce and Andreas Zampella

Opening: January 28th 2025

18.00-21.00

Via Valpetrosa 1, Milan

Nashira Gallery is pleased to present *Intorno alla stella*, a group exhibition that aims to celebrate and pay tribute to the Painting Symposium promoted by the Lac o Le Mon Foundation in Puglia.

Founded in 2018 through the initiative of Luigi Presicce, the Symposium has over the years become an important moment of encounter and sharing among artists from all over Italy. This exhibition gathers the works of all the participants from its six editions.

Curated by Luigi Presicce and Andreas Zampella, *Intorno alla stella* is a tribute to six years of reflection and collective creation, where each edition of the Symposium has seen the birth of works that blend individual sensitivities with the shared inspiration drawn from the Salento territory. The exhibition will be accompanied by three texts: one by Luigi Presicce, one by Andreas Zampella, and one by Laura Perrone, which will help contextualize and enrich the narrative of this unique experience.

Intorno alla stella will offer the public a broad overview of contemporary Italian painting, highlighting the vitality and diversity of the languages developed within the context of the Symposium. The exhibition will not only celebrate the individual journeys of the artists but also the value of dialogue and the artistic community, making visible the intersection between personal practice and collective inspiration.

The opening will be held on January 28, 2025, from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM, and the exhibition will be open until March 15, 2025.

Fabrizio Ajello (Palermo, 1973), Paola Angelini (San Benedetto del Tronto, 1983), Anna Arena (Bari, 2010), Emanuele Baldi (Copertino, 2010), Isotta Baldi (Copertino, 2013), Mattia Barbieri (Brescia, 1985), Angelo Bellobono (Nettuno, 1964), Thomas Berra (Desio, 1986), Enne Boi (Cantù, 1989), Thomas Braida (Gorizia, 1982), Martina Bruni (Cosenza, 1989), Michele Bubacco (Venice, 1983), Anna Capolupo (Lamezia Terme, 1983), Matteo Capriotti (Giulianova, 1996), Giulio Catelli (Rome, 1982), Valeria Carrieri (Rome, 1987), Matteo Coluccia (Neviano, 1992), Rudy Cremonini (Bologna, 1981), Valentina D'Amaro (Massa, 1966), Rudy De Amicis (Pescara, 1973), Lupo De Amicis (Madrid, 2010), Francesco De Grandi (Palermo, 1968), Roberto De Pinto (Terlizzi, 1996), Nicola Dinoia (Matera, 1972), Gianluca Di Pasquale (Rome, 1971), Gabriele Ermini (Figline Valdarno, 1996), Elisa Filomena (Turin, 1976), Antonio Grulli (La Spezia, 1979), Agnese Guido (Copertino, 1982), Piotr Hanzelewicz (Poland, 1978), Pesce Khete (Rome, 1980), Francesco Lauretta (Ispica- Ragusa, 1964), Matthew Licht (Vermont, 1960), Valentina Lupi (Arezzo, 1997), Davide Mancini Zanchi (Urbino, 1986), Marta Mancini (Rome, 1981), Monica Mazzone (Milan, 1984), Beatrice Meoni (Florence, 1960), Giulia Messina (Milan, 1998), Jimmy Milani (Savigliano, 1995), Luce Negro (Galatina, 2012), Marcello Nitti (Taranto, 1988), Matteo Nuti (Bientina, 1979), Aryan Ozmaei (Tehran, 1976), Marco Pace (Lanciano, 1977), Anita Pace (Florence, 2017), Anastasiya Parvanova (Burgas, Bulgaria, 1990), Mattia Pajè (Melzo, 1991), Aronne Pleuteri (Erba, 2001), Vera Portatadino (Varese, 1984), Leone Maria Presicce (Florence, 2015), Luigi Presicce (Porto Cesareo, Lecce, 1976), Cetty Previtiera (Switzerland, 1986), Pierluigi Pusole (Turin, 1963), Giulia Querin (Venice, 1997), Linda Randazzo (Palermo, 1979), Chris Rocchegiani (Jesi, 1977), Andrea Salvino (Rome, 1969), Alessandro Scarabello (Rome, 1979), Davide Serpetti (L'Aquila, 1990), Maddalena Tesser (Vittorio Veneto, 1992), Michele Tocca (Subiaco, 1983), Andy Trema (Galatina, 1982), Flaminia Veronesi (Milan, 1986), Lucia Veronesi (Mantova, 1986), Andreas Zampella (Salerno, 1989)



Intorno alla stella

by Luigi Presicce

Exactly ten years ago, we had a sum of money to invest. We had organized several editions of the *Festa dei vivi* (a project reflecting on death), and we had even been invited to DOCUMENTA13 in Kassel. In the group, called *Lu Cafausu*, along with me, there were Cesare Pietriusti, Luigi Negro, Giancarlo Norese, and Emilio Fantin. I had joined the group in 2010. This new group had emerged from the ashes of the well-known Gruppo Oreste, which had participated in the 48th Venice Biennale directed by the legendary Harald Szeemann.

As I mentioned, we had money available, but instead of spending it on racing SUVs for the provincial Gallipoli-Maglie road or buying huge televisions, we decided to invest it in something more meaningful: a house of our own. Not to turn it into a B&B, as everyone does in that part of land called Salento, but to welcome artists from all over the world.

I chose to place our *Cafausica* house in the small town of San Cesario di Lecce, for emotional reasons or simply to not be too far from the famous *Cafausu*: a stone gazebo from the 1700s, frescoed inside, which, miraculously, had remained standing after the destruction of the villa that once surrounded it, now surrounded by ugly buildings in a parking lot.

We began looking for our house in the historic center of the town, visiting many houses and noble palaces with frescoed vaults, antique furniture, and dreamlike citrus groves. In the end, however, we chose a late 19th-century farmhouse on the border between San Cesario and Cavallino. The house was bare and reduced to a ruin, having survived the death of all its inhabitants, including the sharecroppers who had worked the tobacco fields surrounding it. The property, which stretched over seven hectares, also included an *ortus conclusus*.

The house was large, about 400 square meters over two levels, with various terraces, one of which offered an extraordinary view of the Salento countryside, practically uninhabited. A corner of paradise, completely isolated, with the Adriatic on one side and the Ionian on the other, just a few kilometers away.

Everything had been planned: minimal renovation work would be done, and all the energy would be produced by the sun, including running water. A unique ecological experiment. The idea of communal living was becoming more and more concrete in our minds. The next step would be to start involving other artists in this adventure, and to do so, we decided to organize a Summer School that could host as many people as possible during the summer, which in the south lasts much longer than in other parts of Italy.

In 2015, the year when all of this began, I had just finished a session of the Academy of Immobility at the MAMbo in Bologna, an experience that had thrilled me. I had created a group of extraordinary people with whom we staged a spectacular performance: *Heroic End of an Image from the 15th Century*.



The idea of replicating that experience in such a special place fascinated me, but I soon realized that it would be an emotionally exhausting commitment. At MAMbo, I had left a piece of my heart, which had been shared among all the participants, and there was not enough left for me to start over. Meanwhile, the work on the house was almost finished. And I, fresh from my experience in Florence with Francesco Lauretta, had created the *Scuola di Santa Rosa*, a free drawing school that took over bars in the center of town with the aim of creating relationships under the pretext of en plein air drawing. It wasn't the first time I had committed to non-profit initiatives, giving space to others. In 2008, together with Luca Francesco and Valentina Suma, I had founded *Brown Project Space*, the first independent space created by artists to host other artists in Milan, a city that at the time was focused only on capitalizing on art. A few years later, I was invited by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi to participate in the first edition of *Artist in Residence* at the MACRO in Rome, where I extended the invitation to nine other artists, who lived in my large studio within the museum. We called it *Laboratorio*: a space where we lived fully, away from the strict rules imposed by the museum.

In 2018, I decided to take a step toward what had always been my greatest passion: painting. Thus, the idea of founding a *Symposium of Painting* was born, a space-time where painters of different generations would confront each other, living in the same spaces and sharing the same motivations.

At the first edition of the Symposium, many painters were invited to enjoy a holiday in a fairytale location. Laura Perrone, whom I consider a sister, helped me organize everything, and with her, I felt safe. There was no obligation: no one had to paint, no one had to participate in creative sessions. The only rule was to take care of the house and the others: cleaning, cooking, washing dishes, changing bed linens, and keeping things in order.

Many spent time on the beaches, while others began timidly to paint. The initial groups, formed by those who already knew each other, slowly merged, and the group became more and more united. Outdoor dinners began, as well as barbecues around the fire (the star built by Calori & Maillard). And, shyly, the ice was broken: someone began DJing from the window, and the dancing became something incredible. A happy island. I felt satisfied with all the efforts made.

On average, there were about 25 people, and the same happened in the second edition in 2019. Everyone slept together, everyone took care of each other: loves, conflicts, and rivalries were born, but harmony reigned, like in a family, with always someone breaking the eggs in the basket, but in the end, everything worked out anyway. The moments of greatest tension occurred during portfolio reviews, where the younger participants were enthusiastic and the older ones acted as peacemakers. Still, we coexisted under the same bubble, far from the real world. The Symposium was a true island.

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the 2020 edition, but in 2021 we restarted with a special version, assisted by Luigi Negro, with the participation of miniature artists: it was the *Symposium for Children*, many of whom were children of artists or collectors. In 2022, 2023, and 2024, the Symposium returned to normal, with a group of guests who had become increasingly close-knit and considered the house an essential and familiar place during the summer.

The last three editions, also led by Matteo Coluccia, my guardian angel, were characterized by “sober” harmony. The group, which remained mostly the same, with some new guests, created.



A unique, serene atmosphere, where everyone was in the right place at the right time.

I like to say that Thomas Berra is the *Ugo Tognazzi* of the group, the chef of the Symposium, a man from Brianza who formed close ties with the greengrocers, butchers, fishmongers, and everyone else in the town. I could share anecdotes and curiosities about each person who passed through that house—I loved them all like a family of brothers and sisters I never had.

This exhibition, strongly desired by Andreas Zampella, will never be able to fully capture the unique atmosphere that was created over these six years, but it will help to strengthen those bonds that continue outside the Symposium, every time an opportunity arises. The fact that these bonds are real, that many continue to message each other every day on the Symposium chat, is, for me, pure gold—a miracle in an art system that offers little hope. Like a broomflower growing from the stone.

Then there are the tears. Every summer, the Symposium ends, and the house drowns in a sea of tears. They feel like forever goodbyes, endless hugs, the pain of early departures, and the mourning for those who remain. The Symposium is not an artist residency; it cannot be placed into any category. It's lived life, a paradise snapshot.

As someone wrote on a wall of the house: *"The Symposium is how artists want to live"*.

And I was convinced of that.



Punto Esclamativo

by Andreas Zampella

Three years ago, for the first time, I took part in the Painting Symposium, created and curated by Luigi Pre-sicce at the Lac o Le Mon Foundation in San Cesario di Lecce. Having a general idea of what it entailed, I didn't hesitate and immediately confirmed my participation. Since then, I've been invited to the subsequent editions, up until the most recent one this past summer.

The Painting Symposium begins with an invitation via email to participate in an experiment—a human experiment—where the protagonists are emotions and relationships within the confined space of contemporary art, particularly within Italian painting. The idea is to bring together a number of artists equal to the number of beds in the house and have them live under the same roof. The artists eat, work, and sleep together, with no obligation of return, no need to prove anything. In short, the goal is to become a community on a work-vacation in southern Italy, in Salento.

The concept of community is based on the idea that a certain number of people live together, sharing rules, values, and common goals. Over time, this coexistence led to the birth of municipalities, stable places where people settled, shaping territories not only physically but also culturally—spaces to cultivate and enrich, something destined to last over time. But what happens when this idea is turned on its head? What happens if a group of people lives together only for a limited period, creating intense bonds and sharing experiences, only to return home to their everyday lives? Can it still be called a community, or is it something different, more fluid, perhaps even more fragile, but no less significant?

A response I like comes from the poet and writer Franco Arminio, who says: “Temporary communities are not a failure, but an opportunity. They are like a stream: they don't retain, but welcome, flow, and move.”

Today, we can no longer associate community with a specific place, and perhaps not even with those precise bonds or ties that are the foundation of this concept. But it should not be thought of as something that has disappeared; rather, it has transformed, losing that quality of fixity and stability, becoming nomadic, without a permanent home, provisional. Like other fields, the world of contemporary art has its own community, but unfortunately, it's a small one, sometimes uncomfortable, where connections, though significant, die as quickly as they are born and rarely transform into authentic and lasting friendships.

Despite the fact that the very values of art revolve around each person's sensitivity and depth of vision, it is difficult today for an artist to feel part of a community.

The work that Luigi asks us to do is to overturn this condition and create a mobile, temporary but alive community, made up of friends united by a deep love: the love of painting.

Thus, we become a constellation and realize that we have written part of our art history, full of anecdotes that will never make it into textbooks—or perhaps, who knows, maybe they will.

But why this exhibition? All communities, whether nomadic or settled, temporary or enduring, have their own exclusivity: they are made up of selected people, united by common values, interests, or experiences.



But we are artists, and this exhibition aims to go beyond that. It is a staging of our relationships, a moment of broader sharing. It does not seek to be a final point, but rather an exclamation point, a celebration of something still in progress, a living dialogue between works, space, and people. Here, the works are not arranged according to style or hierarchy, but by human connections: friendships formed, loves blossomed, feelings shared. *Intorno alla stella* is not a gathering of the best Italian painters, but a celebration, a ritual, a circle of works dancing together as one would dance around a fire. That fire in the shape of a star, which unites us on summer evenings and awaits us in the silences of winter.

The works on display are driven by the force of a shared experience, one that feels the need to manifest itself, to communicate, to share the results of an experiment still ongoing.



Interludio

by Laura Perrone

A tree-lined avenue crosses the park and opens into an amphitheater that faces the main façade of a farm house from the early 20th century. Characterizing the façade is a green iron door, reinforced with white-headed nails, from which emerge the silhouettes of two dancing figures, a man and a woman, surrounded by dense vegetation. A large central hall and a monumental, recently restored kitchen stove fuel the imagination about the bustling daily life of what could have been a farming community engaged in the nearby fields, surely part of a larger estate that was later subdivided, now dulled by the advance of the industrial area and the equally invasive sports facilities. On the noble floor, eight large interconnected rooms are found, along with a terrace offering a view of the *hortus conclusus*, the geometric design of an ancient vine pergola, of which only a few traces remain, along with citrus trees and other Mediterranean plants. The house's rooms are deliberately left empty to best accommodate the needs of each group of residents, who are first invited to seek a mindful relationship between the small daily gestures and the finite resources of the architecture. The intention to maintain autonomy from any potential external resource has distinguished the light, restorative work done on the space and made the architecture sustainable. A system has been implemented to capture the necessary solar energy, and a manually dug well, reaching a groundwater level about fifty meters deep, has been reactivated.

The cafausic house, the headquarters of the Lac o Le Mon Foundation, has been the site for almost a decade where temporary forms of collective living are activated as the central element in the exercise of reflection, thought, and research practices. These are often linked to thematic or material cores, closely connected to the experience of living in that particular place. Its activities are fueled by a vibrancy of proposals that follow one another rhizomatically, manifesting a general interest among all those who come into contact with the house, in wanting to actively contribute to its programming.

This process, comparable to wild spontaneity, has generated a profound diversification, not only in the proposed practices but also in the individual experiences that often return strong contrasts related to the sphere of sensitive memory. The field of forces in which this type of alteration occurs is shaped by an unexpected combination of variables revolving around self-perception, the perception of the individual in relation to the architecture, the perception of the other from the self, and the predisposition to being-with, towards forms of space dedicated to the common good. In a workshop held at the Lac o Le Mon Foundation in June 2016 (*Per un sensibile del comune*, curated by Ilaria Bussoni and Nicolas Martino), the discussion was about the “common beyond the individual,” and some questions were deliberately left open: “Is it possible to rethink the coordinates of a common world starting from the sensible? Which aesthetic experiences reconfigure our experience by subtracting it from the ‘ownership’ of an individual? Does the affirmation of a common life not also involve the abolition of the most intimate form of ownership: that of the very life of the individual?”

Over the course of these ten years, the “cafausica” house has hosted, almost silently and submerged, hundreds of artists and thinkers from different generations and backgrounds, becoming for many a form of secular pilgrimage, a place to return to. While traces of some activities have been completely lost, others have been able to solidify with continuity and formal coherence, generating nationally significant projects



like the exhibition Sensibile Comune - Le opere vive, presented in January 2017 at the National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rome. It is within this complexity that the unique experience of the Symposium of Painting takes root. Its rarity comes from the intensity of its nature. It is not a rhetorical trick, but an attempt to translate into language the choreography of gestures and bodies that punctuate the space. The Symposium inhabits the material; the first perception is therefore olfactory: essence of turpentine, oil paint, and mineral spirits. It impregnates, leaves a trace, and stratifies, with every nook involved in this form of permanence. No breath can remain indifferent. Here, the singular blends with the plural, and the plural is born each time from the convergence of unique and unrepeatable factors.