

PRESS RELEASE

Louisa Gagliardi
A Moment's Notice

March 25 – May 20, 2023

Opening on Friday, March 24, 6 – 8.30 pm

Maag Areal, Zahnradstr. 21, CH-8005 Zurich

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present *A Moment's Notice*, the first solo exhibition by the Swiss artist Louisa Gagliardi.

Confusion is the main effect of tech's recent onslaught. New pathways of working, communicating and living have left society in a state of dumb agitation. Louisa Gagliardi, in her negotiations of reality and illusion, reflects a related excitement and anxiety. Perhaps not entirely specific to our time, her works do contain a universal existentialism at their core, and are thus totally contemporary in their consideration. Hers is a practice that finds adventure in fooling with dichotomies and blurred borders. Her paintings play at being screens, her objects straddle rendering and being and she has constructed a total *mise en abyme* where the viewer is implicated in her imagined stages trespassing into the world around us.

When discussing her work it has become default to primarily refer to its digital aspects. But, that relation to technology is more a symptom of our time, and her clear understanding and reaction to it, than to the work itself. While the paintings nod to their conceptualization on the screen, with those impossibly beautiful backlit colors on silky smooth surfaces, they remain paintings and painted sculptures in the classical sense of the words. Colors are mixed, images are rendered, composition, form and content are actively fused.

As with discussing whether Vermeer used a *camera obscura* in the creation of his scenes, over focusing on the studio aspects of Gagliardi's work clouds real joy and achievement. Although, that's part of her trick. By design these works are made to complicate what it means to exist in the world in the 21st century, the online and the IRL. To experience one of these works is to do it in person, as only through interacting with the work does the light reflect and reveal the handmade additions that separate and elevate them away from their computer assisted creation. They surprise viewers, who recognize them from online and print, finally encountering them. Tempting ideas one way and delivering more the other, they keep the viewer aware of how fragile reality and its expectations might be.

This unsureness is echoed in the depicted. Her figures are never portraits, but staged worlds paused at an unclear moment. With Gagliardi, as with those panels of Vermeer, there is always this idea that something is happening but you're not sure what it is. The unconscious mind interprets the parts that are missing, creating infinite possibilities equal to the viewer's who see them. Androgynous figures confront our world from androgynous spaces, with even the surreal feeling more possible in front of Gagliardi's work. If we are used to surveilling the museum, Gagliardi's cast is equally up to the task of surveillance.

Her works grab freely from the canonized past and our present, as direct references to antiquity and art history commingle with the possible settings inspired by film, fantasy or the gallery they're exhibited within. They reflect culture's current static timelessness, our ability to activate the past, present and future simultaneously in a perpetual feedback loop. The dreamlike possibilities these works offer are equal to the fears they reflect, of entering other realms and defying the limits of reality or those realms entering and running amok here. One might read her figures as self-sufficient at one moment or lonely and detached at the next, like so many crowds gathered together and interacting through their screens.

The possibilities of illusion then, in painting and sculpture, are offered by Gagliardi as knowing reflections of the world and generous portrayals of possibility. Her disorientations serve as beacons of change, societal mirrors, rather than easy tricks. These objects question and confuse: the nature of reality, visual expectation, social cohesion

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and our place in the world. These are not the concerns of contemporaneity alone, but strike to the very heart of being human for millenia. Depending on your point of view, another word for confusion might be fascinating.

Mitchell Anderson

Louisa Gagliardi (*1989, Sion, CH) presented a major new work, *Tête-à-tête*, at Art Basel Unlimited 2022. In recent years she has been the subject of monographic shows at National Gallery, Prague, CZ (2022); Swiss Art Awards, Basel, CH (2021); Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, CH (2021); Antenna Space, Shanghai, CN (2020); McNamara Art Projects, Hong Kong, HK (2019); MOSTYN, Wales, UK (2019); and Openforum, Berlin, DE (2018). Gagliardi's work has been featured in group exhibitions such as Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, CH (2022); National Gallery Prague, CZ (2021); Wallriss, Fribourg, CH (2019); UN Art Center, Shanghai, CN (2019); Plymouth Rock, Zurich, CH (2018); Aargauer Kunsthhaus, Aarau, CH (2018); Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen, St. Gallen, CH (2018); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, DK (2017); and Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, CH (2017).

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