

PRESS RELEASE

SHERWOOD *The Stars are Matter, we're matter but it doesn't matter*  
GABRIELE PORTA *The inner emotion of being alive*

MAY 22 – JULY 18, 2009

OPENING THURSDAY MAY 21, 7 – 9 PM

FEDERICA SCHIAVO GALLERY  
PIAZZA MONTEVECCHIO 16 ROMA

Federica Schiavo gallery is pleased to announce the exhibition of works by Rob Sherwood and Gabriele Porta.

Born in Bristol (United Kingdom) in 1984 **Rob Sherwood** graduated last year at Chelsea College of Art and Design in London; with a nomination for the "Jerwood Contemporary painters" 2009 his work is already in several important private collections. After four years of exhibiting in London, Sherwood will show for the first time in Italy, bringing to us his personal approach to painting.

After an attentive investigation of the themes of landscape and perspective, Sherwood's works, shown in the first exhibition space of the gallery, announce the total dispersion of the figurative element on the canvas, in order to release and give space to a new notion of light as a subject that could hold its own field *"somehow transcending any boundaries between the idea of abstract art and representational art"*. (R.S.). Some examples can be found in works such as "Perfect Sympathy" (2009, oil on canvas, 35x30 cm) or "Some Flee the dream" (2009, oil on canvas, 200x180 cm).

When looking at the work the viewer is faced with a meticulous process of positioning of coloured squares, forming a grid that gives the perception of spatial depth without the aid of perspective. *"Each square of colour defies the brush stroke until one is right up to the canvas. Each gesture absorbed into the milieu of squares until the presence of the artist is blurred into a realm of ambiguity"*. (R.S.)

Born in Monza in 1981 **Gabriele Porta** lives and works in Arcore (Milan), where he develops his artistic practice through the use of different media such as video, photography, etching, printing and drawing. The stillness and suspension of his filmed scenes or his images tend to congeal that moment of passage between one emotional state and another. Solitude, isolation and 'suspence' are all elements that contribute to the fascination of his imagery. The other two rooms of the gallery space host two different works by Gabriele Porta; in a room the viewer dwells in front of a projection of a short 16mm film based on a passage of the novel "Reasons to Live" by Amy Hempel. The film shows a close up of a chimp in a static condition, undecidedly sleep or death. This effect is purposely created in order to suspend the real subject of the work. Exploiting a cinematic sequence long shot, the artist focuses the action on the ambivalence of the prolonged image, that originates in the viewer an ambiguous emotional status. The question that accompanies the viewer is further articulated when observing Hempel's text, projected on a series of 18 slides upon the pages of Verga's novel, *Nedda*.

In the last room we find a series of reproductions of classic images of the Pietà, where the central figure of Christ is literally obliterated. The surprised viewer, loses a sense of a figurative orientation and is forced to focus his attention on other compositional details. In this series the artist's intention is not to linger on the religious subject, but rather on a universal emotional status which is not referred to the body of the dead Christ, but to the Vergin Mary's emotional reaction. Unlike the image of the chimp, the death of Christ conceals its plausibility, the body deprived of all anatomical reference. These are elements which in the first room are explicitly put forward.

Both Sherwood and Porta play on the 'de-figuration' of the visual image: while the British artist focuses on the concept of light and color, exposing the perspective expedient in favour of a squared pixelated image, the Italian artist suspends the viewer's gaze firstly with a projection and then with the reprocessing of traditional imagery. In both cases the narrative loses its linear flow, originating several new elements that can be starting points for the creation of the viewer's own narrative.

The exhibition will be supported by a critical text by Riccardo Conti.

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