

VIASATERNA

ARTE CONTEMPORANEA

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Who by fire

Solo show featuring Elena Ricci

With a critical essay by Fabio Carnaghi

From Tuesday 4 June to Friday 19 July 2019

Opening: **Monday 3 June 2019**, from 6 pm to 9 pm

Opening times: Monday – Friday, 12 pm – 7 pm. Mornings and Saturdays by appointment only.

Venue: VIASATERNA, Via Giacomo Leopardi 32, Milan, +39.02.36725378

www.viasaterna.com

Viasaterna is pleased to present the first solo show by Elena Ricci (Rome, 1973), *Who by fire*, with a selection of works made with different painting techniques and in distinct moments, with a focus on the origin of the photographic fragment.

Who by fire is the title of a song by Leonard Cohen, inspired by an ancient Jewish liturgical poem that, like the homonymous painting in the exhibition, "it narrates the precariousness of the human condition with respect to the violence of a blazing fire that explodes in the landscape making nature no longer physiological and organic, but a metaphysical cosmology ", as suggested by Fabio Carnaghi in his critical essay. Ricci begins her work with this human investigation, collecting photographs of war archives or found by chance from unknown authors of the first half of the 20th century. Their subjects are de-contextualized and offered through painting as archetypes and symbols that draw on the sphere of myth, solitary figures of shamans, soldiers, living beings in a constant sway between the real and the magical world.

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The only clue of the relationship with photography can be found in the inks that trace the latent image of the negative, maintaining their bi-chromatic character. The interest in the figure is revealed with the oil technique and it is often in relation with an indefinite and liquid background, inhabited by horizons of bright colours. A further step towards abstraction is accomplished with pastels in which the subjects also tend to disappear and where the landscapes are just subtended, suspended and enclosed in the shape of a circle that becomes a lens on a new imaginary. The technique of dry pastel appeared in the first half of the 1500s and was mainly dedicated to portrait, however the artist avoids rigid determination of details and engages the medium into a play with the index of its nuances.

Through the narration of a personal microcosm, Ricci offers a glimpse at the balance between human and nature. Friedrich Hölderlin wrote "the more the gods flew, and still are not the coming" evoking a world deserted by the divine, in which new transitional appearances alternate in a suspended and mysterious imaginary. The figures tell us of mutable, unstable and precarious states such as a shipwreck, a fire, a corrupt nature that are echoing the final question of Cohen's song "who shall I say is calling?".

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THE ARTIST

Elena Ricci (Roma, 1973). She lives and works in Milan.

Between 1998 and 2002 she studied in Lausanne at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Arts Paris-Cergy, where she experimented various medias, deepening her interest in painting and drawing. Soon her research started to dialogue with psychology, anthropology, myth and religion. In 2002 she went back to Rome where she participated to numerous group shows. In 2008 she moved to Milan, where she exhibited her work in solo shows in 2011 in the gallery Uno+Uno and some home galleries as Da Vicino. Since 2015 she focused on her research.