

STEFANO ARIENTI

Galleria Christian Stein
Milano, Corso Monforte 23

30 June – 24 September 2021

Galleria Christian Stein is pleased to present, in its Milano venue in Corso Monforte, the solo exhibition of **Stefano Arienti** (b. 1961, Asola), which will feature three groups of new works created expressly for the occasion. They consist of photographic images taken by the artist and manually enlarged and printed on a variety of different supports. Also on display is a body of works in which the artist invents new ways of manipulating the image, an extension of his free approach to creation which is expressed both in the variety of content and in his ability to experiment with a range of artistic techniques.

Arienti's work, since his debut in the 1980s, has focused on the almost obsessive re-elaboration of images and materials taken from everyday life and from the history of art - including paper, books, figures taken from postcards, posters, and photocopies, polystyrene, plastic, plasticine, and fabric - transfigured and transformed through a creative process aimed at restoring complexity to the image and stimulating our awareness.

The image extrapolated from its functional context is reinvented through the dexterity of a simple, sometimes playful gesture which, combined with the use of 'poor' materials, gives it new and surprising value, a new life that reverberates with meaning.

The independence of **Arienti's** approach to making art and his refusal to submit to what he defines as a sort of "tyranny of images" derives in part from his interdisciplinary background, which does not include classic academic training. After graduating in agricultural sciences, he pursued further non-artistic studies in various fields, from botany and zoology to mathematics, physics, economics, and statistics, while also being a great lover and connoisseur of music and Asian cultures. In his artistic endeavour, he behaves like a curious traveler who, in order to better know the objects collected along the way and the images they carry, investigates them with new and adventurous techniques.

The first series of works on display consists of photographs printed on micro chenille, some of which have also been overlaid with netting before printing. This commonly used textile is characterised by a special yarn that **Arienti** exploits perfectly to infuse his figures with unusual depth, increasing the physicality of the colour to generate an effect of pictorial density.

A second series of photographs printed on paper are reworked by **Arienti** using perforations, inspired by the *spolvero* (pouncing) technique used for frescoes. This is a practice that the artist has used since the 1980s, in which he manually punches sequences of small holes that, seen on the white surface of the back of the photo, invite the viewer to reconstruct the original underlying image, stripped down to its essential values.

For the third group of works, **Arienti** tries his hand at a new technique which he has been working on since 2019, exhibiting it here for the first time. The artist intervenes with a very thin layer of acrylic paint on a photographic reproduction previously sprayed with water. Once dry, the surface retains traces of the tiny droplets, creating a surprisingly *naturalistic* effect. The image of the vegetation is perceived as if through a filter, a sort of condensation of the atmosphere that measures the distance between our gaze and the subject, which becomes vivid and present.

Interestingly, for this exhibition (as well as for his first show at Galleria Christian Stein in 2019), the artist decided to personally take the photographs used in his works. The subjects tend to be drawn from a strongly anthropized nature, where objects or residues of human presence coexist with the vegetation, creating an image of our contemporary landscape. What emerges is not the carelessness of humankind towards an abused nature, for there is no moral judgment in the artist's gaze, but rather an awareness of the complexity of what we call nature, combined with a desire to move away from a pre-packaged iconography. As such, from the creative process springs a *vegetal truth* of augmented intensity. If anything, what it clearly shows about the existence of plants is "*their apparent indifference to everything we call culture*". (E. Coccia, *La vita delle piante*, 2016)

This project is one of the artist's two exhibitions in Milano during the summer. In fact, the show at Galleria Christian Stein opens concomitantly with another show at **Studio Guenzani**, more of a retrospective that outlines the artist's path from his first works on paper in the 1980s to his most recent production.

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Monday to Friday: 10 am – 7 pm

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