

FOUR IDEAS

Øystein Aasan, Peter Halley, Jonathan Monk, Maurizio Nannucci

Curated by Lorenzo Bruni

Opening Saturday May the 8th from 9 am to 9 pm
27 March – 5 June 2021

Galleria Enrico Astuni presents *Quattro Idee* [Four Ideas], a group exhibition curated by Lorenzo Bruni. The four artists involved in the project are Øystein Aasan (1977, Kristiansand, Norway; he lives and works in Berlin); Peter Halley (1953, New York; he lives and works in New York), Jonathan Monk (1969, Leicester, UK; he lives and works in Berlin) and Maurizio Nannucci (1939, Florence, where he lives and works).

The title of the project refers to four different, but in some way similar ideas that these four artists have developed on the theme of colour, the legacy of modernism, and the concept of landscape as a space to be crossed rather than observed from a distance. These are themes that might seem peripheral to the radical research undertaken by the artists in question – of different nationalities and from different generations – yet it is precisely this apparent peripherality that makes the themes an interesting approach for considering from new vantage points the way in which these artists work and reflect on the artist's role in society.

The works exhibited at Galleria Enrico Astuni have been specifically chosen by the artists and curator for two main reasons. The first is to observe several urgent and recurring elements in each of the four artists' work: elements that involve a focus on colour as a vibration, and on transcending the theme of the monochrome to the point of sublimating, emphasising or imploding certain principles linked to modernist architecture. The second reason is to reflect on the idea of a mental landscape, which these artists create in their work and which completely overturns the concept of the classical horizon.

In today's virtual world and at the time of a global pandemic, we have all found ourselves not only wondering how to consider sharing a landscape that is not the one observed at a due distance, but also about the possibility of visiting, inhabiting and modifying it. These are themes that the four artists have continually made evident through the dialogue they establish between the presence of their works and the context in which they locate them. This approach also draws attention to the debate that Øystein Aasan, Peter Halley, Jonathan Monk and Maurizio Nannucci have consistently pursued concerning the role of the artwork and culture in general in current society, while also creating a dialogue between perceiving, observing and imagining an image in a post-ideological, post-internet, hyper-connected era.

As Lorenzo Bruni writes, **Øystein Aasan's** geometric and architectural structures investigate the legacy of the design object and also early twentieth-century avant-garde abstract painting. They are a reflection on the theme of the archive in the age of social media, creating particular combinations of drawings, paintings and images that promote the emergence of identifying characteristics of contemporary society. For the exhibition Aasan has also made a sculpture that becomes a seat and a new physical and not solely mental point of view within the landscape created by the works on show.

Peter Halley's large canvases propose an unexpectedly tactile pictorial geometry, not only because of their fluorescent colours but also due to certain areas made in relief using Roll-a-Text textured paint, which produces a strange, “soft”, surreal point of contact between geometric grids, the claustrophobic imagery of urban space and the new digital connections that have proliferated since the 1990s: a “melting pop” also clearly expressed in the titles of several paintings, such as ‘prisons’ or ‘cells’.

Jonathan Monk has always explored the mechanism of conceptual art and relationships with art practices from the 1960s, which he uses to analyse the dynamics by which an everyday object can become an artwork or vice versa. Moreover, for some time he has also been exploring the role of culture in general, examining the spectator’s view of the perception of time in a world composed of digital archives where the past and the present expand into a single horizon. As a response to this condition he is presenting the installation *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, etc.*, which involves the gallery’s entire exhibition space.

Maurizio Nannucci’s neon text installations always create a destabilising or epiphanic effect, caused by their pervasive coloured neon lights and written statements that not only examine the nature of language but also their own transformative possibilities. What’s more, the arrangement of the works in the exhibition space offers a new perception of their ‘encounter’ with the environment. One such work is *Idea*, on display with other works in various media and with different supports that investigate these relationships.

The works comprising the *Four Ideas* project not only use different media but vary above all in their procedural implications. The first reaction on seeing them together is a direct and instantaneous analysis of their diverse approaches to presenting colour and abstract form. But there is also a deeper analysis linked to the tools of art, starting from the encounter between a surface and the presence of colour. This leads thematically to the legacy of modernism and whether it can now be considered a democratic utopia or an egotistic condemnation. There is at the same time also a reflection on the metaphors of coexistence. To whom are these apparently ahistorical images and texts addressed? The works are all linked by a particular attention to colour as a vibration and perceptual expansion; they always require the presence of an external gaze in order to reflect in a different way on the relationship between the observer and the object observed, idea and form, and the container and the object contained.

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