



Omar Galliani, *Ut pictura poesis (Notturmo)*, 2010, graphite and gold foil on panel (triptych), 100 x 300 cm

OMAR GALLIANI

Chiaroscuro: A Symphony in Graphite

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Tornabuoni Art London

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"All my work runs along the thin blade that holds the threads of history tight in its fist."

Omar Galliani

This summer, Tornabuoni Art London is pleased to present "Omar Galliani: A Symphony in Graphite", the artist's first solo show in the UK.

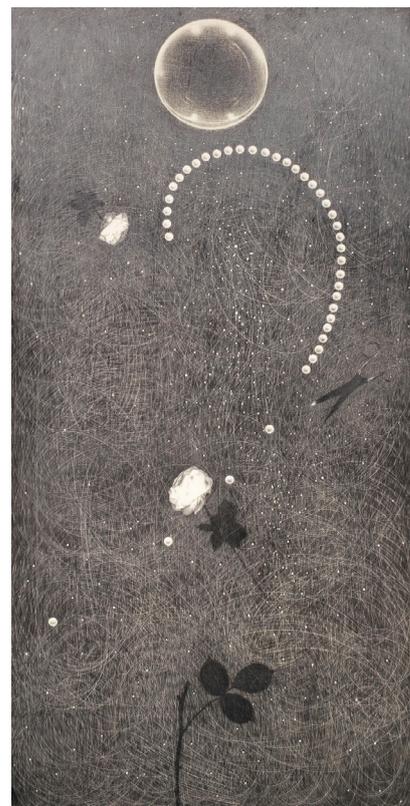
Considered a master of contemporary drawing in Italy, Galliani works with fine and accurate graphite lines that are reminiscent of the drawing techniques honed and developed by the master artists of the Renaissance.

Starting with a white surface – a sheet or paper, a canvas or often a panel made of poplar – Galliani painstakingly traces and superimposes lines with graphite and charcoal. Progressively, these lines acquire a new life, emerging from dark backgrounds in the shape of a human body, a stretch of water or an object of everyday life. In the works exhibited, most of which are large in scale and reminiscent, in some ways, of altarpieces, decorative and symbolic figures emerge like stars in the sky, creating a surreal cosmos of "spiritual signs" embedded on a graphite surface.

The exhibition “Omar Galliani: A Symphony in Graphite” will present around 20 works made in the past few years, which highlight the artist's ability to express the inner light of his subjects. A leading exponent of the “Magico primario” – an art movement theorised by Flavio Caroli in 1982, which endorsed a return to a more traditional and figurative style – Galliani reinterprets the Old Masters in a contemporary way.

Highlights from the exhibition include works from a series dedicated to the constellations – such as *Cassiopea 1* and *Nella Costellazione di Orione* (both from 2015) – a sort of sidereal mythology where the mystical power of women invades the sky, a territory conventionally intended as the domain of the male figure. *Di perle e di luce* and *In ombra e in luce* (both from 2015) are two portraits representing the ethereal faces of a woman with her closed eyes. Defined by an almost dreamlike atmosphere and delicate plays of light and shadow, these two artworks are testament to the artist's fascination with Chinese culture.

The exhibition also includes drawings from the series *Ancora fiori per Alice* (realised between 2016 and 2017). These works express a more lyrical and intimate language, as they feature objects and flowers that seem to float or drift away along a stream, creating a distance between the surreal atmosphere of the painting and the reality of the elements represented.



Ancora fiori per Alice n° 2, 2016, pencil on board, 140 x 70 cm

NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT OMAR GALLIANI

Born in Montecchio Emilia in 1954, where he continues to live and work, Omar Galliani graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna and currently teaches painting at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan. During his studies, Galliani developed a great fascination for the *disegno* (drawing) of the Italian Renaissance masters, which led him to dedicate himself almost exclusively to this technique from the '90s, re-evaluating its cultural importance in the Italian artistic tradition.

An excellent draughtsman, Galliani often applies the technique of *sfumato* that was introduced by Leonardo, achieving a smoky, misty sensibility in his works that gradually reveals his dream-like figures. This peculiar effect may also derive from the artist's birthplace in Northern Italy, where the countryside is often permeated with fog. Galliani's interest in dreams and oriental culture, in particular Chinese culture, can be noticed in his drawings, as they feature ethereal faces and figures on a nocturnal background full of symbols, such as constellations, flowers and Buddhist motifs. The artist has drawn those symbols from his personal travel experiences in Asia. Together, the *disegno* (that brings precision and definition to his figuration) and the surreal atmosphere (through the use of *sfumato* and surreal images) create in Galliani's work a strict connection and a balanced harmony between earthly and celestial, reality and dream.

Since the 1980s, Galliani has been involved in major contemporary art events worldwide, including the Venice Biennale, where he participated in 1982, 1984 and 1986, and the Biennials of São Paulo and Paris, where in 1982 he was invited to show his work in the Italian Pavilion. He also took part in two editions of the Rome Quadrenniale (1986 and 1996), at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni and the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in

Rome. His works have been exhibited and collected by major international contemporary art institutions, from Beijing (Museum of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, 2012) to London (Hayward Gallery, 1982), and from Milan (Gallerie d'Italia, 2017) to Cairo (National Museum of Modern Art, 2011). From 2006 to 2008, the itinerant show "Disegno italiano" (Italian Drawing) was hosted in China's major contemporary art museums, such as Urban Planning Exhibition Center in Shanghai and Museum of Fine Arts in Hangzhou.

In 2008, the Galleria Nazionale degli Uffizi in Florence exhibited and acquired for its collections the work *Notturmo* (triptych, pencil on canvas, 251 x 701 cm). In 2011, Omar Galliani held major solo shows at the National Museum of Modern Art in Cairo and at the Italian Cultural Institute in Beijing. In 2013 he took part in the exhibition "Face and Soul" at the National Museum of Russian Art in Moscow. In 2015 he was invited to join the group exhibition "Imago Mundi – Luciano Benetton Collection: Praestigium Italia" at the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation in Turin.

ABOUT TORNABUONI ART

Founded in Florence in 1981 by Roberto Casamonti, in the street that gave the gallery its name, Tornabuoni opened other exhibition spaces in Crans-Montana in 1993, Milan in 1995, Forte Dei Marmi in 2004, Paris in 2009 and London in 2015. Specialising in Post-War Italian art, the gallery presents the work of artists such as Fontana, Burri, Castellani, Bonalumi, Boetti, Scheggi and Manzoni.

Tornabuoni also has a permanent collection of significant works by major Italian artists of the Novecento, such as de Chirico, Morandi, Balla and Severini, as well as international 20th-century avant-garde masters, such as Picasso, Mirò, Kandinsky, Hartung, Poliakoff, Dubuffet, Lam, Matta, Christo, Wesselmann, Warhol and Basquiat. Complementing its focus on Italian art, the Tornabuoni collection also features the work of young contemporary artists such as the Italian artist Francesca Pasquali and the Italy-based Armenian artist Mikayel Ohanjanyan, who won the Golden Lion at the 2015 Venice Biennale and whose work is on show at Yorkshire Sculpture Park since 2017.

Tornabuoni participates in major international art fairs such as the FIAC in Paris, TEFAF in Maastricht, Art Basel, Art Basel Miami Beach, Art Basel Hong Kong, Artefiera in Bologna, Miart in Milan, Frieze Masters in London, Artgenève in Geneva and Artmonte-carlo in Monaco.

The gallery also works closely with museums and institutions. With its experience and knowledge of the work of the artists it represents, the gallery has also established itself as an advisor for both private and public collections.

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