

L i n d a   C a r r a r a

2015 - 2020

*la prima passeggiata*  
*The Open Box - Milano*  
*2021-2022*

*curated by Martina Lolli*



*It is only within us  
that landscapes  
become landscapes.*

Fernando Pessoa

In *The Book of Disquiet* Pessoa invites us to reflect on how every visual process considered to be objective is doomed to failure: the landscape is in the eyes and heart of the beholder.

In the landscape in which we daily immerse and distance ourselves it can happen that we are absorbed by correspondences and affinities capable of amplifying the laws of nature, of becoming blood of our blood, of restoring to us a gaze that concerns us. In that position we feel ourselves to be original, we blend in among entities like essences: we immerse ourselves in contemplation, losing ourselves in the scrap of world we have selected. A pacific entity that embraces our moods, the landscape allows itself to be permeated by individuals to the point where it traps us within itself, held that in the infinite play between nature and artifice, listening to the silent calls that are generated on the skin of things, awaiting the blossoming of textures on sections of tree trunks, participating in the magic of the alchemical transformation of materials.



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Existing in this *mise en abîme* is to allow thoughts to wander amongst the ricochets of identity, is to diverge infinitely into *différance*, into that deviation of meaning that Jacques Derrida regards as the basis of his philosophical thinking and which he traces in the unbridgeable distance between the expression and the meaning of a thing - between wishing to define it and its signified.

*And just as the height of  
transparency seems to announce  
itself, the most implacable opacity  
breaks in, an opacity that  
disqualifies any identity in its own  
right.*

It is perhaps on the crest of this opacity that the work of Linda Carrara (Bergamo, 1984) finds its natural home, as an invitation to an initiatory journey triggered by the discovery of a landscape carrying her *différance*.

Vision - suspended in a prospective directive - provides access to the sublime scenario of vibrating shapes in which we love to founder.





*It is only within us  
that landscapes  
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Fernando Pessoa

The work opens to contemplation in the literal sense: the landscape of *La prima passeggiata* ("The First Walk") captures a portion of universe and permits an exploration of a perspective in which the transparency of forms transcends their pacific evidence. It is in this moment that the image becomes icon, acquiring a wholly new opacity: the landscape exhibits its levels of meaning and the palimpsest of signs that lives within it adheres to a dimension in which the pretence-transparency can only refer to something else.

*Would it ever be possible to see  
with still eyes a landscape as if  
the man looking did not exist in a  
given place, but elsewhere?*

The icon is the place in which the *différance* is brief, the eternal minute in which the divergence between form and meaning is reduced to the minimum, an instant in which transparency and opacity are two sides of the same coin. It is to allude to the primordial form of things, where appearance crystalise as a vague purity.

It is within opacity - that unbridgeable gap in meaning - that the landscape lives, where the observer begins to see and pacific contemplation is resolved as the perfection of a vision difficult to replicate.

Martina Lolli



Anche la natura spontaneamente produce immagini | 2021  
(Nature as well spontaneously produces images)

Acrylic, oil and white pencil on linen,  
112 × 170 cm







False Carrara marble | 2021

Gesso primer and graphite on 17th century oak beam,  
approx. 20 × 25 × 310 cm each











in fondo al pozzo 2020

Rizzuto Gallery Palermo





in fondo al pozzo | exhibition view

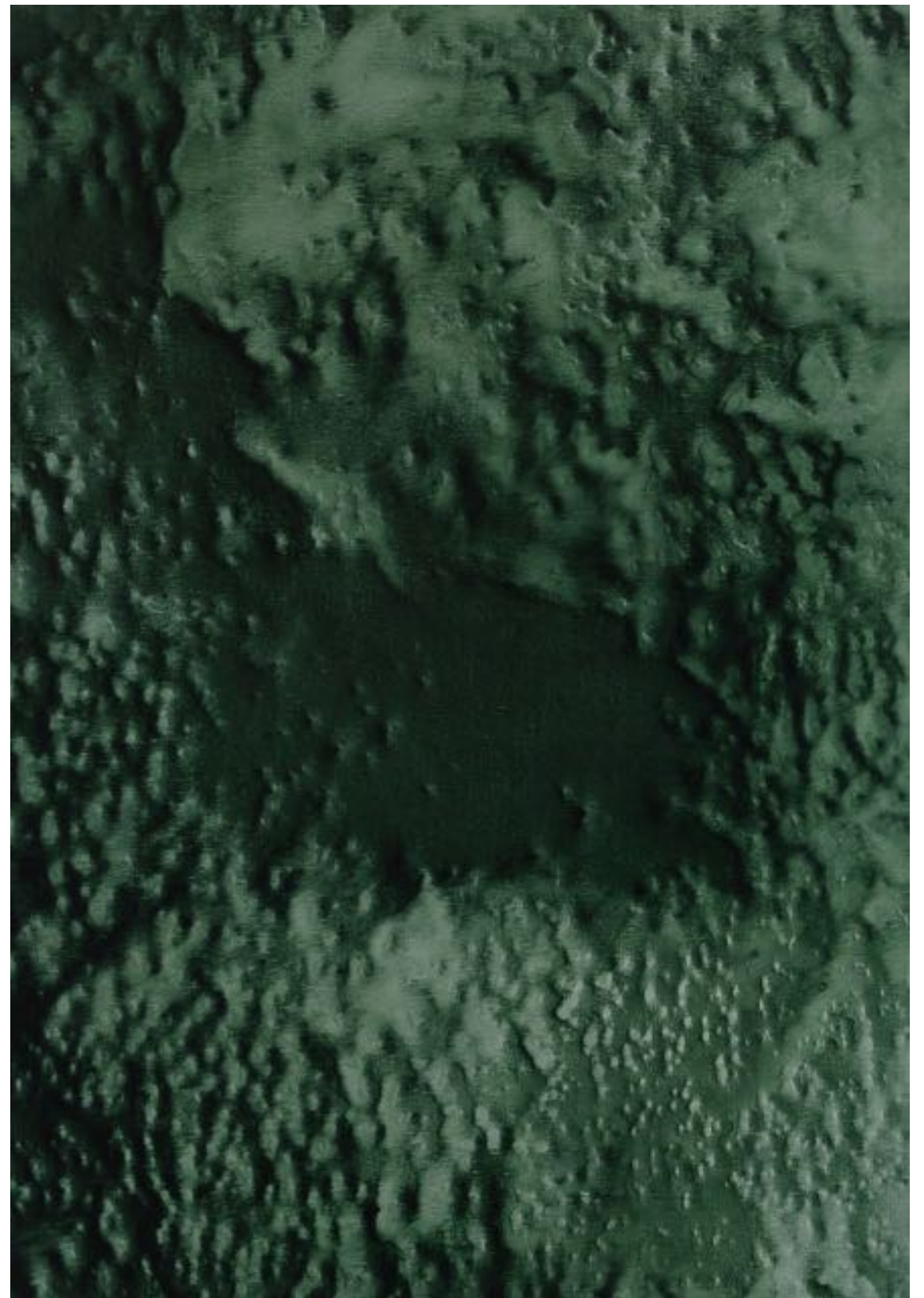
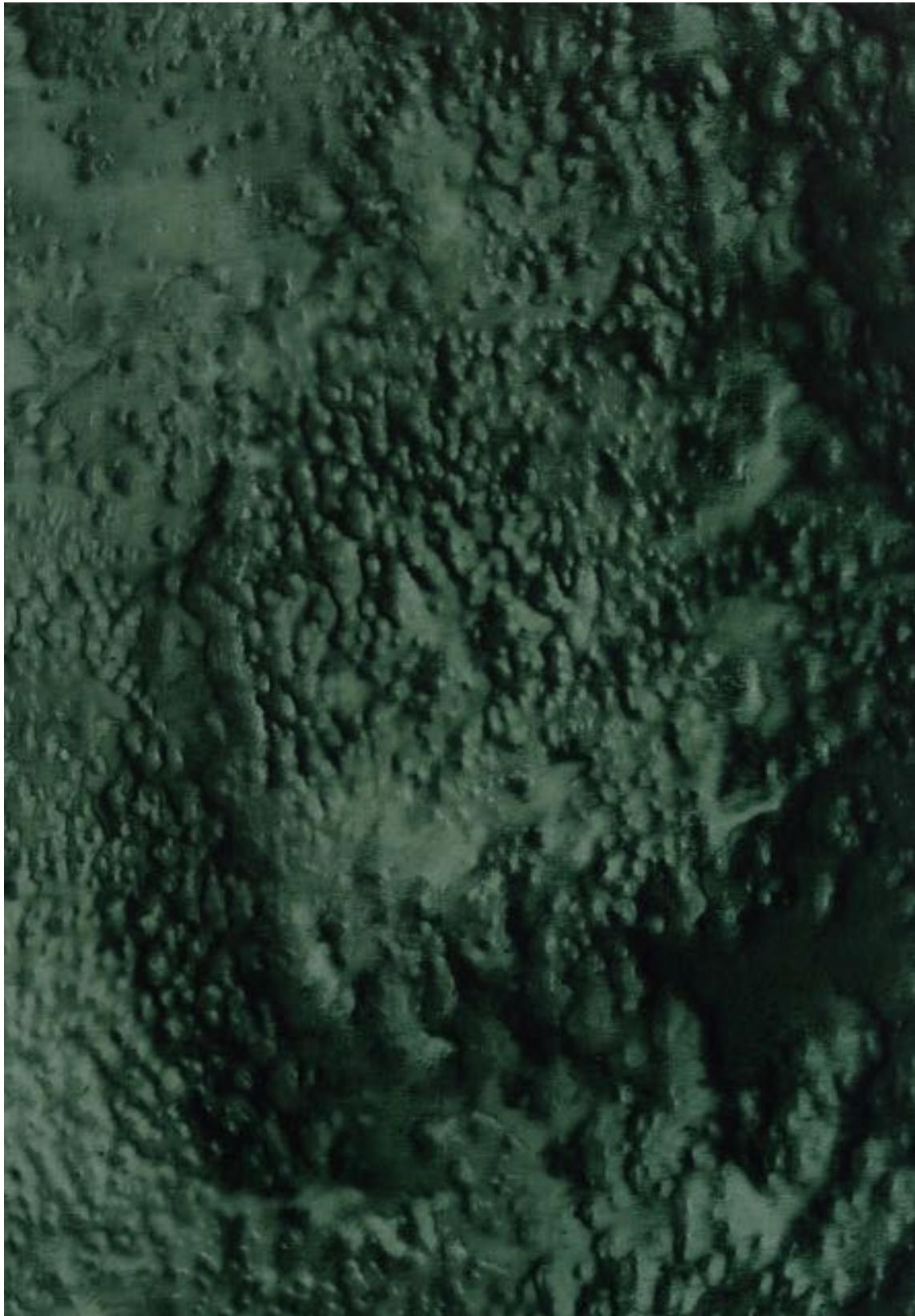


lo stagno | 2020 oil and graphite on canvas 112x170 cm









frottage\_la prima passeggiata | 2020, oil on canvas, 47x67 cm  
frottage\_la prima passeggiata | 2020, oil on canvas, 47x67 cm





in fondo al pozzo | exhibition view







in fondo al pozzo | exhibition view



in fondo al pozzo | exhibition view





in fondo al pozzo | 2020  
oil on canvas 120 x 80 cm

on the background: false Carrara marble  
wall papeer, printed from original drawings

Chôra 2019

Boccanera Gallery Trento

Linda Carrara.

## THE INSIDE IN THE INSIDE

Giuseppe Frangi

Very few artists of the past have left us the secrets of their studio. But Jan Vermeer is an exception. Many of his masterpieces are, in fact, set in a context that we can recognize every time, and that becomes nearly a point of hinge for his works. We remember that window on the left, or that back wall, often used to complete mysterious reminiscent mechanisms. We remember that floor, with black and white square ceramics, which compose sharp structures and guide our gaze in the Vermerian "sancta sanctorum". In reality, he always keeps us in the doorway; we see the inside, but we stay outside. The "inside" is a sacred place. In fact, Daniel Arasse writes in one of his books that the dimension of Vermeer's painting is an "inside in the inside". The floor is the noticeable custodian of this dimension, because on the one hand, it endorses its existence with the accuracy of its arrangement, and on the other hand, it shows its inviolability, dividing our gaze.

But there is more: for an artist like Vermeer, who has nearly always worked in the micro-space of his studio, the floor would probably end up as a cosmic reference, redrawing the orderly arrangement of the galaxies, like a mirror of the sky. I don't know if Linda Carrara feels such an attraction every time she is in her studio in Milan or Brussels. And I can only imagine how much she would give to paint the frottage of Vermeer's floor, to understand the secret pictorial energy: to go into that "inside in the inside".

The floor, then, is the representation of a primary dimension to which the artist has been led since the moment when, as Clement Greenberg said, the easel painting was over. Greenberg was the critic who supported Jackson Pollock in his liberating destabilization and made him the prophet of a new painting. Laying the large canvases on the floor of the Long Island studio, and then letting the color drip with controlled randomness gave birth to the horizontal painting.

The floor contains in itself the paradigm of horizontality. Consequently, it means the denial of controlling reality using a gaze (that of perspective) capable of controlling it. I like to think that an ethical dimension also comes into play in this: there is, in fact, a Franciscan component in bending over the floor (it is not by chance that the saint of Assisi was sleeping and asked his family to sleep on the bare ground). One bends over it, arranges the canvas and, in Linda's case, allows it to be symbolically tattooed. The etymology of "floor" comes from "pavire", in Latin "to beat". The earth is beaten to level it and make it habitable. Linda also works using the force on the canvas to take the humble form of the ground. She stares at it, decides what the "painting" is, in the sense that she determines where it begins and ends. In the end, however, her action is to let it happen. In fact, frottage is an exercise that allows freeing painting from intentionality, pushing it, almost stressing it, so that it increasingly bends to become the skin of the real, to become itself a thing and not just a representation of the thing. In this way, Carrara participates in a vast process, because freeing painting from the limits of intentionality has marked the action of artists from the 40s onwards, in their most interesting and radical expressions.

However, she does not want to stay out, she is not discharged from the artist's responsibilities. Rather, it is an exercise of expressive subtraction, which frees the shapes each time, making them rise on her canvases, like images for the first time on the world stage. This is demonstrated by the fact that at the end of the process, what remains attached to the skin of the canvas is not an image, it is not an imprint, but rather a transfiguration: the canvas becomes the place of an event. Her frottages move toward an indefinite dimension, which holds together the earthly and the otherworldly: windows open wide on another world. Sometimes, Carrara even feels the need to introduce, or rather to make appear, random splinters of objects, in a hyper-realistic way, to give a space in a process of perception that could disorientate.

The process towards an "inside in the inside" has produced a further development in the works by Linda Carrara; in fact, on the reverse side of the frottage, the canvas is covered with her "false Carrara marble", in this case, enlargements printed on canvas from original drawings. They are exercises in mimetic painting, surfaces in trompe l'oeil that insist on the ambiguity of their own substance: liquid marbles or waters with reflections of marble. We are familiar with these works. The surprise is to find them there, represented on the verse of the frottage, to indicate us something: a short circuit, a slipping of material identity, a double preciousness because it chooses to stay hidden. Moreover, for Linda Carrara no surface is neutral, nothing is simple support, starting, as we have seen, from the surface on which we lay our feet and body every moment.

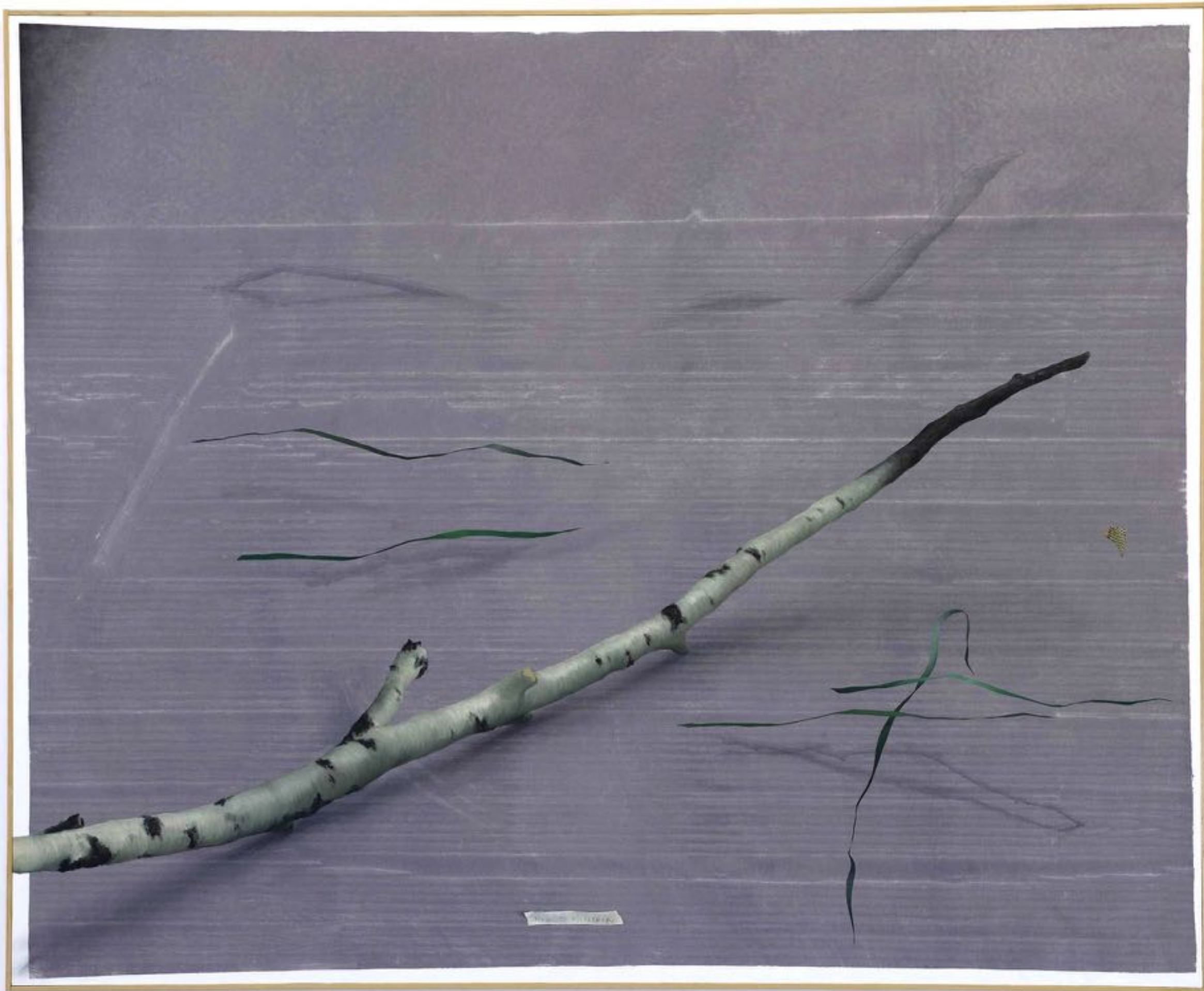
Each surface has a vocation and when the frottages are free from the destiny of becoming wall paintings and are erected like graceful trophies on strips, extensions of the frame, they have necessarily their back exposed. And here I like to think that Linda has been influenced by another great episode in the history of art. Once again, a floor: that of Simone Martini's "Annunciation" at the Uffizi Gallery. The Angel and Mary rest on an amazing marbled surface, with red veins, with curls that seem to be there to sneak out of that amber holder. Some have used those visionary surfaces for apparent fillers, just like Linda: Beato Angelico at the Convento di San Marco has painted a series of fake marbles in the corridor below the fresco with the so-called Madonna delle Ombre. Apparently, a decorative solution, almost a podium for the frescoed figures, in reality, those marbles mean something else as demonstrated by Georges Didi-Huberman in his beautiful book dedicated to the great Dominican artist. He writes that those marbles function as "conversion of the gaze... they introduce the mystery, of what cannot be represented of the figure". But Didi-Huberman also hypothesizes a further explanation, i.e., that even "the marble itself would incarnate", it would participate with its mineral identity in the incarnation. It is a powerful suggestion and I don't know how much Linda knew about it since it happened to her too, without any planning, to arrive in a very similar semantic area. This is demonstrated by one of her frottages, created on the floor of a garage in the Brussels studio, to which she wanted to give the title "Flesh": in fact, on the front, the canvas accidentally left the outline of a small figure hanging, almost like an embryo, the shadow of a crucifix, which emerges, as if by fate, from the turbulence of the surface.

Linda Carrara wanted to give this exhibition a very cultured and relevant title: "Chôra". It is a term taken from Plato's "Timaeus" and indicates the space, in some ways unspeakable, in which the form unfolds its action. With a play on words, one can say that it is the space of the form in "formation". It is not, however, a mechanic process since, by entering these spaces of creation, Linda Carrara's painting opens up unforeseen possibilities. Painting is absorbed into a process of transfiguration - a transformation that makes the head of an ancient oak beam take on the nature of marble. It is painting on sculpture, another version of the "false Carrara marble": objects that surprise not so much for the illusory effect, but for the simplicity with which they made us believe that the material transformation is the result of a budding and not an artifice. In Chôra's unspeakable space the idea is that at the bottom of reality there are no watertight compartments, but that in the creative space, one nature flows into the other: once again it is marble that sends out a warning with the thin veins that furrow its surface; it is a vital material that sprays the clear white of the stone, skin grown on the beam, which, moreover, does not deny its own mineral nature. Chôra is, therefore, that space in which matter still lives free in its ambiguity.

I believe this is the reason for Linda Carrara's attraction (and also her affection) for a third great reference of the past: Leonardo da Vinci. The rocks object-subject of some frottages are those of Adda, which are the background to the two versions of the Virgin of the Rocks. Linda has literally followed Leonardo's footsteps, in places that are very familiar to her. Going physically to the source, she has made a close exploration of that unreachable attitude of Leonardo to establish continuous and dizzying connections with the creative level of the world. It is a space inhabited by a sublime ambiguity, a space of shadows where life is broken, of stones steeped in mystery, of unstoppable lights, of vibrations that ply the surface of things in restlessness. Linda has arrived there in this phase as an artist. This phase has shown her ability to consolidate her work with determination and consistency. But what moves her and makes her path interesting and completely open is the anxiety that crosses it, on the edge of intelligence and feeling. The anxiety of those who know that to see things appear, they must disappear. "How to disappear" is written, as a note, on her last painting, the one that gives the title to the exhibition. Linda is there; she acts in that narrow space, almost with tied hands; in the wait and with the desire to see herself open each time on the vastness (lately also so physical) of that "inside in the inside".







Chôra 2019 | oil, graphite, acrylic, snake skin on canvas with wood frame . 170x207 cm





HOW TO DISAPPEAR





frottage\_Madonna delle rocce | 2019, oil on canvas, 47x67 cm  
frottage\_Madonna delle rocce | 2019, oil on canvas, 47x67 cm



una cosa vale l'altra | 2019, oil on canvas and oak frame, 162 x 97 cm (detail)









Polyptych 2019 | five indivisible canvases, recto/verso



frottage\_07, | 2019, double indivisible canvases, oil on canvas and oak frame 182 x 97 cm



frottage\_07, | 2019, double indivisible canvases, oil on canvas and oak frame 182 x 97 cm





frottage\_08, | 2019, double indivisible canvases, oil on canvas and oak frame, 182 x 97 cm



frottage\_05, | 2019, oil on canvas and oak frame, 182 x 97 cm (detail)





flesh, | 2019, double indivisible canvases, oil on canvas snake skin and oak frame, 182 x 97 cm





frottage\_Madonna delle rocce | 2019, oil on canvas, 21 x 32 each cm

**Мадонна в скалах**

Madonna delle Rocce

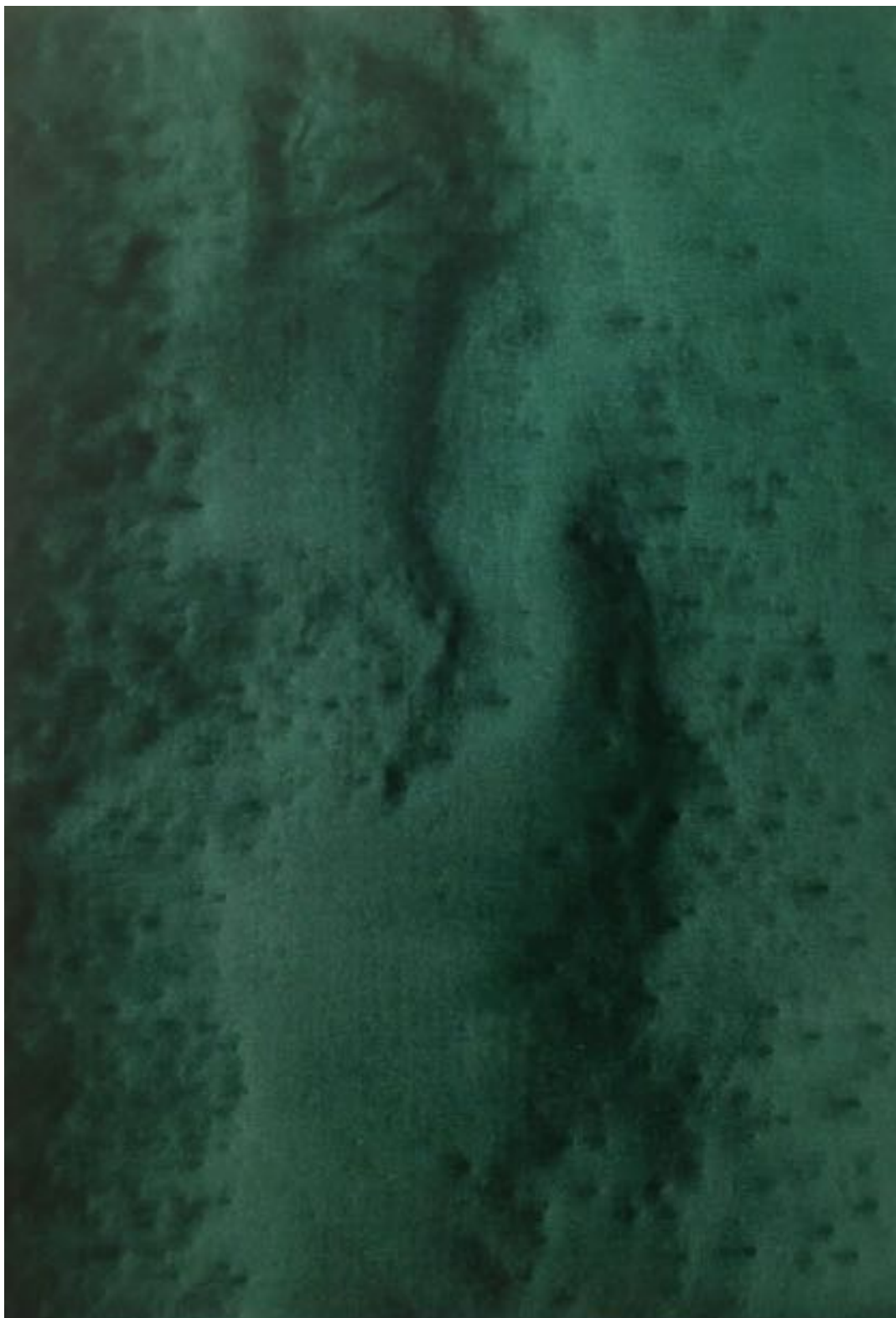
Galerie Iragui

Moscow 2019



Madonna delle rocce 2019 | exhibition view at Iragui Galery Moscow





frottage\_Madonna delle rocce | oil on canvas . 64,5x47,5 cm 2018





floating object | acrylic and graphite on wood panel . 22x30 cm 2018





false Carrara marble | gesso and graphite on ancient wood. 35x35x50 cm 2018









frottage\_Madonna delle rocce | 2018, triptych, oil on canvas, 47x67 cm















no title | 2019, oil on canvas, 158x110 cm







"false Carrara marble"

wall paper printed from original graphite drawings on paper











"false Carrara marble"

graphite and gesso on ancient wooden beams













## Reality, suspended angels and metamorphosis

Daniele Capra

Linda Carrara's work arises from a reflection on the conceptual and mimetic dynamics of painting, and questions its representative intentions. It focuses on a free practice based on the creation of new worlds and new realities that produce entirely new visual relationships. In particular, the subject and the compositional structure, which are central elements in figurative practice, are just a pretext in the artist's work, an opportunity to create an imaginative and suspended reality which leads the viewer elsewhere.

In general, differently to what we might generally think, the practice of figuration is not aimed at reality in itself. Its purpose is neither to copy reality (an aspect that Plato found deplorable), nor to represent it (as in Baudrillard's famous *simulacra*). Indeed, this practice works around reality and changes it. In other words, it proposes a new and different reality, an incandescent material that can be understood only by those who have the sensitivity and the skills to interpret its linguistic codes. This situation is the result of two modern trends. The first one is the artist's awareness of their own role, a situation which has gradually developed from the fifteenth century onwards. Thanks to this perception, artists have become aware of the importance of their own art and of their own intellectual work.

They are finally free from being solely a vehicle for the content of their work, humble servants to the needs of their customers. The second aspect is a conceptual and anti-realist rift, in opposition to the idea of mimesis, which was seen with some artists from the late sixteenth century.

These were the Mannerists, and they continued the strong anti-naturalist tendency that was the first to overcome, in linguistic terms, the limit which, until then, had only been considered as an oddity. We might consider that the twentieth-century avant-gardes, with their indirect way of relating to reality, have carried forward this approach, whether they are aware of it or not.

Linda Carrara's artwork is a tributary of this river. Her painting is not like the work of a meticulous scribe's, compelled to write down what he hears among all the background noise, nor is it the effect of a maverick hero's forceful opposition to the stream of reality. Rather it is the consequence of a completely new, deeper drive that causes a deviation. In her work, painting is no longer either the child or the heir of reality: quite the opposite, it is a new character which increases all possible realities thanks to its own existence.



The objects displayed on the surface of her works are merely an excuse to challenge the cognitive value attributed to reality. In Linda Carrara's research, painting itself is the hidden subject of her work, since it is the *medium* that evokes unconventional features of reality. In this way, her pictures are characterised by a free and precarious syntax, filled with silent poetic bewilderment and genuine contradictions of perspective. Pieces of wood, marble surfaces, sticks and small objects all serve to confirm the fact that they are not themselves, exactly as the writing states under Magritte's famous pipe.

The artist's work questions and embarrasses the viewer, encouraging them to talk about or speak of something else, without the need to be consistent with the topic or the nature of the context. In other words, Carrara's artworks function as surreal and process-based *devices* which lead to a visual and thematic divergence. The title of the exhibition itself, *Il pretesto di Lotto* (The pretext of Lotto), is proof of this attitude. Indeed, her works led to wide-ranging discussions about many questions of art history which were relevant to the painting of Lorenzo Lotto. For example, there was a discussion about the natural/anti-natural sense of flight, as seen in the *Trinity* at the Bernareggi Museum, where Christ flies through the air illuminated from behind. Or about the *Jesi Annunciation*, where the Archangel is depicted suspended before he touches the ground. Or, again, about the *Martinengo Altarpiece*, where the angels hold the Madonna's crown in their hands.

I'll not go into what led to this bewildering intellectual pleasure, but, even without discussing Carrara's research (and over cookies and several coffees) to *talk about something else* was the best way to talk, intensely, about the deepest reasons for her artistic practice. A practice that ultimately encompasses suspension, change of direction, transformation and metamorphosis.

A/R [Linda Carrara nata nel 1984, vive e lavora tra Bruxelles e Milano]

Italian Cultural Institute Bruxelles  
2018





A/R [Linda Carrara nata nel 1984, vive e lavora tra Bruxelles e Milano] | exhibition view



il peso dell'antichità 2018 | installation view











A/R [Linda Carrara nata nel 1984, vive e lavora tra Bruxelles e Milano] | exhibition view



A/R [Linda Carrara nata nel 1984, vive e lavora tra Bruxelles e Milano] | exhibition view





A/R [Linda Carrara nata nel 1984, vive e lavora tra Bruxelles e Milano] | exhibition view









floating objects, oil graphite and acrylic on linen, 112x170 cm 2017

Looking for the right place at the right moment | 2016-2017  
with a text by Claudio Salvi  
BLANCO space - Gent Belgium







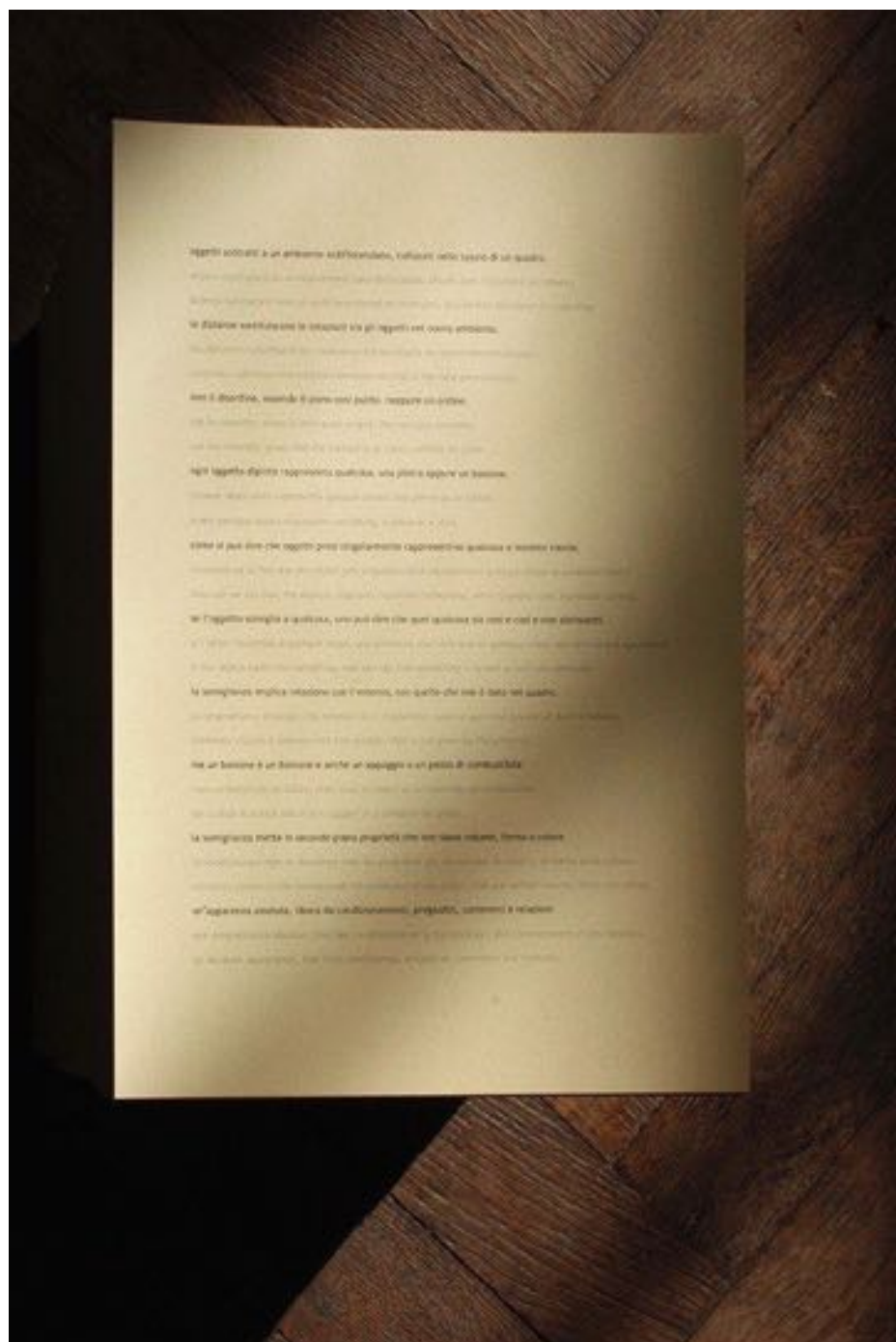




false Carrara marble 2017| acrylic and pigment on paper 150x250 cm







oggetti sottratti a un ambiente indifferenziato, collocati nello spazio di un quadro.  
subtracted objects from an undifferentiated ambient, located in the space of a painting.

le distanze sostituiscono le relazioni tra gli oggetti nel nuovo ambiente.  
the distances replaces the relation between the objects in the new environment.

non il disordine, essendo il piano così pulito. neppure un ordine.  
not the disorder, being the surface so clean. not even an order.

ogni oggetto dipinto rappresenta qualcosa, una pietra oppure un bastone.  
each painted object represent something, a stone or a baton.

come si può dire che oggetti presi singolarmente rappresentino qualcosa e insieme niente.  
how it can be argued that individually objects represent something and nothing at the same time?

se l'oggetto somiglia a qualcosa, uno può dire che quel qualcosa sia così e così e non altrimenti.  
if the painted object looks like something, one can say that this “something” it’s like it is and not otherwise.

la somiglianza implica relazione con l'esterno, con quello che non è dato nel quadro.  
the similarity imply relation with outside, with something is not given into the painting.

ma un bastone è un bastone e anche un appoggio o un pezzo di combustibile.  
but a baton is a baton but also a support or a combustible piece.

la somiglianza mette in secondo piano proprietà che non siano volume, forma o colore.  
the similarity overshadows quality of the object that are not volume, shape, color.

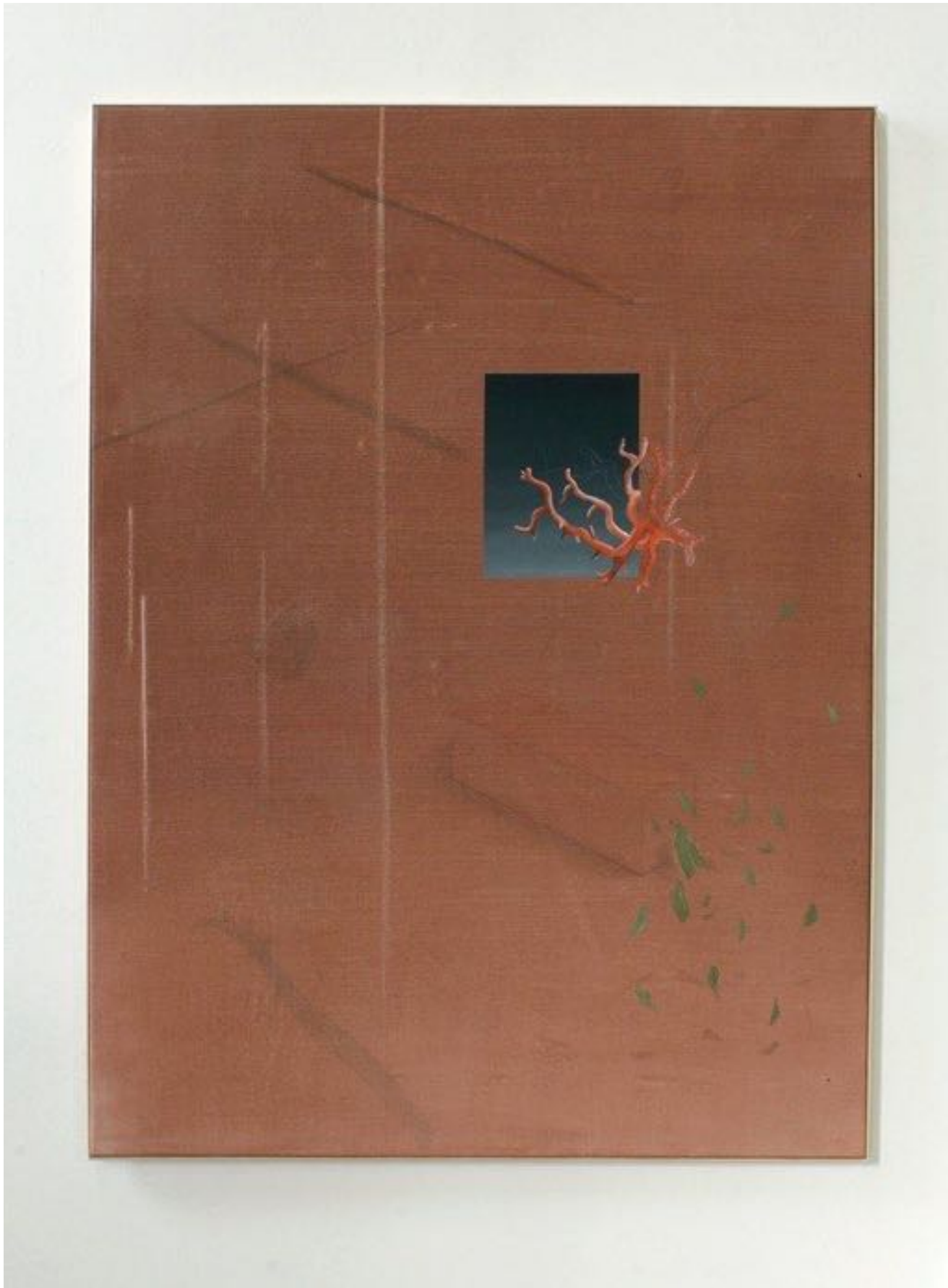
un'apparenza assoluta, libera da condizionamenti, pregiudizi, commenti e relazioni.  
an absolute appearances, free from conditioning, prejudices, comment and relation.

scritto di Clausio Salvi  
by Claudio Salvi









la ragione è completamente deserta, 2017| acrylic, graphite, acrylic on linen, 125x97 cm





Column 2017| acrylic and pigment on paper









il segreto del marmo è una linea che corre nello spazio 2016 | acrylic and pigment on canvas, 40 x 60 cm



ECOLALIA 2015

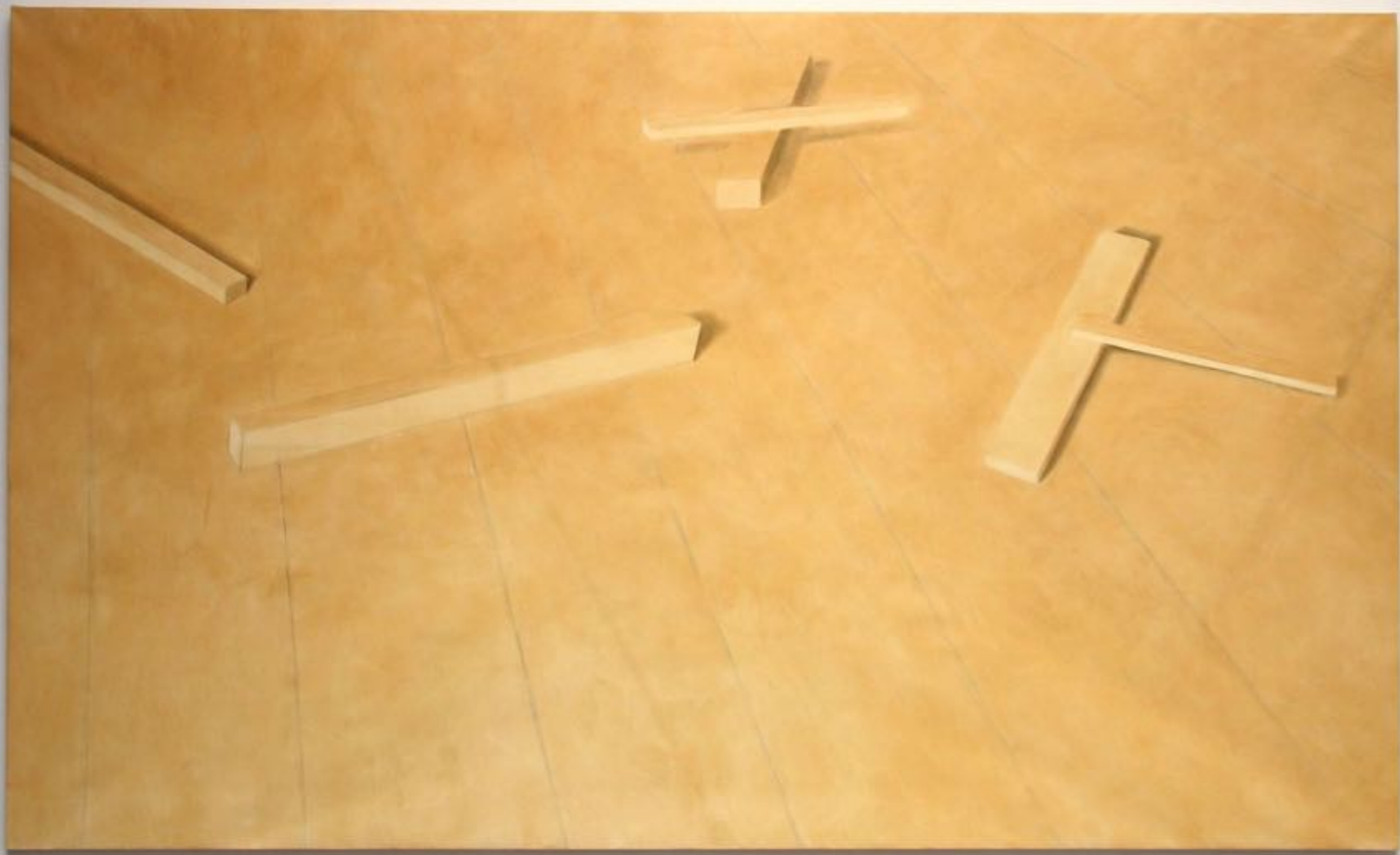
croxhapox Gent Belgim





ECOLALIA 2015-2016 | exhibition view at croxhapox Gent Belgium  
left: false Carrara marble | 2014-2015 graphite, gesso and rabbit glue on wood, 35x47 cm each  
right: ECOLALIA\_03 | pigment, oil, acrylic and graphite on linen, 200 x 300 cm







false Carrara marble | 2014-2015 graphite, gesso and rabbit glue on wood, 35x47 cm ech

