



•REVIEWS

Ali Banisadr “Beautiful Lies” *Stefano Bardini* *Museum and Palazzo Vecchio Museum / Florence*

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Monochromes and contrasting colors, quotation and invention, complexity and immediacy, order and chaos. These are some of the struggles within the painting of Ali Banisadr (Teheran, 1976) who, invited to dialogue with Dante's heritage seven hundred years after the death of the Florentine poet, brings his intuitive and evocative way into contact with two fundamental collections for the history of Italian and European art.

The collection of sculptures of the Bardini Museum, the starting point of this widespread exhibition, recreates in its setting the original vision of the antiquarian Stefano Bardini, who privileged, to chronologies and historiographies, exhibition solutions capable of glorifying both the material and the color of the stone, and the variety of styles and techniques with which classical and Renaissance sculptors were able to model it.

Thus the famous cerulean hues of the museum walls, chosen by Bardini to enhance the whiteness of the statuary, now extend and mix also within the pictorial plane, above the pale background of Banisadr's paintings (*Rhizome* and *Ordered Disorder* , both 2019). Also for the Iranian artist, color and matter are central in his chromatic fights, created by modeling the dark and bluish tones of the oil by layering and eliminating, through more controlled brush strokes, scrapings and brush strokes. On the delicate surface of the linen, unstable and shapeless figures thus emerge from the desire for figuration of the pictorial material and in the unconscious of our vision, always interested in finding itself in what it observes.

Alongside these early experiments by the limited colors, the exhibition develops through numerous colors defined scenes lit and contrasted that, with the same synthetic immediacy, fail to evoke images and memories from art history: *deja-vu* elusive, ambiguous and changeable, born from the lack of a stabilizing design, and therefore open to our interpretation.



① 2 3 4 5 6

Ali Banisadr, *Beautiful Lies*, 2021, 167.6 x 223.5 cm. Photograph by Jeffrey Sturges. Courtesy Thaddaeus Ropac, Lor

Thus we can find in the great bird's eye views of *The Charlatans* and *The Gatekeepers* (both 2009), figures and compositions close to the controlled chaos of the gardens of delights and hells of Hieronymus Bosch and his countrymen. Indeed, the Iranian artist's canvases host entire populations of figures, scenes and landscapes hidden in color, rejecting, like their ancestors, a hierarchy of vision and immediate reading. Banisadr's technique, divided between an instinctive painting and an almost miniaturistic attention to detail, thus connects the Dutch infernal compositions to the material richness of an *all-over* painting and polyphonic, taking up the definition of Clement Greenberg given to the American postwar research of Mark Tobey and Jackson Pollock¹.

When the size of the formats and signs instead increases, we can find in his pigment battles the memory of equestrian battles, where new out-of-focus figures find themselves riding elusive

masses of swirling pictorial matter (*The Builder* , 2019).

Hells and horse fights also return in the second part of the exhibition in the Palazzo Vecchio Museum, which welcomes its visitors with the imposing battles frescoed by Vasari on the walls of the Salone dei Cinquecento. With the impression of their pastel armor still in the eyes, we find in the Sala dei Gigli a new series of processions painted by Banisadr with both acid and soft, bright and opaque shades, which at the same time recall and clash with the Renaissance collection of the host museum , underlining again the plurality of formal manners and virtuosity present in the Iranian artist's paintings (*The Rise of the Blond* , 2016; *Underworld* , 2021).

With *Beautiful Lies* (2021) and *Canto 28* (2011) ² , we finally encounter the central theme of the lie, reinterpreted here as the ability of signs to contain multiple meanings behind their appearances. The hidden and allegorical motifs in Dante's poetry are thus associated with Banisadr's ability to make figuration coexist in abstraction, the circles of hell in battles of color, and the history of art within his instinctive painting. and material.

¹ Clement Greenberg, *The crisis of easel painting* (1948) in *Art and culture. Critical essays* . Allemandi, Turin 1991.

² Dedicated to the group of fraudulents in Dante's narrative of Hell.

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