

## LOUISA GAGLIARDI Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels, Belgium

Looking at Louisa Gagliardi's recent paintings involves a movement in two stages. First comes an appraisal of the overall scene, which tends to depict people or objects within the kind of domestic environment you might associate with a recently married, middle-class couple: a premium Ikea interior. Then comes a feeling of sinking through the surface, at which point other scenes begin to reveal themselves. This is an especially odd sensation given that Gagliardi's are very flat paintings, rendered on a computer and then printed out in ink on vinyl, with additional touches of transparent gel medium applied by hand.

Gagliardi, who has a background in graphic design, started exhibiting paintings in 2012, transferring her digital-imaging skills from one discipline to the other. A small catalogue accompanying this exhibition shows paintings in different stages of becoming: one photograph captures the moiré effect of the computer screen on which the Photoshop eyedropper tool floats against a red patch; another depicts the same detail daubed with milky-wet gel medium.

Within the overall composition of these images, every surface is a potential frame for a vignette. The red area pictured in the catalogue is a plate of jam out of which a face and limbs emerge. In the same painting, *Daily Jam* (all works 2019), a Bialetti coffee pot doubles as a magic lantern in which two figures, dressed for rain, march in opposite directions. Steam from the pot clouds the pastoral view through the window, etiolating it from pastel green and pink into grey.

These are paintings populated by bodies seemingly cut from a single mould: each one is a gummy humanoid rendered as a rudimentary sexless silhouette, faceless and all soft edges like a gingerbread figure straight out of the oven. These ciphers are often sheathed in translucent jackets or clothes that match the colour of their basic bodies. In *Palm Reader*, large cupped hands hold four identically dressed figures wearing trousers, T-shirts and floppy hats. Hands, bodies and garments are all rendered in the same mortadella pink.

When Gagliardi does paint faces, they are elusive or heavily deconstructed. The eyes, lips and skin in *Strained* are disparately reflected in the shiny surfaces of a chromed colander and kitchen tap. In *La Chaleur* (Heat), the glowing embers of a barbecue produce plumes of smoke that resolve themselves into

a trompe l'oeil face licking its lips. These images refuse to commit to fixity, both in terms of their narrative meaning and their technical state: even though each painting is unique (thanks to Gagliardi's application of gel medium), the digital files from which they are printed still exist and are susceptible to replication, transformation and corruption.

For all their nebulous effects of transparent clothing, glass, steam and smoke, these paintings have an accessible and pleasingly *naïf* style. There are surreal tropes here that echo those in the *oeuvres* of Hieronymus Bosch, Salvador Dalí and René Magritte but, while each of those artists marshalled their version of phantasmagoria to serve a theological or philosophical purpose, such intent seems absent from Gagliardi's works. I didn't find anything particularly disturbing, or moralizing, about the surreal slippages in these bourgeois environments. Instead, these scenes have the quality of innocuous daydreams. The title of Gagliardi's exhibition, 'Side Effects of Satisfaction', also has a double meaning. While it posits contentment as a catalyst for the works on show, it also equates satisfaction with a drug. But, if it is a drug, its effect seems to be to detach the user from anything outside this cosy version of domesticity, rather than induce them to envision a brave new world beyond.

Ellen Mara De Wachter

### This page

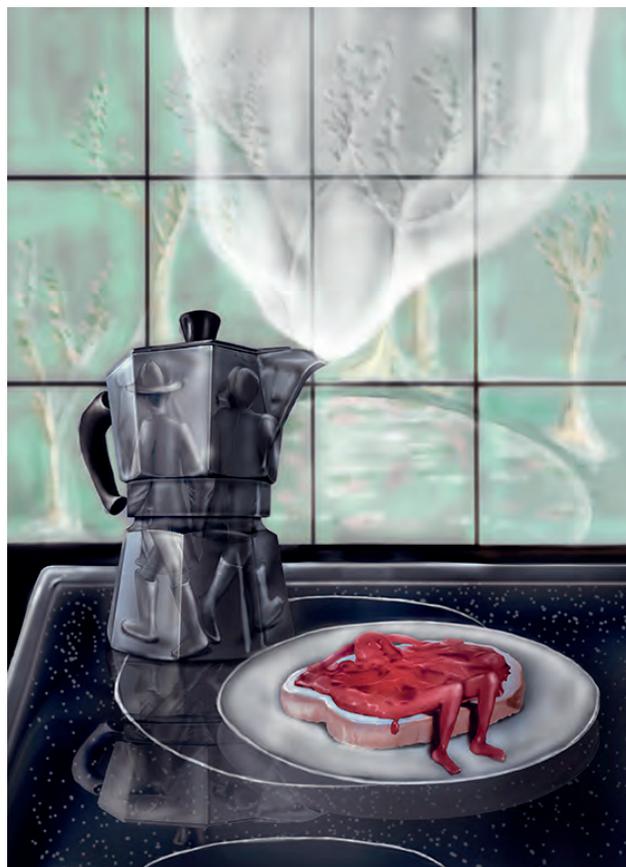
Louisa Gagliardi,  
*Daily Jam*, 2019, gel  
medium, ink on vinyl,  
1.6 x 1.2 m

### Opposite page

Above  
Teo Hernández,  
'Shatter appearances',  
2019, exhibition view

### Below

Rosemarie Castoro,  
'Wherein Lies The  
Space', 2019,  
exhibition view



## ROSEMARIE CASTORO Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris, France

'Wherein Lies the Space', a survey show of work by the late US artist Rosemarie Castoro, literally sets a high bar from the outset. *Black Flasher A* and *Black Flasher B* (both 1979), installed near the entrance of the ground-floor gallery, are two towering sculptures of rolled steel that, as their titles suggest, allude to a pair of dirty old men opening their coats to expose themselves. The effect is not obscene, however, since their gestures are implied rather than explicit. What shines through is Castoro's lightness of touch and razor-sharp wit; it's hard to shake the sensation that the artist – who died at the age of 75 in 2015 – is there, laughing alongside us.

In the basement gallery, *Beaver's Trap* (1977) – comprised of 42 wooden stakes of varying heights arranged in a circle on a raised plinth – is an interplay between vulnerability, female sexuality and hunting. In the ground-floor gallery, *Armpit Hair* (1972) – a wall-mounted sculpture that stretches from the wall to the centre of the room – up close, looks more like a section of cast ploughed earth than its titular namesake, another illustration of Castoro's engaging sense of humour.

Moving up to the first floor, however, there is a marked shift in tone and energy – not least because the space itself is constricted and dark. On a wall jutting into the main gallery hangs a prime example of Castoro's painterly prowess. Lyrical and imposing, *Orange China Marker* (1967) is composed of subtle brushwork and marker pen, pencil and graphite diagonal lines, that pay homage to the seductive, burnt-orange hue in which it is rendered. The startling impact of this painting, however, comes at the expense of works around it, such as the off-white painting, *Inventory Series White and Brown* (1968) and *Grey, Prismacolor pencil* (1967), that are smaller in stature, more sober in delivery and, as a result, somewhat overpowered. Similarly, her concrete poetry series 'A Day in the Life of a Conscientious Objector' (1968) – an index of daily tasks and observations from Castoro's studio, displayed in a narrow passageway – left me feeling more claustrophobic than intrigued.

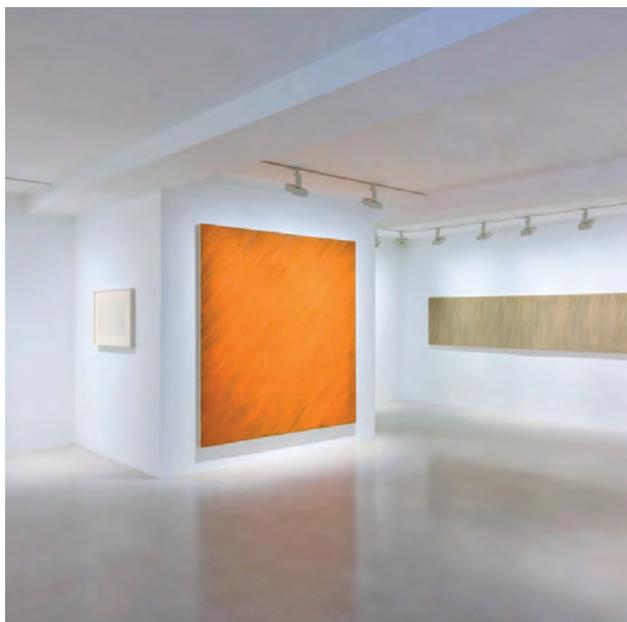
The second floor of the gallery is dedicated to archival material, including documentary photographs of the 'Flasher' series installed at 780 Third Avenue in New York, in 1984 – the high-

end Manhattan location lending the work a further layer of social satire.

Also on view in this section is a photograph of Castoro choreographing and performing with Frank Calderoni at the Pratt Institute in 1963, the year the artist graduated in visual design and choreography. This formative training provides an insight into the use of space and pattern in Castoro's works, particularly in early paintings such as *Red Blue Purple Green Gold* (1965), in which thin rectangles of colour float on top of a gold background; and the performative aspects in sculptural work such as *Land of Lashes* (1976) which comprises eight steel and fibreglass sculptures resting on a plinth that resemble crawling eyelashes.

While the installation may have its shortcomings, the show succeeds in its ambition to raise the profile of Castoro's expansive and endlessly evolving art for a European audience. It makes clear that the artist has, for too long, been pigeonholed as a minimalist or conceptualist – categories that deny her unique voice and her idiosyncratic development.

William Davie



## TEO HERNÁNDEZ Villa Vassilieff, Paris, France

'Cinema doesn't show things. In cinema, you see,' intones Teo Hernández as the camera travels the corridor of the Montparnasse metro station. Just streets away, at the Villa Vassilieff, the Mexican-born, Paris-based filmmaker's first major exhibition in France in over two decades includes a selection of Super 8 films produced between 1977 and 1991, the year before Hernández's untimely death from AIDS. Curated by Andrea Ancira García, 'Shatter Appearances' travelled from the Centro de la Imagen in Mexico City. 'This film carries an X on its body, a sign of banishment and exile,' proclaimed Hernández in *Fragments de l'ange* (Angel Fragments, 1983–84). 'Every image returns to its origin: the void.'

Hernández filmed for nearly 30 years. *Fragments de l'ange* and *Trois gouttes de mezcal dans une coupe de champagne* (Three Drops of Mezcal in a Glass of Champagne, 1983), offer an introductory encounter through autobiography. Shot in black and white, and featuring a voice-over by the artist, they begin with his mother's visit to Paris, on the one hand, and his father's death, on the other, acting as lyrical brackets for a meditation on the nature of memory, dreams, personal mythology and the poetics of cinema.

Hernández also filmed his circle of friends – Gaël Badaud, Jakobois and his partner, Michel Nedjar – the queer community of artists with whom he formed the collective MetroBarbèsRochechou Art in 1977, named in reference to their shared neighbourhood. He captured the area's diverse immigrant population, the small businesses and the landscape that would soon be supplanted by decades of urban renewal and gentrification. Less a nostalgic *flâneur* than an avid chronicler, in his films Hernández manifests what Ancira García has called a condition of 'diasporic intimacy'.

Upstairs, a selection of films centred on cities – Marseilles, Paris, Rome – eschews long takes for saccadic shots that match the cities' native rhythms and flows; non-synchronized soundtracks provide discordant experiences of space. Hernández captured the short-lived street theatre burgeoning on the plaza outside the new Centre Pompidou in his *Parvis Beaubourg* (1981–82). Filming the roving cast of performers, peddlers and gymnasts on the plaza, Hernández relinquished ocular control over the viewfinder, insisting instead that the vitality of the moving image derive from bodily perception.

This manifests at one extreme in his *Nuestra Señora de Paris* (Notre Dame de Paris, 1982), a film that turns the Gothic cathedral's stained-glass rosette windows into portals through which lines of coloured light pour in, tracing a mutable, abstract geometry. In another instance, Hernández accelerated a continuous recording of his apartment during the winter months, endowing the repetitious activity of domestic life with ritualistic qualities. Recalling the muted interiors of late 19th-century intimist painting, *Tables d'hiver* (Winter Tables, 1978–79) lingers on the entrancing quality of the interior, with its rugs, patterned wallpapers and embroidered fabrics – an improvised stage for Gaël who, clad in gilded costumes, performs exuberantly queer and shamanistic choreographies.

Hernández's passion for filming dance is a highlight of the exhibition. Gaël reappears in *Corps aboli* (Abolished Body, 1978), where the motion of his gleaming form has been exquisitely slowed down. A year earlier, at the 1977 Festival d'Hyères, films screened by Hernández and others prompted critic Dominique Noguez to identify their work within a school of 'corporeal cinema'. Hernández honed this vocabulary in collaboration with Studio D.M., a Parisian dance company founded by Catherine Diverrès and Bernardo Montet. He filmed a semi-naked Montet on a roof in Normandy, alternating slower takes and ultra-rapid transitions, and in drag, posing for the camera. Most arresting, however, is the recording of an audition at Studio D.M. in 1991. Here, Hernández's filmic syntax is at its most effortless, anticipating what are largely improvised movements, as though image and body had sprung from the same vital impulse.

Rachel Valinsky