

In Praise of Shadows

Curated by ARTUNER

May 3 - June 17, 2017

Opening Reception: Wednesday, May 3, 6-8 PM

Cassina Projects and ARTUNER are pleased to announce *In Praise of Shadows*, a new exhibition opening on May 3rd, 2017 at Cassina Projects. This is the fourth chapter of a joint exhibition programme between the two ventures.

In 1933, the Japanese novelist Jun'ichiro Tanizaki wrote the seminal essay on Japanese aesthetics 'In Praise of Shadows', outlining some of the key tenets of the country's particular way of perceiving light and darkness. Although specific to Japan, today Tanizaki's essay more widely speaks to an aesthetic sensibility that has spread to the West as well: an appreciation for the patina given by age, for humble materials, for muted hues, and for sombre, yet poignant compositions.

This exhibition looks at the work of three international artists who "find beauty not in the thing itself but in the pattern of shadows, the light and the darkness, that one thing against another creates" (Tanizaki).

Janis Avotins, **Rebecca Salter**, and **Giuseppe Uncini** hail from different cultures and times, and yet they share a similar sparse and contemplative aesthetic sensibility. Their works dispose of the boisterous pyrotechnics of color and find beauty in the understated, in all things softened by shadow and nuance. In this sense, here the Western tradition of painting encounters a fundamentally Oriental matrix of art-making.

In breaking with many of the medium's conventions and straddling the border between East and West, **Rebecca Salter's** (UK, 1955) works offer the viewer an opportunity to challenge the normative canons of experiencing painting and the way such encounters influence one's perception of the world. Defying frontality as the main way of experiencing the medium, her works often blur the boundaries between the front and the back of the painting, forcing the viewer to conceive of it as an *object*, and not as a mere surface. Her highly contemplative works reveal her interest in the line, seen as a calligraphic expression of space and time. In her muted palette and essential marks, Salter demonstrates a great command over the use of empty space, which in her hands becomes a powerful means to spark the beholder's imagination.

Emerging as through hazy, mist-like fields, **Janis Avotins'** (Latvia, 1981) large abstract landscapes represent a turning point from the artist's former figurative works. His dark and ephemeral compositions, realized through thin layers of imprimatura washes, call to mind the eloquent empty spaces of the Hasegawa school of painting. Preoccupied by collective memory and how history gradually effaces anonymous individuals, in this new body of work Avotins communicates subtly through the gaping absence of the human figure. Alongside the abstract landscapes, the artist will be presenting also paintings from his emblematic figurative series: here Avotins sources little known Soviet-era photographs and reproduces them on faintly painted canvas. His works draw the viewer in a diaphanous and precarious vision of the past. The depicted figures look like shadows, the ghosts of collective memory, and their blurred features remind us of the editing powers of history.

Starting in the late 1960s, **Giuseppe Uncini** (Italy, 1929-2008) became very interested in the function of shadows and their relationship to objects, a concern which accompanied him in the realization of his works for several years. Uncini's works are simultaneously objects, sculptures and paintings. Although made of humble, industrial materials – mainly iron and concrete – the artist achieves elegant, rhythmic compositions resulting from the subtle interlacing of the different textures and the spaces between them. Indeed, Uncini's iconic interplay of light and shadow lead the viewer to shift their attention between the material and immaterial sides of his works. Similarly to Rebecca Salter, a reflection on the physicality of the artwork was central to Uncini's practice, as he saw materiality as integral to the work's message. He firmly believed that "those who make art must think thoroughly about the materials they employ, to be able to express real meaning".

Janis Avotins (b. 1981) is a Latvian born artist who continues to live and work in Latvia. He received both his BA in 2003 and MA in 2010 in painting from the Latvian Academy of Art. His recent solo and group exhibitions include: Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich, DE (2016); Sleep, curated by Paolo Colombo, IBID, Los Angeles, US (2016); Prix Jean-Francois Prat (winner), exhibition held at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR (2016); Since the Foundation, IBID, London, UK (2015); There Are No White Spaces, Galerie Vera Munro, Hamburg, DE (2013); Only here, The Federal Republic of Germany's Contemporary Art Collection, Boon, DE (2013); Tartu Museum, EE (2012), IBID Projects, London, UK (2012); IBID PROJECTS at Remap2, Athens, GR (2009); Your Gold Teeth II, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, US (2009); Super Normal, IBID PROJECTS, London, UK (2007). He has also been featured in private and public collections around the world including Rubell Family Collection; Cranford Collection; Hort Family Collection; François Pinault Collection; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo and The Federal Republic of Germany Contemporary Art Collection.

Rebecca Salter (b. 1955) is a British artist who lives and works in London. She graduated from Bristol Polytechnic and has done research at the Kyoto City University of the Arts in Japan. Salter has had numerous solo and group exhibitions recently including: Paintings, Drawings, Prints, Beardsmore Gallery, London (2016); First Light, Howard Scott Gallery, New York (2015); New Works on Paper (with Gianfranco Foschino) Galerie Michael Sturm, Stuttgart (2014); Beyond, Beardsmore Gallery, London (2013); International Print Exhibition UK/Japan, Kyoto, Kita Kyushu (2012); into the light of things: Rebecca Salter 1981-2010, Yale Center for British Art, Connecticut (2011); Rebecca Salter and Japan, Yale University Art Gallery (2011); 40 Artists : 80 Drawings, Burton Art Gallery and Museum, Bideford, Devon (2011); Pale Remembered, Beardsmore Gallery, London (2009); 40 Artists-40 Drawings, Victoria and Albert Museum (2009); Drawing into Painting into Drawing, The Drawing Gallery, UK (2008). In 2014 Salter was elected to the Royal Academy of Arts and her work is part of multiple public and private collections including: Tate Gallery, The British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, The British Council, Government Art Collection, Yale Center for British Art, Yale University Art Gallery, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Portland Museum of Modern Art, Library of Congress, and JP Morgan.

Giuseppe Uncini (b. 1929 – 2008) was an Italian artist who lived and worked in Italy throughout his career. He has had prominent exhibitions at: MART in Rovereto (2008); ZKM in Karlsruhe (2008-2009); Landesmuseum Joanneum in Graz (2008), Fondazione Marconi in Milan (2007), Galleria Christian Stein in Milan (2007); Galleria Fumagalli in Bergamo (2007); Galleria Christian Stein in Milan (2002); Galleria Gio Marconi in Milan (2002); Galleria Fumagalli in Bergamo (2002-2003); Städtische Kunsthalle in Mannheim (2001); MoMA PS1, the Minimalia exhibition, in New York (1999); Spazicemento, collaboration with Galleria Fumagalli in Bergamo (1994); L'Altra Scultura in Madrid, Barcelona and Darmstadt (1990), Venice Biennial (1984, 1966); Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna in Rome (1968). In 1962, he won the Spoleto Award and in 1998 the Feltrinelli Prize for sculpture. His work is part of important private and public collections, such as Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologna - Galleria Comunale d'Arte, Cagliari Museo Civico Giovanni Fattori, Villa Mimbelli, Livorno - Museo del Novecento, Milano - Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Roma - Castello di Rivoli, Fondazione De Fornaris, Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Torino - Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto - Museum Bochum - Museum Lehmbruck, Duisburg - Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz - Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe - Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim - Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam - Galerie der Stadt, Stoccarda - Nijgata City Art Museum, Nijgata, Hakone Open-Air Museum, Kanagawa-Ken, Tokyo. He died unexpectedly in 2008 at the age of 79.

About the Curator: ARTUNER was founded in London by **Eugenio Re Rebaudengo** in 2013. It has distinguished itself through its hybrid approach, displaying and selling works via both its online platform and curated exhibitions. Since its inception, ARTUNER has organized an acclaimed series of shows including projects in: London, Berlin, Paris, Turin and Greece. The ongoing collaboration with Cassina Projects marks its first appearance in New York City.

For press inquiries or further information, please contact Cassina Projects at info@cassinaprojects.com or +1 (212) 242-0444

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