

Through the work of these five artists, the exhibition aims to be the starting point for a reflection on the ontology of the image and an exploration of its potential through themes of authenticity, representation and corporeality.

In the essay *Ontology of the Photographic Image* (1946), André Bazin defined the mummy complex as the human need to counteract the ineluctability of time by replacing the ephemeral physicality of the body with its representation. For the theorist, such necessity for re-production and conservation of reality – dating back to the practice of mummification of corpses in the ancient Egyptian civilization – was for centuries the engine of Western pictorial and sculptural production, at least until the invention of the photographic medium. With photography – unachievable for representational objectivity by virtue of the mechanical nature of the reproduction of tangible data capturable by the camera lens – we witnessed the liberation of art from a mimetic function, from the constraint of perspective and the need for a realistic representation.

Bazin's theory, although very naive and developed around a discourse on the cinematographic language of the second postwar period, drove the debate on the innate objectivity of the technological medium in the representation of reality, themes that echo in a relevant way up to our time. As Smartphone technology has in fact canceled the distance between the producer of the image and the viewer, turning each of us into the director of our own film, the artistic director of our brand and the journalist of our own newsroom. The question remains whether this superimposition of roles has made us critical of what we observe and more aware of the dynamics of semantic redetermination of the images we create, share and to which we are exposed. As happens on the occasion of the birth and diffusion of each new medium, we are currently witnessing a transformation of the collectively shared modalities of "packing" and organization of the world or, in other words, of modulation and demodulation of the data that constitute our reality. We could therefore discover that the mummy, far from being an object "fixed in an artificial appearance isolated from the flow of time" (A. Bazin), is an entity that continues to live and change in time with all of us.

Starting from these questions, the research of the five artists in the show dissects and scrutinize the very definition of image, exploring its ontological aspects and narrative potential, always keeping the attention on the unsettledness of its relationship with the viewer.

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In the show, Chapellier explores the myth of the English countryside, imprinted in the collective imagination as a serene, calm and lush place. The stereotypical image of this perfect countryside, dotted with typical black and white color scheme Tudor cottages, surrounded by nature and crossed by tree-lined paths, evokes a series of values linked to rural life attributable to a nostalgic and positive albeit ideal past. Historically, the aesthetics of these places saw its consolidation from the eighteenth century, when the English countryside ceased to function as a workplace to become a place of recreation for the upper class. Following this change in the relationship between the landscape and its inhabitants, the English countryside increasingly became a commodity to preserve and replicate. The artist proceeds by appropriating the aesthetic elements that define this aesthetic ideal, fragmenting and reproducing them mechanically. The photographs composing the works were shot by Chapellier in different locations (including Stratford-upon-Avon, Hever Castle in Kent and the West Sussex), digitally saturated to accentuate

the colours, printed on synthetic fabric used in advertising and stretched. The wooden parts are designed and modeled in 3D to faithfully reproduce original architectural elements and finally cut and engraved using computerized machinery. These three-dimensional elements, like the Tudor architectures of the images, are in a certain sense authentic in their formal aspect. Chapellier's installations linger between index and symbol or, in other words, between the resemblance of the represented subject and the ideas conventionally evoked by their appearance. In the liminal area between the object and its reproduction, the artist identifies the opportunity to reflect on the dynamics that contribute to the construction of stereotypes through images.

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Matteo Pollini, 2020