

Bernardo Siciliano *Pigs and Saints*

Exhibition: November 1 – November 30, 2019

Press Preview & V.I.P. Reception: Friday, November 1, 6:00pm – 8:00pm
35 Great Jones St., New York NY 10012

We are delighted to present *Pigs and Saints*, Bernardo Siciliano's second solo show at Aicon Art. The present exhibition brings together an intensely personal body of work that mines the artist's self-perception and how that informs his view of the world. It forms part of an ongoing inquiry into the fraught lives of those in urban spaces while simultaneously encapsulating the artist's own negotiations with the city. Each of the seven canvases in the exhibition conjure a tension between the viewer, the sitter/subject (often someone who shares a personal relationship to the artist) and the artist himself – a quality that is typical of his oeuvre.

As a young man Siciliano consumed as many visual resources as he could find - the Italian Renaissance in particular - but also of the artists Edward Hopper, Lucian Freud and David Hockney who became a profound influence on his practice. Siciliano came to painting while grappling with anxiety and he found it helped him deal with symptoms of anxiety. He credits this as the underlying source of tension or foreboding that one might glean from the work. As the late art critic Lea Mattarella has said,

Bernardo is not a 'classical' painter in the sense of being cold or detached, or idealizing. Above all, he does not separate himself from the painting, he is in it, even if you don't see him.

In the present exhibition, this is perfectly encapsulated by the work *Social Network*, a depiction of three of Siciliano's young relatives on a couch engrossed with their phones, seemingly in another reality. The entangled limbs of the young women make it so that, it is not easy to make out which limb belongs to which girl. The entanglement is a foreshadowing of the digital entanglement the subjects find themselves in - scrambled and complex yet also innocent and beautiful. The frenetic energy that social media can catalyze speaks to the artist's own struggle with anxiety at a young age and therefore a natural subject for Siciliano to take on. The canvas also treads a fine line - the eroticism of the subjects both in pose and dress serve to heighten the feeling of uneasiness in the viewer.



Detail: Bernardo Siciliano, *Vincent Desiderio*, 2018
Oil on canvas, 56.5 x 43 inches



Bernardo Siciliano, *Pigs and Saints*, 2019, Oil on canvas, 58 x 144 inches

Another significant work *Monday Morning*, is inspired by Johannes Vermeer's domestic interior scenes of middle-class life. Similar to those scenes, Siciliano's large-scale canvas is flooded with light pouring in through the window. The scene takes place at the beginning of the week, just before work begins. We can see the female figure alone in the apartment, gathering her thoughts with her bag seemingly ready and packed. Siciliano has captured the empty interior space and figure together as one, with an indication of loneliness, a hark back to the works of Edward Hopper. Similarly brooding but devoid of human forms is *Tender is the Night*. Depicting a New York city subway station, the work is suitably titled after the final F. Scott Fitzgerald novel, the fourth and final novel completed by American writer, and also his darkest. The title suggests Siciliano's concerns with personal and collective histories. In the words of writer Nathan Englander,

The stress on personal history, linking individual experience to authentic experience and this contrasted to the falseness of a neighborhood's shifting face, was just another step toward the creation of his own narrative. It was a way of owning a version of the place that is solely his and already gone.

Siciliano was born in Rome in 1969. Il Gabbiano and Forum Gallery have presented his works at both international and national Fairs: the CIAE in Chicago, the FIAC in Paris, the Arte Fiera of Bologna, the LA Art Show and Art Miami. In 1992 the director Piero Maccarinelli commissioned him to paint the sets of the comedy *Verso la fine dell'estate* by Carlo Repetti for the 35th Festival of Spoleto. In 1995 he collaborated on Bernardo Bertolucci's movie *Io ballo da sola*. He was among those highest classified in a referendum held among readers of the magazine *Quádrì e sculpture* for the exhibition *The Other Art?* at Palazzo Barberini (Rome). In 1998 he was an award winner at the invitational XXXII Prix International d'Art Contemporain de Montecarlo. In recent years, he has been included in group shows at Albright Knox Museum (Buffalo), Galleria Forni (Bologna), and DFN Gallery (New York). His latest solo exhibitions have been at the Museo D'Arte Contemporanea (Rome), The Chostro del Bramante (Rome), The Palazzo della Ragione (Milan), the Italian Heritage Culture Foundation (Los Angeles), Studio Forni (Milan) and Forum Gallery (Los Angeles and New York).

Please contact Aicon Art (dheeya@aicongallery.com) for more information.