

IDENTITÀ IDENTITÉ IDENTIDAD IDENTITY

**GROUP EXHIBITION
MARCH 1 - JULY 31, 2021
NOW OPEN**

Espinasse31 Contemporary
Gallery
Calle de Fúcar, 17
28014 Madrid, Spain



Espinasse31 Contemporary Gallery is pleased to inaugurate its new gallery space in Madrid with *'Identità · Identité · Identidad · Identity'*, a group exhibition featuring works by diverse renowned contemporary artists, with the purpose of introducing the artistic vision that Espinasse31 wishes to promote across its locations, and a special focus on the relationships between the gallery's Italian roots, its new Spanish point of compass, and the international context in which this takes place.

'Identity' will be on view from March to July 31, 2021 at Calle de Fúcar 17, located in one of the most culturally-emblematic districts of Madrid, known as the Barrio de las Letras or 'Literary Quarter'. This group show will bring together the work of ten Espinasse31 artists, namely: Ouka Leele, Olga Lomaka, Marcello Silvestre, Oscar Estruga, Fabio Pietrantonio, Robi Walters, Paolo Ciabattini, Rodrigo Branco, Veronica Mar, and Adam Lucey.

Paintings and sculptural works by said artists occupy the new Espinasse31 space in conversation with each other. The **diverse and eclectic character** of this first exhibition—in terms of format, media, the artworks' themes, and the artists' personal and professional backgrounds—serves as the backbone of the narrative constructed by the gallery to introduce its identity and values. **Harmony**—as a concept, feeling, and visual effect—is the connecting thread that ties the composition together.

The artists and artworks on show, in connection with the gallery's '*Identity*' and vision, are as follows:

- **Ouka Leele** (b. 1957, Madrid) is an internationally-renowned Spanish photographer and painter. Her artistic career consolidated during Madrid's countercultural and social movement of the 1980s, known as 'La Movida Madrileña'; it was then that Ouka Leele (a pseudonym for the artist's birth name, Barbara Allende) demonstrated her interest and skill in a variety of artistic disciplines, bringing great innovation through her series of unedited, hand-painted photographs—labeled as icons of her time. Her works often attempt to show human nature and to reveal the connection between life, emotion, and their translations in art language. Ouka Leele's exhibited work at Espinasse31's '*Identity*' group show expresses such themes while presenting her masterful painting technique, captured through a large-scale mixed media work on linen. Its title is unequivocally poetic, as is the floral imagery and her use of light: '*Alumbramiento. En el jardín misterioso, lugar del sueño del ser alegre. Hay luces en mis sueños. Mi amiga de pétalos misteriosos, comulgarte sería mi credo.*' (2003)
- **Olga Lomaka** (b. 1982, Krasnodar) is a Russian contemporary artist based in London. Her remarkable personal style, situated within the realm of pop-art, is instantly recognisable by its interplay of appealing to consumerist culture and communicating symbolic messages. Lomaka has won international acclaim in recent years, having earned Phillip's Best Contemporary Artist of the Year award in 2017. The artist often mixes traditional materials with modern media, and speaks to hidden dimensions of consciousness through a discourse of social concern. Various works by Lomaka are on show at Espinasse31 Madrid. Visitors will find her '*Yellow Curiosity*' (2016) pink panther relief sculpture as the gallery's welcome sign; the work is part of Lomaka's '*Pink Magic*' series, which has taken her to international art landmarks, from the Royal Academy of Arts' Summer Exhibition in 2018, to the Venice Biennale in 2019, to Red Dot Miami Art Fair with Espinasse31. Two additional fibreglass sculptures from Lomaka's later '*Aliens*' series —'*Screaming for Chanel*' and '*Screaming for Marijuana*' (2020)—evoke a contemporary version of Munch's magnum opus, while shedding light on the flaws of society today.
- **Marcello Silvestre** (b. 1977, Naples) is an Italian artist, designer, and architect; he uses his interdisciplinary knowledge and experience in order to achieve a holistic approach to his creative process. Among the many awards obtained by the artist, a must-mention is the Targa d'Oro, obtained at the Premio Arte 2018, and leading him to exhibit his '*Invisible Cities*' series at Milan's Palazzo Reale. Silvestre's sculptural works explore complex themes such as the relationship between body and soul, the concept of time, the oneiric world of modern urban landscapes, and human spirituality. Various sculptures by Silvestre are on show at Espinasse31's '*Identity*'; one of his latest works, '*Quarantine*' (2020), is a major centrepiece of the exhibition. Through his recognisable use of 3D-printed PLA with rust finish, the artist offers his visual representation of feelings provoked by the experience of confinement, now so familiar to all of us. Other exhibited sculptures by Silvestre —'*The Rust of Feelings (Misunderstanding)*' (2017) and '*Everybody's Got an Armor*' (2019)—depict subjects that are charged with emotion despite their anonymity and geometric abstraction. This, coupled with their rust or verdigris overlays, makes his works recall the passage of time, serving as a point of reflection for their viewers.

- **Oscar Estruga** (b. 1933, Vilanova i la Geltrú) is a Spanish painter and sculptor, established since his award of the prestigious Juan March Foundation scholarship in 1966. Estruga is best known for his urban sculptures, which include landmark monuments such as *'Pasifae'* (1988). His works often recreate and reinvent Ancient Worlds, borrowing from Greek and Cycladic mythology about eroticism, strength, and the human experience; the images resulting from this depict a calligraphic form of the artist's imagination. **Estruga's bronze sculptures stand out from the contemporary selection at Espinasse31. However, they are key to the gallery's 'Identity' due to the special relationship it holds with the artist, who previously occupied this space at Calle de Fúcar as his personal studio for years. Estruga's works thus serve as a window to the past, or as an anchor that grounds the exhibition on historical and cultural references. Despite belonging to a different age than the works on the gallery's walls, these sculptural pieces, heavy in material and meaning, coexist with their contemporary counterparts through harmony and balance.**
- **Fabio Pietrantonio** (b. 1966, Torino) is an Italian artist based in Milan. His work is strongly influenced by the concepts of symbolism and spirituality, taking cues from his personal traveling experience and the artistic practices observed by Pietrantonio in the native communities of Australia and New Mexico. The artist addresses his perception of contemporary anxiety and alienation from nature, drawing on the concepts of human instinct and wisdom to produce what he labels as 'totems'—presented in the form of multi-formed objects or sculptured paintings. **His aim is to transmit a message of peace, faith, and balance, which one can absorb by interacting with works such as 'Incontri (Sapienza Universale)' (2018) or 'Creta Rossa' (2015), on show at Espinasse31 Madrid. The artist's Italian origins, as well as his focus on the principle of harmony, make him an indispensable addition to the gallery's newly-presented 'Identity'.**
- **Robi Walters** (b. 1973, London) is a leading British contemporary artist based in Soho. His mesmerising and colourful collages have captivated celebrity collectors including Thandie Newton, Usain Bolt, or Diplo. In 2018, Michelin-Star Chef Tom Kerridge commissioned Walters to create bespoke design work for his London restaurant. In 2020, Robi was invited by Aston Martin to become their Artist in Residence. Walters has also been named by The Telegraph as one of the top creatives in the UK. **The artist owes this exceptional success to his unique and transformative artistic practice; by constructing mixed-media pieces with unusual materials, such as packaging from household items and broken vinyl LPs, Walters has a creative process and product that are reminiscent of both pop art and *arte povera* movements. His use of such materials reflects his concerns about human consumption and sustainability; furthermore, the artist's signature arrangement of these fragments into lotus-like forms represents his own interest in meditation, giving his vibrant works socially-charged and personal significance alike. This is true for Walter's highly-chromatic blue piece selected for the exhibition, titled 'This Town' (2018).**
- **Paolo Ciabattini** (b. 1961, Milan) is an Italian abstract artist of international vocation. His strong academic background, having studied architecture and design at the St. Raphael University of Rome, as well as drawing and figure at the Academy of Brera in Milan, is clearly reflected in his masterful command of paint. **The artist uses thick layers of colour, which accumulate on the canvas to create a powerful sense of intimacy. Ciabattini's large-scale abstract paintings, such as 'Abissimi Marini' (2013), on show at Espinasse31 Madrid, resemble natural elements and envelop the viewer through their**

impressive depth. Through this expression, the artist aims to unveil the hidden perceptions that are filtered through the synergy created in the human brain; those perceptions, according to Ciabattini, if devoid of the judgments of the mind, can be pure. He aims to transfer this concept of purity to the visuals surrounding the viewer of his works, which are transfused in colour on the canvas. In 2013, Ciabattini established the LaboExpo project in Milan in collaboration with the world-renowned American architect Daniel Libeskind.

- **Rodrigo Branco** (b. 1986, São Paulo) is one of the most prolific street artists to have emerged from Brazil in recent years. Influenced by his artistic family and the fascinating world of graffiti in the streets of his neighbourhood, Branco has developed his talent as a painter through the depiction of faces, elements, and colourful expressions that inhabit his imaginary or his childhood memories. **The artist's pictorial technique includes a lack of definition to the borderlines of his subjects and a use of strong colours, producing paintings that capture and retain energy.** His *Untitled* work (2017) at Espinasse31's '*Identity*' exhibition reflects just this, while providing a complementary and contrasting presence to the artworks on neighbouring walls of the gallery. Rodrigo Branco has notably been involved in several social art projects in recent years; his mural works can be found on the walls of São Paulo's favelas, while his works on canvas can be found in private and public collections around the world.
- **Veronica Mar** (b. 1979, Granada) is a Spanish artist and interior designer based in Madrid. **Her main body of work consists of delicate and abstract sculptures, with a style that is characterised by minimal and organic lines that subtly play with texture, colour, and reflections caused by light.** This balance of both the seen and the unseen is fundamental to Mar's work, greatly inspired by the dualities and rhythms seen in nature and in Taoist philosophy. The resulting pieces create a space of personal reflection and tranquility, and ultimately lead to a new awareness of the self within the natural world. Mar has exhibited her work at Rossana Orlandi (Milan) and the Wolfsonian Museum (Miami), among others. **With Espinasse31, the artist's sculptures are on show at the Zaha Hadid Residences in Milan, and now at this new gallery space in Madrid. Works from Mar's '*Unity*' series blend seamlessly into the exhibition, providing a visual break and a sense of harmony.**
- **Adam Lucey** (b. 1994, Boston, MA) is a self-taught American artist. With a background in street art and fashion, and having discovered his passion to paint at the age of 23, Lucey has an eclectic and attention-grabbing style that is grounded on bright colours, simple-yet-precise lines, and a harmonious use of acrylic and spray paint on canvas. The majority of his paintings involve pop culture motifs; besides creating his own recurring characters, Adam Lucey uses cartoon characters from his upbringing, immersing his works in 90's nostalgia and strong character. **His exhibited work at Espinasse31's inaugural exhibition, titled '*Cards & a Pig*', is an exponent of his signature style, as well as a symbol of the gallery's focus on contemporary muralism—a notion derived from its roots in Miami's Wynwood District, whereby urban art is transported from the street to the canvas.**

Identity is now open at Espinasse31 Contemporary Gallery's new space in Madrid: Calle de Fúcar, 17. 28014 Madrid, Spain.

For **inquiries**, you may contact Thomas Castiglioni (Gallery Manager) at thomas@espinasse31.com. You may more about Espinasse31 through our **website** at www.espinasse31.com, or our **social media** @espinasse31.