

ENGLISH

GALLERIA CONTINUA

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# YOAN CAPOTE

## ELEGY

30/09/2022 – 3/12/2022

Tuesday – Saturday 11am – 7pm

Galleria Continua is happy to present for the first time in its Roman spaces, in the prestigious hotel The St. Regis Rome, a **solo exhibition by Yoan Capote, one of the leading figures on the international art scene.**

The exhibition, "Elegy", presents works that refer to Landscape through a **deeply conceptual and emotional approach.** Here, a **dialogue** is created between the artist's works and sculptures that push **Capote's iconic seascapes** towards a **broader and more global spectrum of thought,** underlining the **values, symbolism** and cultural importance of the materials used to create these paintings: **recycled fish hooks, broken chains, fence wire, barbed wire, gold leaf, plaster and others.**

Although all the pieces in this show **reflect on migration, from a local and universal perspective,** they

also take on meanings with **social and political overtones.** The series "ISLA" was initially inspired by personal memories and experiences of the artist during the **90s in Cuba** when he was a witness of the strong migratory crisis experienced in those days. But it was an ideological concept **used during the cold war "The Iron Curtain"** that definitively gave shape to the idea. These **fishhook paintings** were intended to **transform the image of the sea into a metal fence and a tactile surface** that addresses the viewer and creates a symbolical contact with the object. This fence-like sea creates a kind of wall around Cuba itself, the only country that during the Cold War was unable to erect artificial barriers, instead making use of the surrounding natural element.

The "REQUIEM" series was inspired by Capote's first trip to Italy, during which he made a pilgrimage to artistic masterpieces **housed in churches, sacred places, and museums.** This

context allowed him to connect more directly to the recent migratory currents of the Mediterranean Sea, bringing to the surface **parallels with his own deep relationship with the sea and his Cuban experience.** Rooted in the **technique of early Renaissance religious paintings and Medieval altarpieces, gold leaf** is a central element to the paintings that make up "REQUIEM". **Gold has been historically associated with the divine** and spiritual, used to represent **purity, devotion, and heavenly light.** Beyond its material value, gold has been used in artworks and altarpieces **across cultures** to evoke another worldly, transcendental atmosphere conducive to **reflection and meditation.** In these new seascapes, Capote gilds the sky and some water areas with gold leaf – **the shining light of the horizon is also an allegory of the migrant's hope** for a better future. In many ways, these paintings function as a different kind of altarpiece, **evoking a spiritual connection between landscape and death.** For the artist, **these seascapes are a visual homage to the spirits of migrants across cultures** who have died at sea. The works also evoke a sense of empathy for the current suffering of all life and nature.

Throughout the **"PURIFICAZIONE"** series Capote **recycles and reworks chains, barbed wire fencing, handcuffs and other metal waste into alternate shapes and dimensions;** there are moments of **deconstruction, tension, aggression, and control.** It is no coincidence that the use of these materials elicits **themes of border divides, control, liberty, migration, power and oppression.** Capote manipulates the **metal material by straightening, flattening, or**

**beating it,** using the diminished metal to draw meticulous lines across a plaster primed surface. This entire process is shown at the gallery in a **video that documents the sequences of actions and the powerful meaning of the work.** These metal elements have oxidized in areas to stain the plaster beneath, creating a beautiful visual **similarity with classic drawings and etchings.** Capote further seals the surfaces with matte varnish and illuminates it in some of the works with thin layers of oil paint, to reinforce the depth and atmosphere of the image.

**As Capote writes,** "the absurd act of **freeing the barbed wire of its aggression** takes away all its sharp extremities and returns it to its primary straight shape. I see this as a **metaphor for the purification of the object and its function.** Something similar also happens when the chain links are fragmented and bent with fire." The artist's obsessive, near political action of cutting handcuffs and wire with jeweler's tools, transforming them into **fragile lines that outline clouded skies and vast horizons, creates a form of visual poetry.** For Capote, it **refers to the pursuit of freedom as an intrinsic part of human nature.**

The exhibition therefore consists of works that have been created through a laborious material and production process the result of which examines behaviors and psychological states from the intangible to the visceral, alluding to ideals like hope, life and freedom in order to construct landscapes of optimism.

For further information on the exhibition and photographic material: Silvia Pichini  
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