

JULIET

By Your Side. Yves Scherer at Cassina Projects, Milan

by Erica Massacesi – 11 February 2021



Public space and private space. Collective identity and individual identity. How thin is the line that divides these two categories, especially when through a screen you have the opportunity to follow the life of each individual step by step. What are you wearing? What do you read? Where is he/she? And with whom? As if you could be by their side, to the point of no longer knowing how to distinguish fiction from real life or, simply, until you end up idealizing the person him/herself.

Cassina Projects gallery inaugurated the By Your Side exhibition by Swiss Yves Scherer (Solothurn, 1987) on January 22 in Milan. Following the artist's first institutional solo exhibition in Switzerland, at the Kunsthaus Grenchen, the show – open until March 27 – presents paintings, lenticular prints and sculptures created over the last year.

The large white cube with a translucent floor and high ceilings become the perfect setting for this story that unfolds between intimacy and stardom, past life memories, personal experiences and social clichés. For some time, Scherer's artistic research has been investigating the "culture of celebrity" and the ways in which this is perceived through the media. However, in his most recent works his desire to reveal the cult around the figure of the most famous characters of showbiz is intertwined with autobiography. If the lenticular work *Untitled (Autumn, 2020)*, depicting the faces of the famous couple Vincent Cassel and Tina Kunakey, offers a reflection on the entertainment society, the plaster figure of a child next to a tree trunk, *Boy with a tree (2020)*, indicates a completely different social structure. The innocence of certain memories and places, not yet affected by the

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power of images, is contrasted here with that illusory identity that the internet and social media are able to create. The snapshots of the celebrities, in this case the French actor and model united in a seemingly perfect marriage, provide a non-existent idealization, placing them as models to aspire to. The fascination of that photograph, a symbol of love and success, is capable of influencing reality itself and its perception. On the contrary, the artist's self-portrait as a child, in pure white plaster, places its own nakedness in the eyes of those who are looking at it. He is, therefore, without any filter exposed to the community, dressed only in his own innocence.



In the center of the room, *Boy with a tree* is not the only one to inhabit the interior of that space; *By Your Side* (2020) is a concrete sculpture, a massive block from which two small Dandelions emerge. Side by side, united in their fragility, they convey a different message than the stylized flowers portrayed in the *Untitled paintings (Spring, 2020)*. The need to rediscover that childish naivety then joins the survival of the romantic ideals dear to the artist. Not far away, however, appears an aluminum sculpture of a woman sitting on the ground (*Sitting Girl, 2020*), who unperturbed looks straight in front of her. At this point, the proposed individuality becomes overwhelming, emphasizing even more Scherer's interest in the limits and boundaries of different social identities.

The remaining large canvases in bright colors make up the scenic setting around the central works. They are nostalgic representations of some childhood memory, far from that world of appearances. Produced during his last stay in the places where he grew up, *Untitled (Apple Tree, 2020)* and *Four Season (2020)* are an explosion of warm and nuanced colors, while the *Untitled (Spring, 2020)*, already mentioned, are the stylized representation of a white flower against a bright green background. Scherer decides to abandon the image digitization processes, visible in lenticular printing, to return to the material. This process is even more evident in the assembly *Vacation (2020)*, where the use of mixed techniques recall a certain post-war American expressionism. Paint, fabrics, synthetic furs, wood and adhesive tape are used to evoke a certain human, intimate and nostalgic condition.

The continuous search for unmasking the mechanisms of the "culture of celebrity", the charm and perfection that a photographic or sculptural reproduction is capable of communicating no longer seems sufficient. In *By Your Side*, actually, the artist embarks on a different type of storytelling. Side by side, we cross that almost invisible line that separates the public from the private, the collective ideals and idealized identities from the most marked subjectivity of his latest production.