

Al Dente: A Feast for the Senses  
Curated by Edoardo Monti  
30 November – 16 December

Berntson Bhattacharjee is delighted to host *Al Dente: A Feast for the Senses*; an exhibition guest-curated by **Edoardo Monti**, shining a spotlight on the creative endeavours of twelve artists who recently completed a month-long residency at his prestigious **Palazzo Monti** in Brescia, Italy. Monti has carefully curated a selection of artists who are evolving the craft of their artistic field and finding international recognition as ones to watch. Exhibited artists are **Hiva Alizadeh, Elli Antoniou, Andrea Bocca, Bea Bonafini, Thomas De Falco, Kirsten Deirup, John Fou, David Gardner, Delphine Hennelly, Eliza Hopewell, Madeleine Roger-Lacan, and Hannah Tilson.**

As the founder and driving force behind one of the world's leading residencies, Monti places paramount importance on his social duty to nurture and champion emerging talent. In doing so, he has established a sense of community and refuge at Palazzo Monti, where resident artists become part of his family and home. *Al Dente: A Feast for the Senses* is an example of Monti's curatorial household and aptitude for bringing together artists with diverse practices and backgrounds.

The exhibition offers a foray into the multifaceted realm of contemporary figurative art, wherein a wide spectrum of artistic mediums assumes a prominent role. Ranging from synthetic hair and cotton tapestry to the timeless technique of oil on canvas, as well as pigments adroitly applied to sheer fabric and meticulously crafted acetate sculptures, the presentation showcases a convergence of artistic ingenuity. *Al Dente: A Feast for the Senses* further serves as a harmonious convergence of talents hailing from seven nations, extending from Iran to the far shores of the Atlantic. This confluence of international perspectives offers a diverse and nuanced tableau of contemporary artistic expression on a global scale. With a seamless fusion of diverse and individual artistic practices, the exhibition guides its visitors on a sensory journey that transcends conventional boundaries through the universal language of art.

About the artists

**Hiva Alizadeh** (b. 1989) is an Iranian artist living and working in Teheran. Self-trained film-maker and artist, he started his career writing and directing experimental documentary films before shifting his focus to the creation of sculptural works and installations. Alizadeh uses the element of hair to recall its universal connection with humanity, however the electric array of colours witnessed immediately informs the viewer of the artificiality of these constructions. By highlighting these contrasting elements, he skillfully navigates the tensions between the real and the imagined, all the while playing with the textured qualities of the compositional surface.

**Elli Antoniou** (b. 1995) is an Athens-born London-based sculptor. She holds an MA Degree in Sculpture from the Royal College of Art (2020), with a scholarship from NEON Organisation for Culture and Development and a BA in Fine Art & History of Art from Goldsmiths University of London (2017). Antoniou creates 'metallic drawings' activated by light. The technique she employs hybridises industrial tools and processes, combining them with the expressiveness of gestural drawing. Her practice is a meditation on screens, delving into their profound influence on our perception of time and space. As her sculptures continuously regenerate under the play of light, they become fictional screens for an unfolding parallel reality, whose world she is gradually shaping.

**Andrea Bocca** (b. 1996) is an artist living and working in Milan. In his exploration of sculpture and installation art, Bocca centres his artistic inquiry on the interplay between spatial forms and the objects that surround him. His fascination with architecture and design leads him to craft a narrative that transforms the exhibition space into a storytelling canvas. His rural origins blend with modernist and industrial landscapes, providing him with fresh wellsprings of inspiration. Bocca's creative practice revolves around weaving together artisanal and industrial techniques, which serve as the foundational pillars of his artistic expression.

**Bea Bonafini** (b. 1990) is an artist based between London, Rome and Paris. In 2014, she completed her BA in Fine Art at Slade School of Fine Art and in 2016 she received her MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art, London. Bonafini's installations are openings to encounters between the earthly and the otherworldly, balancing between figurative and

abstraction. She works with a range of techniques bridging painting, sculpture, textile and ceramics. In doing this she explores the relationship between the textures, ideas and forms.

**Thomas De Falco** (b. 1982) is an Italian-French artist living and working in Paris. De Falco expresses his research and artistic production through the creation of tapestries, inspired by the ancient art of weaving with a vertical frame. He masterfully employs the 'wrapping' technique, a relentless proliferation of knots in lush tapestries. This method centres around the artist's meticulous manipulation of wool thistles, enabling him to control the distribution, thickness, and the sculptural form of the wrapping, which stands as his most distinctive and personal signature.

**Kirsten Deirup** (b. 1980) is a Canadian painter who graduated from The Cooper Union, New York, in 2003. Deirup's works seamlessly intertwine the known and the mysterious, bridging the gap between the everyday and the extraordinary. With her mastery of portraying depth and light, her works consistently astonish, challenging the audience's perspectives and defying their expectations as she effortlessly transitions from lifelike representation to dreamlike surrealism, all the while employing traditional artistic methods and formats.

**John Fou** (b. 1983) is an artist living and working in Paris. Fou, a self-taught artist with a diverse background in live performance, circus arts, dance, and theatre, has cultivated an innovative approach to figurative painting. In his work, he orchestrates captivating narratives that mirror social dynamics among animals of various species, using these portrayals as allegorical reflections of his personal journey and, in a broader sense, human relationships.

**David Gardner** (b. 1987) is an artist living and working in London. He studied at Central Saint Martins graduating with a BA in womenswear fashion design (2011) and at the Royal Drawing School (2019). Gardner's work seamlessly blends representation and abstraction, employing lines, forms, and colours as its fundamental vocabulary to explore concepts of presence, absence, memory, and trace. His works aspire to conjure a realm where every space converges into one, a concurrent present, essentially forming a palimpsest of imagery that draws inspiration from a rich tapestry of art history, interwoven with contemporary and personal references.

**Delphine Hennelly** (b. 1979) is an artist living and working in Montréal. She received her BFA from Cooper Union in 2002 and her MFA from Mason Gross School of the Visual Arts at Rutgers University in 2017. Hennelly's work addresses the human condition and prescribed gender roles through her use of pattern, repetition, and uncanny colour palettes. Her work is particularly inspired by tapestries, art history, and early Modernism which she references through motifs, compositional structures and gestures.

**Eliza Hopewell** (b.1994, Greenwich) is a South London based artist who works across painting, ceramics, printmaking and film. Eliza's work is concerned with challenging the societal view of women and femmes through subverting objects and spaces that are typically associated with them. Exploring the difference between private and public selves, and drawing on cinema and literature, her work tells nuanced and sensitive stories of femininity.

**Madeleine Roger-Lacan** ( b.1993) is a painter living and working in Paris, France. She is a graduate of the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris (2019) and the Slade School of Fine arts in London (2016). A phantasmagorical universe unfolds in the figurative paintings of Roger-Lacan. Within her work, self-portraits and intimate character portraits coalesce with dreamlike vistas and contemporary objects from popular culture. Conceptually, she focuses on female sexuality, especially concerning the complex imbalance of power as well as misinterpretations which lie in the relationships between genders.

**Hannah Tilson** (b. 1995) is based in London where she graduated with a Bachelors in Painting from the Slade School of Fine Art in 2018, during which time she also studied on exchange at the New York Studio School. In 2020, she completed a scholarship programme at the Royal Drawing School in London. Tilson's work is a colourful range of mix-media, where she overloads the viewer with information through the clashing of patterns and forms. She is currently working on a series of intimate self-portraits made with bright colours and vivid patterns, elevating ordinary objects and placing herself in a vibrating space filled with patterns.