

Marc SIJAN

HYPERREALISM

The artist as an illusionist



Roberto BERNARDI

OPERA GALLERY

PRE- FACE

HYPERREALISM

The artist
as an illusionist

Hyperrealistic artworks take a step forward to simulate life and more, unlocking the boundaries that bind art and the illusion of reality. Marc Sijan and Roberto Bernardi are exemplary artists who cleverly portray realism in ways that aim at revealing rather than concealing whilst inviting you to enter and celebrate the illusion of reality at its highest levels.

Marc Sijan's hyperrealistic sculptures fascinate even the most detached audience. With predecessors like Duane Hanson or John De Andrea, Marc Sijan has imposed himself as a must-see hyperrealist sculptor of our times. Mirror like images resembling anatomies of the human figure are depicted in various subjects that capture life and form in essence. A moment in time, an expression, an inspired motion, Sijan's life-sized sculptures conjure an evocation of vulnerability and summon an investigative response. Interpretations of the human form are remarkable and the viewer finds himself exploring every core and inch of the intricate reproduction. Technical mastery foretells a story of the figure in focus, perhaps of a security guard or another tribute to a real person not necessarily beautiful nor perfect.

Roberto Bernardi's hyperrealistic art has the ability to create a 'theatre of objects'. His still-life candy paintings are a true temptation and a certain appeal to greediness. This could be seen as a cheeky nod to the tradition of ancient Dutch moralist painters. But his eye for translucent objects elevates the viewer to a heightened sense of fantasy. One is intrigued not only by the physical presence of the arrangement but also by the order of chaos that strikes a sensational chord in every sense. Bernardi's art encourages aesthetic indulgence *via* a burst of candy popping and luminous colours that glisten and glean organically, or inorganically, especially in his latest candy paintings.

Their masterpieces provoke personalities and captivate you with their own narration of definitive and detailed renderings of life and form. Let's celebrate living illusions with these remarkable artworks and enjoy various subject complexities with immense depth that call forth deeper reflections.

Gilles Dyan
Founder & Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

Stéphane Le Pelletier
Director Asia Pacific
Opera Gallery

MARC SIJAN

BIO- GRA- PHY

This is the story of a Milwaukee man, an extremely talented sculptor whose works are found all over the world and who in fact is rated number one in his genre, yet is better known in cities of Europe, Asia and the Middle East than he is, right here, in his own home town. His name is Marc Sijan. His artform is Hyperrealism.

Most people relate the art of sculpture and especially the sculpture of the human body, to the works of the ancient Greeks and Romans, such as the *Venus de Milo* and Michelangelo's *David*. There are, however, other types of sculpture depicting the human form. One of them is called "Hyperrealistic" sculpture. If you were ever fortunate enough to observe, up close, works such as the *Venus de Milo* and *David*, you'd probably be very impressed with their beauty and workmanship. But you would never think of them as looking exactly like the humans they depicted. Conversely, if you were to view Hyperrealistic sculptures up close, you'd be absolutely amazed. The sculpture would look exactly like a human being. In fact you likely wouldn't completely believe your eyes and would reach out and touch it to make sure it was alive.

There are hundreds of top quality art galleries throughout the world that exhibit Hyperrealistic sculpture. Rating lists exist for those sculptors, much as there are ratings systems for athletes, resorts or restaurants. Those ratings are based on degrees of originality, detail and other factors. For Hyperrealistic sculptors, as it is for other forms of sculpting, those lists are published in art magazines. I looked at one of them, which detailed the top 20 Hyperrealistic sculptors today. It was then that I read about the most recent sculptor rating, where Sijan had moved from number two in the world to number one, a tremendous honour.

Sijan is a very private individual and rarely talks about himself despite his world class skill as a sculptor and his many awards and accolades. His magnificent sculptures have won him fans throughout the globe. His staunchest fan, however, has always been his lovely wife Patricia. When I asked her about her husband's recent ranking upgrade, she smiled and replied that the ranking of number one in the world should have been awarded to him long time ago. Wives of highly successful men always seem to say things like that. It's a clue to why those successful men are the way they are.

Sijan's studio is located on a small side street in Milwaukee's Bay View south side. It's definitely off the beaten path, which is exactly what he wants. He spends a tremendous amount of time on a single sculpture, taking from six months to a year to complete just one. He pointed out, however, that he works on several at the same time. Quiet and solitude are a must for the great concentration to detail that is necessary in his work.



“Can't believe
your eyes.
Certainly expect
them to blink

ASSOCIATED PRESS

I was completely astounded the first time I walked into his studio. It is filled with dozens of life-sized sculptures, and every one has its own story. Some of the sculptures are standing like an ordinary statue. Others are sitting, some are curled into a box, others are lying on the floor. I pointed to one of an aged African beggar, lying on a tattered mat, his arm and hand out, pleading for food. Sijan told me the story of how he was walking through a marketplace in a small African village one day and saw the man. He said he asked if he could photograph him and do a sculpture of him, and the beggar of course agreed, as the request came with a sizeable offering. Sijan never creates a sculpture of anyone without obtaining the person's permission. He told me about his conversations with the beggar, and the story of his plight and the village he lived in. We talked for quite some time about just the one sculpture. If I had asked him to tell me the story of every one of them, I'd probably still be there listening.

You would think, with all his skills, that Sijan would create sculptures of beautiful humans, women such as Marilyn Monroe or male athletes such as Arnold Schwarzenegger. Not so. A few of his creations are of good looking people, such as a young lady with a towel, but the vast majority are of all shapes and forms, some scrawny, other obese, some old, some young, some weak, some burly, the gamut of humanity. Sijan is like a superb writer in that regard who writes not only about the rich and famous, but instead about all facets of life on earth. Like the writings of any good author, Sijan's works of sculpture tell a story.

His creations have been featured in galleries, museums and special exhibits all over the world. They include the Smithsonian Museum of Modern Art in Washington, D.C, USA ; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, USA ; the Philadelphia Museum of Modern Art and the Milwaukee Art Museum, USA. Sijan is of Serbian descent and is proud to have been honoured as one of the most prominent Serbian Americans in the world. He has had over 60 solo museum exhibitions, a truly exceptional achievement. Most artists are overjoyed to have only one or two exhibits.

There are many collectors of Hyperrealistic art. One such collector is Senator Herb Kohl, who is also owner of the Milwaukee Bucks professional basketball team. It was because of one of these sculptures he gave to the Bucks that led me to write this story.

The Bucks Training Center is located at 3501 S. Lake Drive. As you enter the lobby, one of the first things you see is a security guard, sitting near the receptionist window. One day when I went there to attend a Bucks Media Day, I saw him myself. As I walked in, I said hello to the guard, got no response and said hello again. He seemed perfectly normal, but wasn't moving. I wondered if perhaps he was asleep with his eyes open. So I went over and touched him on the shoulder, to awaken him or to get some kind of response. It was then that I discovered to my embarrassment that I'd been trying to talk to a sculpture. The name tag on his chest identified him, tongue in cheek to be sure, as "Art".

I learned later from one of the Bucks media execs that "Art" fools just about everyone. Most people are pleasantly amused and entertained by him, but there are exceptions. Former NBA superstar Michael Jordan came into the lobby one day and reportedly became quite angry when he felt "Art" was ignoring him and refusing to answer his questions; so much so that he made a point of complaining about him to the Bucks officials.

I asked Sijan about "Art". He laughed. "Actually, there is another guard sculpture similar to "Art" in the lobby of the Wisconsin Center" he explained. "I really appreciate the exposure both of them have provided for me, but on the other hand, they tend to give the wrong impression of my work. I've created hundreds of sculptures in hundreds of different guises that have been and are exhibited in galleries and museums all over the world, but the only ones most Milwaukeeans see are those two security guards", he said.

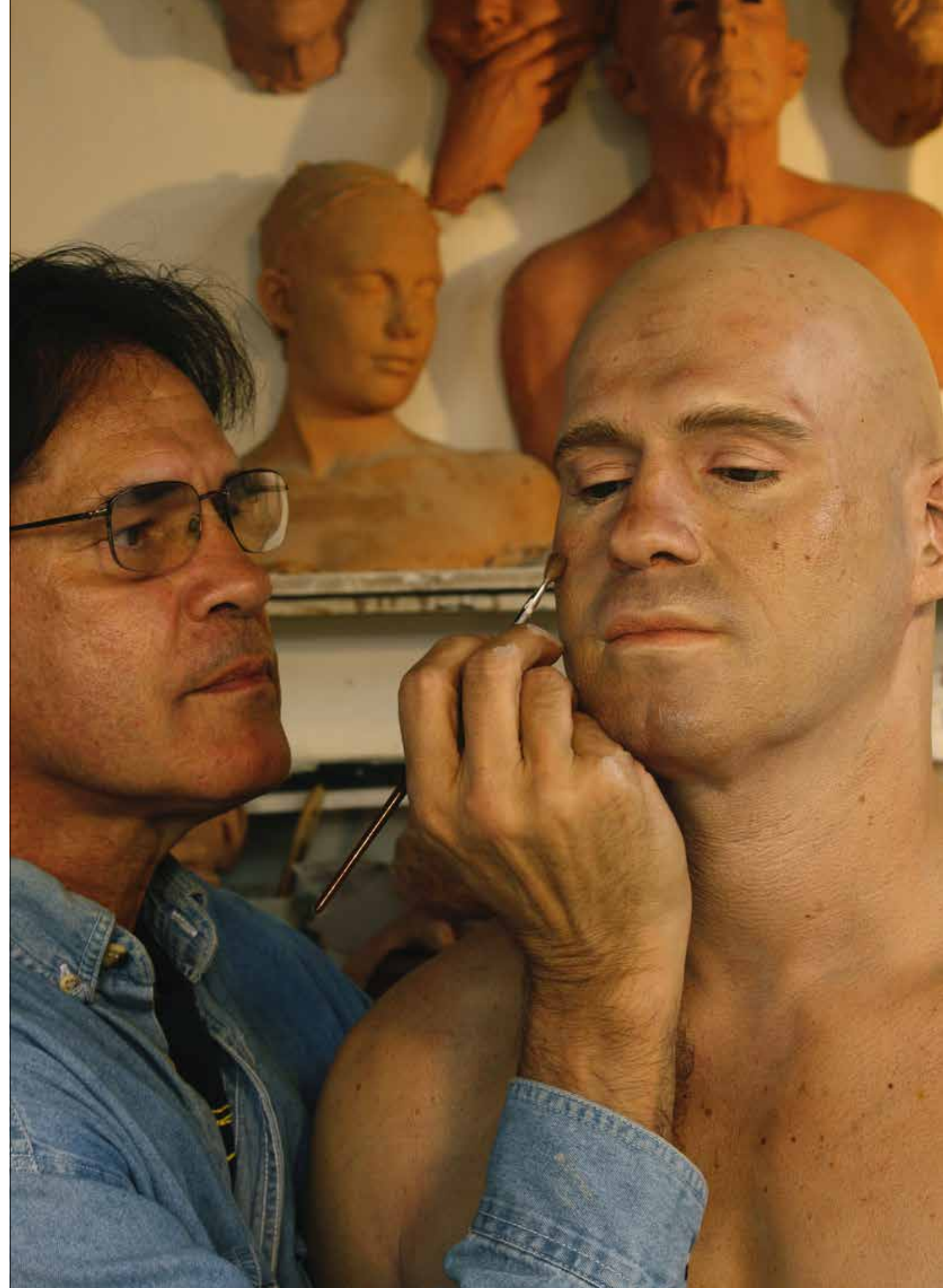
Sijan's works have to be seen; mere words don't adequately describe them. I'll try to explain. Look at yourself in a mirror, up close. You see those tiny little wrinkles and hairs, the veins beneath the skin and perhaps a tiny mole or a wart or some pimples. Look at the color and texture of your skin and hair. Then the same for your entire body and observe the shape and size of your torso, arms and legs. There are so many infinitesimal things even a good photograph would not reveal. All of that is in every one of Marc Sijan's creations. It doesn't seem possible, but that's what Hyperrealistic Sculpture is, and what Sijan does.

[...]

I haven't offered much here on Marc's personal life and his background, but he prefers it that way. As noted, he is a very private individual. I did discover he was born in 1946, which makes him 71, but in truth he looks half that age. All the work he does, thousands of hours a year, working every day of the week, must be wonderful exercise. I also found out that he attended Bay View High School, loved sports, then earned a degree from UW-Whitewater and an advanced degree from UW-Milwaukee.

Another truly remarkable aspect of the man is that until he was into his twenties he had never given a thought to sculpture or becoming a sculptor. He attended Whitewater to earn a degree in teaching. One of his classes there had to do with teaching art. He became more and more interested in art and then specifically in sculpture to the degree that he switched his major. The world of education lost what may have been a pretty good teacher. The world of art, however, has gained, what many said, is a genius.

Jack Pearson



STATE- MENT

THE REAL THING

Marc Sijan is following the primal compulsion of people to create images that reflect a respectful perspective on themselves, a practice that began some seventeen thousand years ago. Humans started portraying their own image on the walls of caves in northern Spain, resulting in some of the most remarkable art ever conceived. Even Picasso was impressed, observing that this was the beginning of the development of recreating the figure, although on flat two-dimensional surfaces. These instincts continued to develop over thousands of years, until the skills of drawing and painting were finally harnessed and put down on woven material or on Pompeian plaster walls. But it was a true adventurer who took up the challenge of translating the human form into recognisable, three-dimensional context.

Thin, figure-like sculptures were likely first fashioned out of tree branches tied together with twine and mud. Eventually, these somewhat recognisable forms were probably produced from rough timber as totems and decorative architectural details. The final designs were necessarily abstract, as sharp, stone-cut geometric lines had to be a substitute for the more nuanced features and shapes that primitive artisans wanted to invoke but did not have the tools or the experience and maturity to create something moderately realistic. As societies became more advanced and as the craft movement went beyond utilitarian objects, the realisation of recreating an artificial human form finally took place. Thousands of dusty figures have been found in Egyptian caves, offering further evidence that man has had an intuitive and spiritual motivation to duplicate objective presentations of himself for thousands of years. Later, the Greeks and Romans took advantage of past experiments and refined their abilities to create extraordinary work often chiseled from marble blocks and polished to perfection.

Modern artists who studied these great leaps forward in constructing objects that were ever more sophisticated than their predecessors began to search beyond acceptable practices in bronze and stone through high levels of ingenious improvement that would bring a super-rich realism imagery to mainstream Contemporary art. A handful of sculptors took up this seemingly impossible task by exploring the advantages of new materials that were far from the original lump of clay described in biblical terms to create the first doppelgänger. These pioneers in the late 1960s discovered a new synthetic material that could be cast directly from the figure to produce a genuine illusion of body and soul, complete with prosthetic eyes and dressed totally in ordinary clothes. Hyperrealism came into vogue in the 1970s with curious works by Duane Hanson, whose simulations of everyday people were in a class of their own. John De Andrea took the process one step further by reproducing figures in their natural state without the advantage of covering the body with clothing. Now, sculptor Marc Sijan, who has been pursuing this discipline for over forty years and often shared production and finishing techniques in Hanson's studio, is arguably one of the most successful and innovative artists working in America today.



His work, which is steeped in a well-conceived multitasking foundation that is cast and intricately painted with multiple layers of flesh-coloured paint, has brought hyper-illusion as another aesthetic component into modern figurative sculpture that's celebrated in numerous museum and gallery exhibitions around the world. The challenging variety of technical steps that have been painstakingly developed during the artist's illustrious career permanently positions Marc Sijan not only as a visionary but as a technical wizard who keeps his studio trade secrets to himself. As the artist is arguably at the very height of his career, having mastered one of the most technical difficult casting techniques imaginable for sculpture, Marc Sijan is free to comfortably explore the limitless dimensions of his subject matter. This artist is the consummate observer of life in the most challenging of realist traditions. The complete opposite of man's failed tries at recreating the human image no matter how primitive, Sijan's work succeeds. The most magical three-dimensional profiles ever achieved if placed retroactively in the aforementioned caves of northern Spain would no doubt have those early artists running in the opposite direction without ever looking back.

A natural byproduct of Sijan's realistic sculpture not surprisingly is the intense curiosity generated by the viewing public. As an internationally renowned American hyperrealist artist with numerous solo museum exhibitions, he continues to set attendance records whenever he exhibits. His most recent international show in Dubai, to an audience not accustomed to his work, drew huge crowds — including world leaders. Critics have observed of this unique sculpture "All that's missing is the pulse," and in the words of Lou Zona, director of the Butler Institute of American Art, Marc Sijan "truly breathes realism into his sculptures". Accolades aside, ultimately it is the remarkable human response to Marc Sijan's sculptures that persuades. Almost every member of the public expresses wonder and appreciation with a subject so familiar it seems both impossible to reproduce and amazing to consider. Sijan continues to take us on this fascinating journey of recognisable human figures that turn the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Bruce Helander

INTER- VIEW

Why did you choose to recreate humans through your art?

Man has always been fascinated by his own image. This takes root in the most ancient myths, with Narcissus. So I'm following an age-old theme of all mankind, showing humankind as we truly are. I do not enhance reality, I depict it.

Do you sculpt from real human models?

The life-size ultra-realistic sculptures I create are a combination of sculpting and direct anatomic casts. But I've never been to an anatomy course. All I know comes from observation. I really am a good observer, always wondering what is the story of the person in front of me. I try to see beyond appearances, as one is revealing only in a gesture, a pose, a look or an expression. This is even more useful than a cast.

Did the work you did with Duane Hanson guide you to your current choices? Where does your inspiration come from?

Duane Hanson was the legendary master of Hyperrealism. We shared projects together and I was influenced by his works of art. My work comes from everyday people and situations. Like I said: if I catch something in someone's eyes, there I see the story I can tell.

How do you choose your next theme?

I'm an observer of life. My themes come from everyday situations. I'm always looking for new, fresh and different things. I'm looking for something that people will remember whether because they'll be moved, stunned or surprised. It takes me a while to choose a theme that is worthy. What can I bring to art as a hyperrealist artist? I need to find something that can be impressive, both in the concept and in the realisation.

Is sculpture a way to ally your pleasure to transform raw materials to your love of painting?

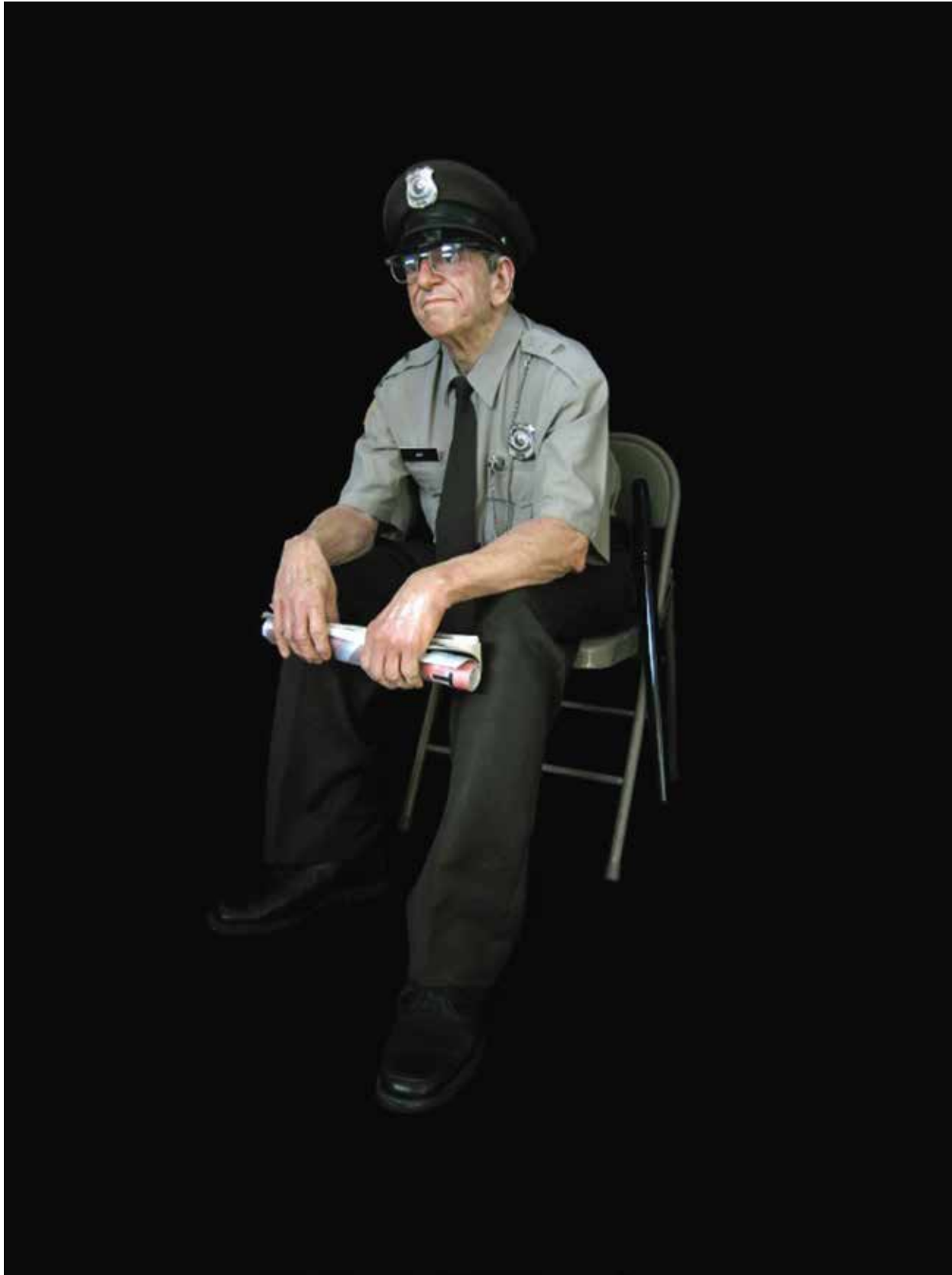
My sculptures allow me to be both a sculptor and a painter. I love drawing, painting but I also love three-dimensional works. Painting my sculptures was a solution that enabled me to perform almost all kinds of art. My sculptures have to convince, so I have to be very precise and meticulous. Nothing is due to chance in hyperrealism. The greatest artworks are the ones that challenge people. This is what I do, allying these two genres: I challenge myself, but also the people seeing my works of art.

According to you, what is the role and place of hyperrealism in art today?

Hyperrealism is a genre of painting and sculpture resembling high-resolution photographs. It's another format for man to express his own human form. Hyperrealist sculptures and canvases work in the same way as any other canvases: it depicts an emotion or a feeling, but what we, hyperrealist artists, do is to make it real, obvious, clear and figurative. I'm always analysing my pieces to improve them. And when they are truthful, when you can recognise someone in it or when you're fooled by them, then these are the best hyperrealistic pieces.



Detail of Big Man Security Guard (bald with keys), 2016



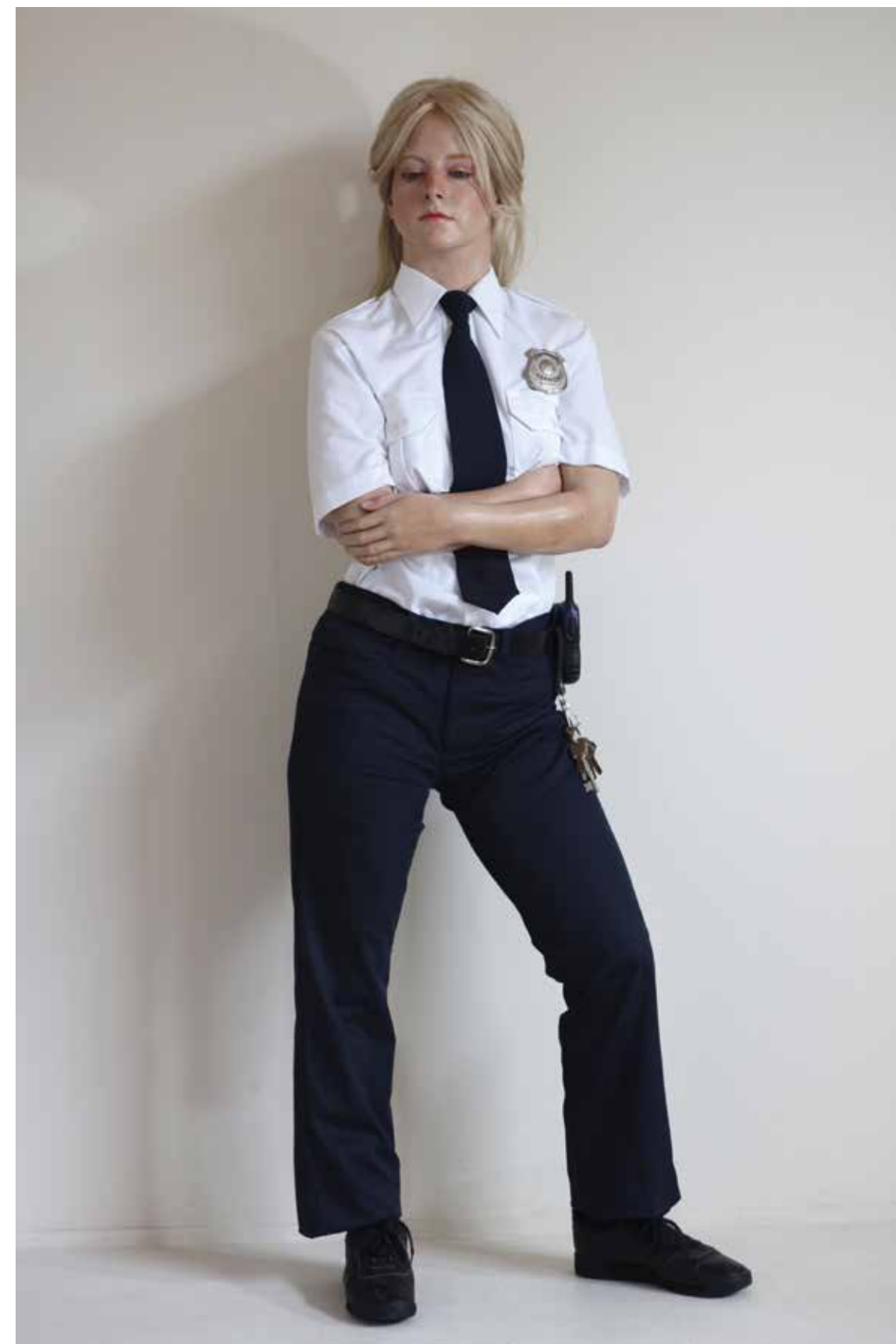
Seated Guard, 2016
 Polyester resin and oil paint
 114.3 x 53.3 x 61 cm - 45 x 21 x 24 in.



Seated Guard, 2016
 Polyester resin and oil paint
 114.3 x 53.3 x 66 cm - 45 x 21 x 26 in.



Window Dressing, 2015
Polyester resin and oil paint
101.6 x 76.2 x 22.9 cm - 40 x 30 x 9 in.



Lady Standing Guard, 2016
Polyester resin and oil paint
147.3 x 50.8 x 35 cm - 58 x 20 x 13.8 in.

“People often have been fooled by Sijan’s work. His “security guard” sculpture sits in the lobby of the Milwaukee Bucks practice facility, where it once frustrated Michael Jordan by its lack of conversation that he complained to management.

ESPN



Big Man Security Guard (bald with keys), 2016

Polyester resin and oil paint
172.7 x 61 x 55.9 cm - 68 x 24 x 22 in.

Kneeling, 2015

Polyester resin and oil paint
96.5 x 60.9 x 81.3 cm - 38 x 24 x 32 in.



HS Guard, 2016

Polyester resin and oil paint
172.7 x 81.3 x 71.1 cm - 68 x 32 x 28 in.



Butler, 2015

Polyester resin and oil paint
172.7 x 63.5 x 58.4 cm - 68 x 25 x 23 in.



Lady Security Guard (in blue), 2016

Polyester resin and oil paint
162.6 x 61 x 43.2 cm - 64 x 24 x 17 in.

“The Sculptor creates
images that look so
real, observers may find
themselves chatting to a
work of art.

Marc Sijan

Golfer, 2014

Polyester resin and oil paint
170.2 x 81.3 x 45.7 cm - 67 x 32 x 18 in.





Standing Guard (MS), 2016
Polyester resin and oil paint
182.9 x 50.8 x 71.1 cm - 72 x 20 x 28 in.



Handyman, 2014
Polyester resin and oil paint
198.1 x 81.3 x 58.4 cm - 78 x 32 x 23 in.

EXHIBITIONS

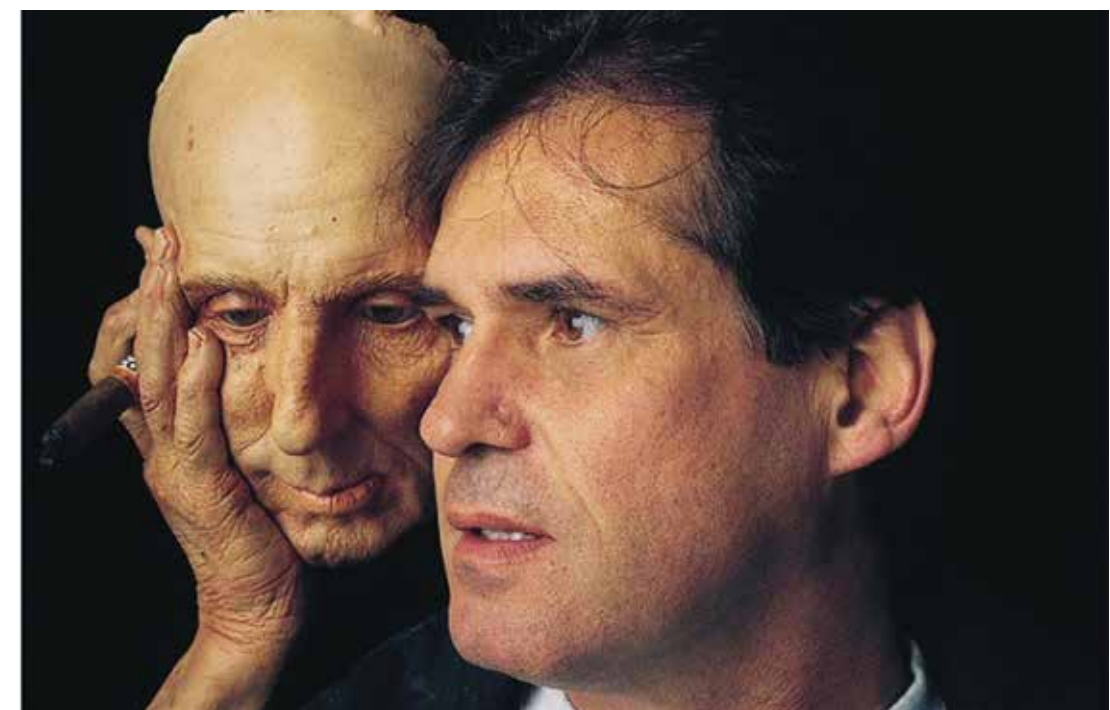
ONE MAN MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS / USA

- 2014** ArtPrize winner 3D Sculpture, Museum of Art, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA
- 2013** The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, USA
- 2012** Vero Beach Museum of Art, Vero Beach, Florida, USA
- 2011** Contemporary Art Center of Virginia, Virginia Beach, Virginia, USA
- 2010** Waukesha County Museum, Waukesha, Wisconsin, USA
Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum, University of Louisiana, Lafayette
Charles H. MacNider Art Museum, Mason City, Iowa, USA
Krasl Art Museum, St. Joseph, Michigan, USA
Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, Delaware, USA
Museum of Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, USA
- 2009** Elmhurst Art Museum, Elmhurst, Illinois, USA
Dane G. Hansen Memorial Museum, Logan, Kansas, USA
R.W. Norton Art Museum, Shreveport, Louisiana, USA
Pritikin Museum, San Francisco, California, USA
J. Wayne Stark Galleries, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, USA
The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, USA
- 2008** Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville, Jacksonville, Florida, USA
Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa, USA
- 2004** Albany Museum of Art, Albany, Georgia, USA
Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Greensburg, Pennsylvania, USA
Dennos Museum Center, Traverse City, Michigan, USA
Miller Art Museum, Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, USA
York Museum of Art, York, Pennsylvania, USA
- 2003** Krasl Art Museum, Saint Joseph, Michigan, USA
Dane G. Hansen Memorial Art Museum, Logan, Kansas, USA
J. Wayne Stark Museum of Art, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, USA
Louisiana Art & Science, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA
- 2002** Brunnier Art Museum, Ames, Iowa, USA
Bregstrom-Mahler Museum of Art, Neenah, Wisconsin, USA
- 2001** Texas Tech University Museum, Lubbock, Texas, USA
Muscatine Museum of Art, Muscatine, Iowa, USA
Southwest Art Museum, Midland, Texas, USA
Museum of Art & Science, Macon, Georgia, USA
Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, USA
- 1999** Art Museum of Abilene, Abilene, Texas, USA
- 1998** Alexandria Museum of Art, Alexandria, Louisiana, USA
Meadows Museum of Art, Shreveport, Louisiana, USA
Brauer Museum of Art, Valparaiso, Indiana, USA
Owensboro Museum of Fine Arts, Owensboro, Kentucky, USA
- 1997** Union Art Museum, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA
New England Fine Art Museum, Boston, Massachusetts, USA
McAllen International Art Museum, McAllen, Texas, USA
Art Museum of Hollywood, Hollywood, Florida, USA
Loveland Museum and Art Gallery, Loveland, Colorado, USA
Dane G. Hansen Memorial Art Museum, Logan, Kansas, USA

- 1996** Roger Goffey Art Museum, Kansas City, Missouri, USA
Midland Art Museum, Midland, Michigan, USA
Berman Museum of Art, Collegeville, Pennsylvania, USA
Sunrise Museum of Art, Charleston, West Virginia, USA
Museum of Art and Archeology, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, USA
Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita, Kansas, USA
- 1995** Ella Caruthers Dunnegan Museum of Art, Bolivar, Missouri, USA
Paine Art Center, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, USA
West Bend Art Museum, West Bend, Wisconsin, USA
Cheekwood Tennessee Museum of Art, Nashville, Tennessee, USA
Portsmouth Museum The Arts Center, Portsmouth, Virginia, USA
- 1994** Texas Tech University Museum, Lubbock, Texas, USA
Canton Art Institute, Canton, Ohio, USA
- 1993** Charles H. MacNider Museum, Mason City, Iowa, USA
- 1986** Byer Museum of Art, Evanston, Illinois, USA
- 1971** University of Wisconsin, Museum of Art, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

EXHIBITIONS / ABROAD

- 2017** Hyperrealistic Exhibition, ANKEM Museum Modern Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark
- 2016** Suwon IPark Museum of Art, Suwon-si, Gyeonggi-do, Korea
Clayarch Gimhae Museum, Gimhae-si Gyeongsangnam-do, Korea
Hyperrealistic Exhibition, Museo de Bellas Artes, Bilbao, Spain
Hyperrealistic Exhibition, MARCO Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Monterrey, Mexico
- 2015** 21C Hyperrealism Exhibition Daejoen Museum Of Art, Daejoen City, Korea
- 2010** Cuadro Museum and Fine Art Gallery, Dubai, UAE



ROBERTO BERNARDI

BIO- GRA- PHY

Roberto Bernardi was born in Todi, Italy, in 1974.

He started to paint at a very young age and his first oil paintings date back to the first half of the eighties. His obsession for detail and learning of pictorial techniques had a significant influence on his artistic formation. Once he finished high school, he moved to Rome where he worked as a restorer in the church of San Francesco a Ripa. After an initial foray with landscapes and portraits, Bernardi turned towards a kind of realism closely associated to Photorealism: Hyperrealism.

In September 1994, Bernardi had his first solo exhibition, obtaining both public and critical recognition. Since then Bernardi has held 12 solo exhibitions worldwide between New York, London, Paris and Detroit and his works have been included in 25 museum exhibitions and over 100 group exhibitions around the world.

In 1999 Bernardi met Raphaella Spence, also a Hyperrealist artist, with whom he occasionally creates a series of large-sized paintings representing social scenes such as crowds at football stadiums, executed with incredible skill and attention to detail.

Since 2012 Bernardi has been taking part in an international museum tour on Hyperrealism which started at the Kunsthalle Tübingen Museum in Germany and has continued with over 13 museum venues worldwide. This traveling show has been on view at the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, Spain; the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, England; the New Orleans Museum of Art, USA; the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, USA; the Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, Spain; the Kunsthall Museum Rotterdam, the Netherlands; the Tampa Museum of Art, USA, and many more.



Roberto Bernardi in his studio

In 2014 Bernardi was invited to the 2014 Contemporary Realism Biennial, held at the Fort Wayne Museum of Art, USA.

In 2010, Italian multinational oil and gas company ENI, currently Italy's largest industrial company, added Bernardi to the group of young talents from across the world who work to interpret in a unique way each moment of ENI's communication and Bernardi was commissioned to do a Hyperrealistic painting that was added to their prestigious art collection.

In 2015 Bernardi's paintings were published in *Sugar and Sweets*, by D. Goldstein, Oxford University Press Editions; and in 2016 in *On the Origin of Art*, edited by MONA, the Museum of Old and Modern Art in Tasmania, Australia.

“When people ask me to explain the meaning of my artwork I often find it difficult to give them an answer because I do not believe there is another form of language that can transmit what I want to convey in addition to the painting itself.

Roberto Bernardi”

STATE- MENT

Through my hyperrealistic paintings I try to analyse the world in a profound and accurate manner with the end result matching not the photograph that I was initially inspired by, but the very reality that surrounds us.

The subjects of my paintings usually relate to daily life and are often just details, generally considered insignificant details of our existence or familiar objects of common use. One can think that painting nature directly has a different meaning compared to painting from a photograph, but from my perspective, the heart of hyperrealist art is pure painting, no matter where or what you perform it with.

Being inspired by my photographs, that are captured moments, allows me to paint and to place myself in front of the desired subject with detachment, while being able to look objectively without any subjective or personal interpretive filters.

At that moment, modernity is naked and defenceless before my eyes and forced to reveal the truth since the silent observation is no longer disrupted by background noises. It is by then fully exposed and for this reason many Hyperrealists don't directly paint objects or landscapes, but they paint from the photographs they take.

In the end a Hyperrealist oil painting gives us a human look on our world that is too often superficial, banal and full of artificial lifestyles.

Hyperrealism shows us profound beauty that until recently was not recognised, it allows us to ask for the visible truth of our modern life style and it forces us to focus our attention towards everything that we encounter during our daily lives.

Hyperrealism is therefore an act of freedom, rebellion through which man claims the supreme right to ask the true meaning of "reality" in our time, to demand the truth behind its outward manifestations and at the same time to ask what place humans should have in the world.

Roberto Bernardi



INTER- VIEW

What first attracted you to Hyperrealist paintings?

I think it has the power to “illuminate” everyday life objects and to make them not only interesting but also fascinating and intriguing. Suddenly they cease to be trivial, obvious, banal or even insignificant, they are impressive and stunning.

Why are sweets a main theme in your art?

I used to paint everything I could find from refrigerators to dishwashers and newsstands in Beijing. They were all heavily reflecting the banality of everyday life. I purposely sought out mundane and boring subjects to then transform them into beautiful and interesting subjects through my painting. Then I started to paint candy, another subject closely related to our current times, but in this case what fascinated me was the symbolism of rampant consumerism of our times and the importance of appearing perfect at all costs. A candy painting may seem beautiful but actually in the end it is a handful of sugar transformed into nothing but hundreds of colourful and bright sweets.

What are the steps of creation of an artwork? Does the difficulty increase proportionally with the size of the painting?

The first step is the idea that may come to me at any time of the day. I then transform my idea into a picture in my photographic studio. There, I try to create the composition using my still-life table and when the light, contrast and composition are all perfect, I take the picture. At this point my photograph becomes the reference material to work from, a bit like a sketch for a Renaissance artist. Using a blank canvas and with the composition that I created in the studio I start to draw the outlines of the subject. I then start to paint in oils, one thin layer of colour at a time until I finish.

In reality there is no difference between making a small or large painting. It is just a bit more uncomfortable, to be able to reach the top you have to work on a metal scaffolding. I have painted paintings up to 250 x 200 cm and have found the same difficulties as when making a painting sized 30 x 40 cm.

What are your main artistic influences?

I started to do oil painting at the age of 12 and as soon as I finished high school I went to work as a restorer in Rome in the church of San Francesco a Ripa where I worked for a year on frescoes by French artist Simon Vouet, one of the leaders of the Caravaggio school. This experience certainly had a great influence on my artistic career. In this church there was also a magnificent sculpture by Bernini, *the Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*: I could touch it and see it up close, it was amazing and I realised there and then that to me, art had to be real, perfect and that it didn't have to lie about what it would convey. Hence, I chose to become a Hyperrealist artist.

How do you consider Hyperrealism in the art world today?

Hyperrealism, thanks to its expressive power, makes us aware of how distracted and distant we are from our own lives and our surroundings: colours, shapes, lines, shadows, reflections and so on.

When we look at a hyperreal painting we are amazed. This is what Hyperrealism does, it reminds us that, most of the time, we look at the world without really seeing it, unconsciously, as if we were in a trance. Everything passes in front of us, escapes us and disappears. Unfortunately we often remain insensitive through habit, boredom, the rat race of modern life, its insatiable consumerism and superficiality. All of a sudden, why do even the most trivial things shine with this fascinating light? Simply because they have now been turned into art, whereas before they were simply “objects”, “things”, which we were totally indifferent to. The artist's touch has turned them into a work of art.

Do you always paint still-lives or have you tried portraits for example?

I started by painting everything but then I switched to still life because I could find my means of expression through it.

Together with my partner Raphaella Spence, a British hyperrealist painter, we have made 25 large-sized paintings together representing social scenes such as crowds at football stadiums. In these works the stars are in fact the members of the public, the fans and hooligans.

Why are your backgrounds so colourful?

In my past works, I painted interiors of dishwashers and refrigerators so the bright colours were not part of the message I intended to convey. Nowadays, in my sweets paintings, I dispute this rampant consumerism and cultural and social systems based on appearances. In this context these bright, vivid and even sometimes vulgar colours help me to convey this message, drawing one's attention to it.





Il Castello di Zucchero, 2015
Oil on canvas
100 x 120 cm - 39.4 x 47.2 in.



Orange Duck, 2016
Oil on canvas
70 x 55 cm - 27.6 x 21.7 in.



La sosta, 2017
Oil on canvas
90 x 95 cm - 35.4 x 37.4 in.



Corona di plastica, 2017
Oil on canvas
80 x 85 cm - 31.5 x 33.5 in.



Le caramelle volanti, 2014

Oil on canvas
70 x 120 cm - 27.6 x 47.2 in.



L'elemento comune, 2016
Oil on canvas
90 x 100 cm - 35.4 x 39.4 in.



Yellow Duck, 2016
Oil on canvas
70 x 55 cm - 27.6 x 21.7 in.



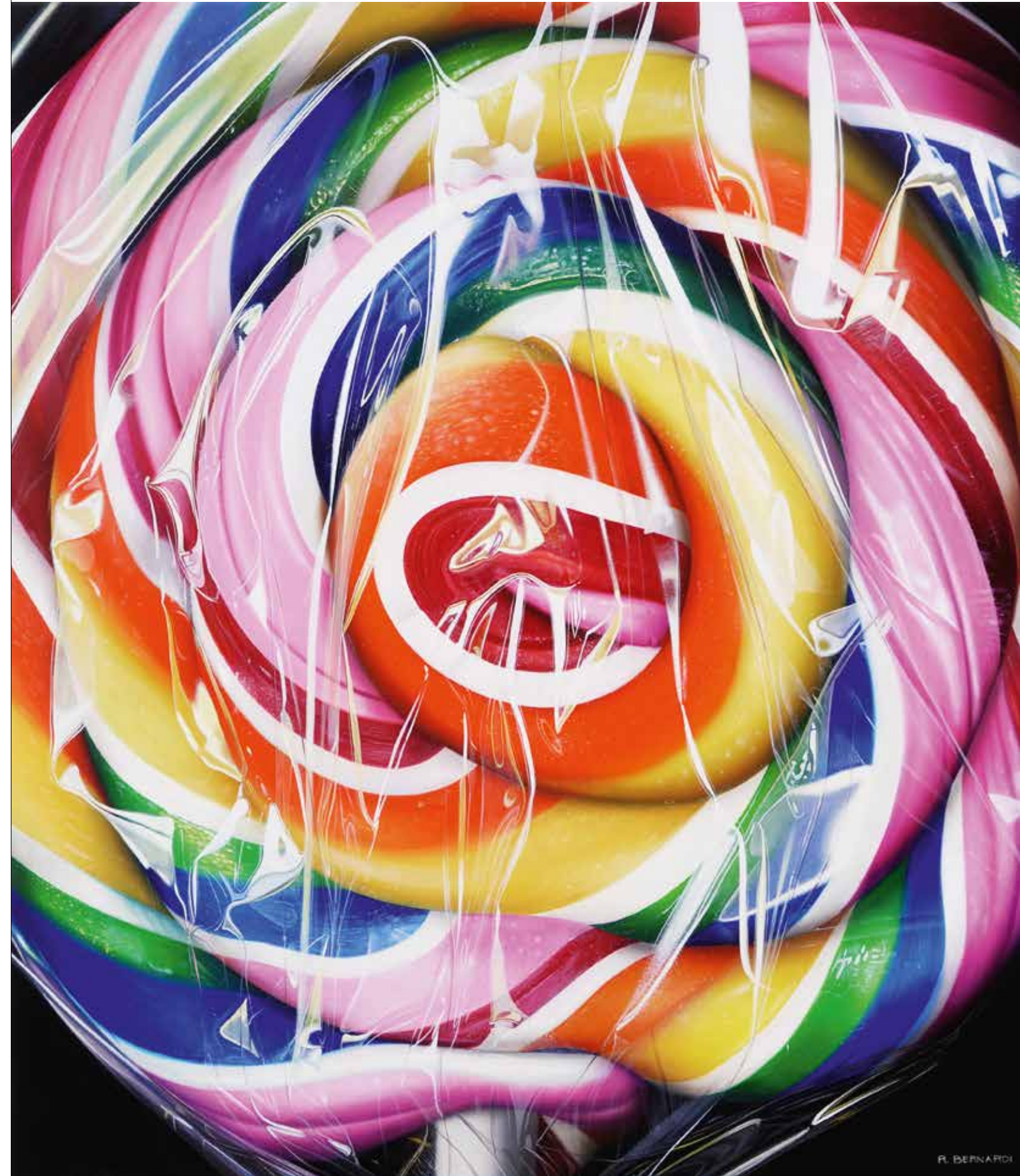
Tweety and Bunny, 2017

Oil on canvas
160 x 200 cm - 63 x 78.7 in.

“When we look at a hyperreal painting we are amazed. This is what Hyperrealism does, it reminds us that, most of the time, we look at the world without really seeing it, unconsciously, as if we were in a trance.

Roberto Bernardi”

Labirinto, 2017
Oil on canvas
100 x 90 cm - 39.4 x 35.4 in.



R. BERNARDI



Pink Bunny, 2016
Oil on canvas
95 x 80 cm - 37.4 x 31.5 in.



L'ippopotamo nascosto, 2017
Oil on canvas
80 x 80 cm - 31.5 x 31.5 in.



La scommessa, 2015

Oil on canvas
100 x 140 cm - 39.4 x 55.1 in.



Esplosione, 2016
Oil on canvas
120 x 180 cm - 47.2 x 70.9 in.



Il prescelto, 2017
Oil on canvas
90 x 80 cm - 35.4 x 31.5 in.



Marilyn, 2016
Oil on canvas
120 x 120 cm - 47.2 x 47.2 in.



Orange Candies, 2015
Oil on canvas
55 x 55 cm - 21.7 x 21.7 in.



Condannati, 2017
 Oil on canvas
 95 x 130 cm - 37.4 x 51.2 in.

EXHIBITIONS

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2016** Candyland, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
- 2014** Candy Paintings, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
- 2012** Caramelle, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
- 2011** Candy Paintings, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
- 2009** Beijing project, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Glass FX, Art of Glass 2, The Hermitage Museum, Norfolk, Virginia, USA
- 2007** Dirty Plates, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
- 2005** Giardini di Cristallo, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
- 2004** Spazi Infiniti, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Albermarle Gallery, London, England
- 2002** Robert Kidd Gallery, Detroit, Michigan, USA
- 2000** Galerie Castiglione, Paris, France
- 1995** Umbria Jazz, Perugia, Italy



MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

- 2017** Kunsthal Museum Rotterdam, Photorealism - 50 years of Hyperrealistic painting, Rotterdam, the Netherlands
Tampa Museum of Art, Photorealism - 50 years of Hyperrealistic painting, Tampa, Florida, USA
Parrish Museum of Art, From Lens to Eye to Hand Photorealism 1969 to Today, Water Mill, New York, USA
- 2016** Osthaus Museum Hagen, Photorealism - 50 years of Hyperrealistic painting, Hagen, Germany
Nassau County Museum of Art, Feast for the Eyes, Roslyn Harbor, New York, USA
Ixelles Museum, Photorealism - 50 years of Hyperrealistic painting, Brussels, Belgium
Kumu - Art Museum of Estonia, Photorealism - 50 years of Hyperrealistic painting, Tallinn, Estonia
- 2015** Museum de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, Photorealism - 50 years of Hyperrealistic painting, Bilbao, Spain
- 2014** FWMOA, Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Biennial Contemporary Realism, Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA
NOMA, New Orleans Museum of Art, Photorealism: The Sydney and Walfa Besthoff Collection, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
- 2013** Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Photorealism - 50 years of Hyperrealistic painting, Madrid, Spain
Saarland Museum, Photorealism - 50 years of Hyperrealistic painting, Saarbrücken, Germany
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Photorealism - 50 years of Hyperrealistic painting, Birmingham, England
OKCMOA - Oklahoma City Museum of Art, Photorealism Revisited, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA
The Butler Institute of American Art, Howland Township, Ohio, USA
- 2012** Tübingen Museum, Photorealism - 50 years of Hyperrealistic painting, Tübingen, Germany
- 2011** Mana Art Center, Eileen S. Kaminsky Family Foundation at Jersey City, New Jersey, USA
- 2010** Ringling College of Art and Design, Real(ists) at Selby Gallery, Sarasota, Florida, USA
- 2009** The Hermitage Museum, Glass FX, Art of Glass 2, Norfolk, Virginia, USA
- 2007** Musei Capitolini, Arte Contemporanea per i Rifugiati, Rome, Italy
- 2005** Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cars and Ketchup: Photorealist Images of the American Landscape, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA
Arnot Art Museum, Re-presenting Realism VII, Elmira, New York, USA
- 2004** New Britain Museum of American Art, Seeing is Believing: American Trompe L'oeil, New Britain, Connecticut, USA
- 1997** National Museum of Fine Art, La Valletta, Malta

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 Small Paintings, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
The Europeans, Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Hyperrealism, Imago Galleries, Palm Desert, California, USA
- 2016 Art Miami New York Pier 94, "Roberto Bernardi and Mel Ramos", 3 - 8 May, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Realisme Amsterdam Art Fair, Mark Peet Visser Gallery, the Netherlands
Art Miami, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
- 2015 True Colors, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Art Miami, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Candyland, Opera Gallery, Hong Kong
Summer Group Exhibition, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
- 2014 Context Art Miami 2014, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Photorealism, The Everyday Illuminated, Jonathan Novak Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California, USA
Art Silicon Valley, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
- 2012 Hyperrealism, Galerie Sho Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan
Photorealism, Galerie de Bellefeuille, Montreal, Canada
All Inn, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Palm Springs Art Fair, Imago Galleries, USA
Palm Springs Art Fair, Scott Richards Contemporary Art, USA
- 2011 Stand Still, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Real: Realism and Diverse Media, Imago Galleries, Palm Desert, California, USA
What kind of real?, Albemarle Gallery, London, England
- 2010 Sweet Tooth, Scott Richards Contemporary Art, San Francisco, California, USA
Grand opening 2010, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Art Hamptons, Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
- 2009 Summer Views: Gallery Artists & Invitational, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Small Paintings from Around the World, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
40 Years of photorealism, Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Photorealist paintings, Arthur M. Berger Gallery, Manhattanville College, Purchase, New York, USA
- 2008 Unforeseen Reflections, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Arte contemporanea per i rifugiati, seventh edition, Sotheby's, Milan, Italy
SPF 20 - Shades of Summer, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Arte contemporanea per i rifugiati, seventh edition, Sotheby's Rome, Italy
Monaco 2008, Prince Fine Arts, Monte-Carlo, Monaco
Art Chicago, Louis K. Meisel Gallery, Chicago, Illinois, USA
- 2007 Culinary Arts, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Structure, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Iperrealisti, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Arte Contemporanea per I Rifugiati, UNHCR, Christie's, Milan, Italy
Art Twenty, New York Art Fair, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Group Show, Albemarle Gallery, London, England
- 2006 Summer Suite, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Three Person Show, Albemarle Gallery, London, England
Contemporary Realism 2006, M.A. Doran Gallery, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA
Winter Reflections, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Art Miami, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
10th Anniversary, Albemarle Gallery, London, England
- 2005 New Photorealists, Elaine Baker Gallery, Boca Raton, Florida, USA
What is Realism?, Albemarle Gallery, London, curated by Edward Lucie - Smith
Personal Places, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Winter in Blue, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA

- 2004 New American Realism, Anthony Brunelli Fine Art, Binghamton, New York City, New York, USA
The Big Picture, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Vertical Arrangements, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Summer is..., Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
New Photorealists, Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Blow Up, St. Paul's Gallery, Birmingham, England
Summer show, Albemarle Gallery, London, England
David Klein Gallery, Birmingham, Detroit, Michigan, USA
Art London, Albemarle Gallery, London, England
- 2003 Albemarle Gallery, London, England
Painting Glass, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, New York City, New York, USA
Albemarle Gallery, London, England
Art Chicago, Bernarducci Meisel Gallery, Chicago, Illinois, USA
- 2002 Albemarle Gallery, London, England
Paisley Tyler & Co., London, England
Robert Kidd Gallery, Detroit, Michigan, USA
- 2001 Albemarle Gallery, London, England
Robert Kidd Gallery, Detroit, Michigan, USA
Albemarle Gallery, London, England
- 2000 M.F.F. Galerie, Nice, France
Galerie Rocha, Barbizon, France
Alexander of Florence Gallery, San Francisco, California, USA
Galleria Ortarte, Novara, Italy
Albemarle Gallery, London, England
Galleria Questarte, Fiera d'Arte Contemporanea, Innsbruck, Austria
- 1999 M.F.F. Galerie, Nice, France
Galerie Rocha, Barbizon, France
Alexander of Florence Gallery, San Francisco, California, USA
Galleria Ortarte, Novara, Italy
Galleria Questarte, Villa Farsetti, Venice, Italy
- 1998 Galerie Rocha, Barbizon, France
Galleria Fidesarte, 16 Asta, Venice, Italy
Galleria Ortarte, Novara, Italy
Galleria Fidesarte, 17 Asta, Venice, Italy
Galleria Got, Paris, France
Alexander of Florence Gallery, San Francisco, California, USA
Galleria Artesegno, Mostra Mercato d'Arte Contemporanea, »Arte Padova 1998«, Padova, Italy
- 1997 Centro Espositivo, La Rosetta Hotel, Perugia, Italy
Palazzo Comunale, Perugia, Italy
Galleria Arearte, Ancona, Italy
Galleria Artesegno, Udine, Italy
Galerie le Miroir des Maîtres, Geneva, Switzerland
- 1996 Centro Espositivo, Fonte Cesia Hotel, Perugia, Italy
Grande percorso artistico, Perugia, Italy
Todi Festival, Palazzo Comunale, Todi, Perugia, Italy
- 1995 Palazzo Pietromarchi, Marsciano, Perugia, Italy
Mostra Mercato d'Arte Antica e Moderna, Terni, Italy



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