



PRESS RELEASE **OVERPAINTING**

Location: 11/12 Dover Street, London W1S 4LJ, United Kingdom

Catalogue with text by Luca Massimo Barbero

Dates: 5th February – 20th March 2015

Opening hours: Monday-Friday, 9am – 6pm

With this show, the Repetto Gallery pays tribute to a new genre, a new technical idea in a dramatic yet fortuitous coupling, through some of the works of nine major artists from the second half of the 20th century.

Despite being historically distinct and at times even at odds, as far back as the 19th century, photography and painting, technique and craftsmanship, have sought dialogue and comparison, despite being uneasy bedfellows. Several great impressionist painters like Manet, Degas and Monet collected photographs, and indeed their first exhibition – as is known – was hosted in Nadar's studio. Thus there has always been an intimate yet strenuous relationship, both amicable and conflictual.

Starting from the mid-20th century, with the work of Peter Beard, Christo, Anselm Kiefer, Youssef Nabil, Shirin Neshat, Luigi Ontani, Arnulf Rainer, Gerhard Richter and Mario Schifano, this link was to become ever tighter, as the richness of oil paints, the transparency of water colours, the scratches of pencils and the hieroglyphics of the pen stroke mixed and blended with photographs and other images. On one hand we have the introspection and the irony of the portrait, of the face, the game of self-representation – be it light, tragic, sensual or dramatic – often embellished by the subtleties of watercolours (Nabil, Neshat, Ontani, Rainer), pages from a handwritten diary, places, visions, memories; on the other hand, we find

nature, landscape, the shapes of our outside world more commonly underlined by the thickness of oil paints (Beard, Christo, Kiefer, Richter). At other times, a wider range of techniques and materials is used: from pencil to pen, from ink to resin to mud to blood, in subtle alchemies, in Arabesques of happiness or desperation – be it as testimony or denouncement – interweaving with the objective backdrops of photography. As Luca Massimo Barbero writes in his catalogue text: “History teaches us that ever since the dawn of time, painting, stroke, image and creation move side by side, intertwining manual and mechanical techniques in an almost secret, clandestine fashion. Right from the outset, with the birth of the first images of *proto-photography*, the attempt was made to add colour. Artists immediately saw in photography a means by which to capture the ‘truest truth’, the image placed at a suitable distance and immortalised. The relationship between painting/colour and photography was a hybrid one right from the word go (...).”

This London event brings together a number of possible cases, typologies and emblems of this time-honoured tradition, stating the extraordinary wealth and diversity of what is emerging ever more clearly as a potential ‘genre’: one of research, and of a contemporary as well as what is now a traditional form of expression. In other words: continuity and novelty in the world of the artifice and crafts (in the most attractive sense of the word) of the photographic image.