

# Bitter Pills

curated by Jurji Filieri and Valeria Pardini

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Giovanni De Gara, Giuseppe Restano, Abdon Zani

How bitter is reality?

Difficult, perpetually complex and vague determination, flawed, certainly yes, from the condition of complete immersion to which every man is subjected by biological state. We live immersed in a multi-stimulated "amniotic" atmosphere, which alters the perception of what surrounds us and sometimes contaminates the matter itself of which things are made, the air, the light, the sounds through which we come into contact with the taste of existence, to the point of concealing its flavor.

The reality is then a fluid, shapeless molasses, with a sweet-sour taste, articulated and "sinuous"; a dynamic and non-static condition, in which, as in a menu of nouvelle cuisine, even different ingredients, generate a state of alchemical suspension and the invited dinner swirls between reckless food excesses and more reassuring culinary evocations.

Bitter Pills (bitter pills) are therefore steroid sweets, Cortisone (bitter as it appears to the taste the hormone used for the preparation of the drug) with which the organism is prepared for the reaction of struggle or escape from reality, until the recovery of a condition existential active, organic, symbiotic with the world. A dramatic passage through which the healing of the soul passes, which follows that of the body and mind.

Within this parable, once again the visitor becomes the patient who seeks emancipation from the constraints of his time, also through the experience of art.

A bitter, raw and fair setup, in which however the gravity of the themes and the task of the questions investigated by the artists still project positive reflections of our time, inside the color (even gold) of the media and the subjects represented.

The project brings together and links the works of Giovanni De Gara, Giuseppe Restano and Abdon Zani, in a "pharmacological" mix that supports the visitor's therapeutic revival program.

Under the golden flicker of the flags, Abdon Zani's ceramic sculpture exasperates the contradiction of armed fragility, staging an unexploded bomb from which colors and images of a less disastrous world emanate, the world of paintings by Giuseppe Restano, in which, thanks to a unique reinterpretation of the oil on canvas technique, archetypes and childhood icons, become gems for the construction of a glycemid mandala (Candy candy) happy to optimistic, which instills a sweet and bitter generational melancholy.

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### **Giovanni De Gara**

He was born in Florence in 1977, lives and works between Florence, London and Berlin. Graduated in Architecture, in 2005 he began to devote himself to contemporary art and in 2006 he went to London with *Snake Attack*, a project on original sin financed by GAI, Young Italian Artists. From 2010 with the *A.N.A.S. asphalt project* he's asphaltting works the dirt roads of landscapes painted in the paintings of other painters.

In 2012 in Berlin he developed the *People are waiting to die* project, still in progress.

In 2013 he began his activity as a publisher, printing and distributing the volumes of *The real story of a tree*, obtained by recycling waste wood or broken furniture.

In September 2014, with the personal exhibition *Giovanni de Gara: Uno, nessuno, centomila*, at the Spazio Testoni gallery in Bologna, presents the project *Looking for the Pope*, or rather *Two Japanese seek the Pope but find oil*. It is the beginning of a cycle that tells of the extinction of the species. In 2015, with other Florentine artists, he founded the *BenzoPlanet* collective dedicated to the marketing of conceptual products, including *L'ago nel pagliaio* [The needle in a haystack], *Straccio* [Rag] (the cloth that does not release dust) and *Stay* (the flip-flops to stay still). Also in 2015, in Florence, with the performance *Spring is late*, he abusively exhibited his paintings in the Piazzale degli Uffizi, in Piazza della Signoria and in the courtyard of Palazzo Strozzi. In 2016, fed up with the isolation in the studio and the dynamics of the official art market, he launched the *Mensile d'artista* [monthly artist magazine] and found 100 collectors for it for a year, receiving in exchange a work a month. The same year he created the *FRAGILE* project, an update - with revolvers, shotgun and submachine gun - of the maps and tourist guides of the cities hit by the 2015-16 terrorist attacks. On September 20, 2017 launches the appeal for the second edition of *Mensile d'artista* aimed at Italian, Swiss and US collectors.

On 28 June 2018, from the Basilica of San Miniato al Monte (Florence), the *Eldorado* project began, a reflection on the theme of hospitality carried out through temporary site-specific installations on the doors of some churches and some symbolic places, which the artist dresses with the gold of the thermal blankets commonly used for the rescue of migrants.

### **Giuseppe Restano**

Born in 1970, he was born in Grottaglie (TA) on 1 January.

He currently lives and works in Milan. From 1984 to 1989 he studied at the State Institute of Art in Grottaglie and then, from 1991 to 1996, at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence, painting section.

His formal research presents unprecedented optical and conceptual results thanks to a unique and personal painting technique. Restano paints in oil on canvas, real subjects, which in the color, spread evenly in flat colors along the edges, become hyperrealistic simulacra of a popular symbolic universe.

In his work the object is sublimated to a stage of archetypal perfection and maintains a hallucinated verismo, which redeems the subject from its natural contextual collocation.

Alongside painting he combined graphic illustration with traditional and digital techniques and in particular in recent years he has been working on a new research theme that springs precisely from the linguistic contamination of realist figuration with contemporary stylistic features. The artist's works are part of important private collections and museums in Italy and abroad.

### **Abdon Zani**

Born in 1974, in Milan, an eclectic spirit and experimenter, he studied ceramics first in Milan and then in Faenza, where he now lives and works.

In recent years he has exhibited in Italy, Germany, Poland, France, Spain, Portugal, Taiwan and China. Fascinated by that machine that is so perfect and controversial that it is man, he brings back in his works a critical, at times ironic, nuance on what our society is with its paradoxes. Try to materialize a vision of a future in which the great gaps between science and conscience have been overcome. They are complex, meticulous works that move from sculpture to installation; whose creative process is characterized by a careful preparatory phase followed by the realization phase. The sculptural technique blends with that obsessive seriality typical of our time, from which a POPular characteristic derives, however released from the original motivations of the American artistic movement.