



## Pietro Finelli

### Border Painting

January 29 – March 15, 2014

The Monopoli Gallery is pleased to present: **Border Painting** – an exhibition by the artist Pietro Finelli (1957). On display are works by Finelli including paintings and recent photographs considered to be representative of the artist's desire for discovery and analysis, or, to put it another way, the assumptions surrounding the 'how' of painting as it is only through serious discussion and scrutiny that a pictorial response can be critical of the reality surrounding it.

Finelli himself has said '*The sphere of the paintings turns boundaries into thresholds, as Walter Benjamin commented when referring to the Parisian themes in his 'Passegenwerk' or Arcades Project'. The confines represented are portrayed in art as an authoritarian, 'Haussmannesque' push towards conservatism and colonialism to the cost of the 'Flâneur'. Colonial expansion meant that little importance was attributed to the minutiae of street life yet the 'Threshold' or 'Boundary' marks an area where it is possible to negate external agents set on exploiting geo-political power in order to gain status and profit. The 'Threshold' is unexplored and uncontaminated, therein we can unlock our desire to expand and measure ourselves continuously from within – exploding and imploding, searching and measuring. In this way, also, the artist is attracted to boundaries as a metamorphosing entity, moving continuously, always in progress and never stable.*

Finelli is an artist who is attracted to fathoming darkness. By using oils it is possible to transfer colour pigments which in turn portray a gloomy, cloudy, ill lit, dank atmosphere, which is nonetheless not void of brightness and opacity, albeit in shades so dark as to recall dungeons and caverns of ancient times, thus giving the works an archaic feeling.

To the artist, the black palette represents an aesthetic dimension. Black creates a depth of painting and centre of interest embodying the internalised discipline of creating, the desire to search for an escape. Black, however, becomes an obsession for the artist – suffice to consider Caravaggio, De Ribera, Rembrandt, Goya, Odilon Redon, Manet and many more.

The aforesaid were all revolutionaries who tried to express their own vision in different ways, but who were all ultimately forced to surrender to the exacting rigour imposed by the absence of colour. Only great technical ability can create breathtaking beauty, nuance and movement where there is no colour.

Finelli's images are constructed as individual frames designed in their elegance to evoke forties film noir. In fact, Finelli has paid great attention to the craft of the black and white artists: the inherent seduction of crime, treachery, the attempts at dodging justice, the importance of leaving clues and so on. The artist in his works is trying to recreate a vision which goes beyond a definitive meaning but rather expects the viewer to build their own figurative hypothesis.

Travelling beyond the explicit reference of film imagery, a closer inspection of Finelli's works reveals indisputable signs of his fascination with the Baroque. This fascination is doubtless born from the depth of darkness which renders the human form difficult to draw. Caravaggio is the most persuasive master of this art form. Religious imagery is used as the relentless background to his works, darkness is simultaneously swallowing and disgorging bodies which alternately seem to sink into the oblivion of the backdrop, while all the time advancing towards the viewer. This constant visual toing and froing is symbolic of the advance toward the grace of divine light. Eye movements are reversed because darkness is in the foreground constraining the viewer to look towards the background in order to see the light. If what we have before our eyes is what we want to see then it is necessary to first lose yourself in the darkness of the foreground to truly see what is before us.

