

Past / JACOPO BENASSI

Opening February 9 until April 30, 2021

THE VANITY OF FISH

Jacopo Benassi was born and lives by the sea. Water is an essential element that dominates, permeates and defines his identity, the breezes, colors and aromas of his existence. Nevertheless, like many people who live by the sea, Jacopo has never loved going into the water; he's never done it regularly, either for sport or for health reasons. For him and his nocturnal and club-going tendencies, with a passion for the abrasive sounds of punk, the out-of-register graphics of the more alternative fanzines, the suggestive shadows of gay seduction, this new series of underwater images thus documents an unexpected and extra-ordinary experience. It is not only the personal and quite codified way of using black and white photography, which has for some time now been Jacopo's preferred means of expression. But also and especially the unexpected choice of inverting his and our perception of nature, turning the sea into a strikingly metaphysical and nocturnal setting. The experience of an elsewhere, invariably observed at sunset, after six in the evening, while schools of small fish throng together in every direction near the shore, aware, or so it would appear, of the photographer's attention and seemingly intrigued by the flash of his camera, from which they – sociable, silvery and vain – certainly don't shy away. By using an underwater flash to cover and neutralize light reflections, Benassi has accentuated the sensation of being on another planet. A world that transcends Monterosso, the location in the Cinque Terre where the photographs were taken, under the cliff featuring the famous Monterosso Giant, just around the corner from the artist's home, to give prominence to the feelings of otherness, isolation, of a fantastical unknown and an otherworldly silence.

And they do not present themselves as simple portraits. Jacopo places his fish into a longer, articulated story, which also involves the dry land and the woods along the seaside, the color and the warmth of wood devastated by the fires that regularly transform and re-shape our coasts. And he creates a short-circuit that connects his encounters and his experiences of the external world with interiors, from the studio to the gallery, in which, between experience and visions, the private and the public, his work comes into contact with and dialogues with other images, working notes, trouvailles, random materials. A merzbau of discoveries, suggestions, and inspirations in two and three dimensions, which mirrors and interprets his way of living and seeing. That universe between *genos* and *thanatos*, *eros* and transgressions, culture and nature, which defines and inexorably feeds his artistic imagery.

Mariuccia Casadio