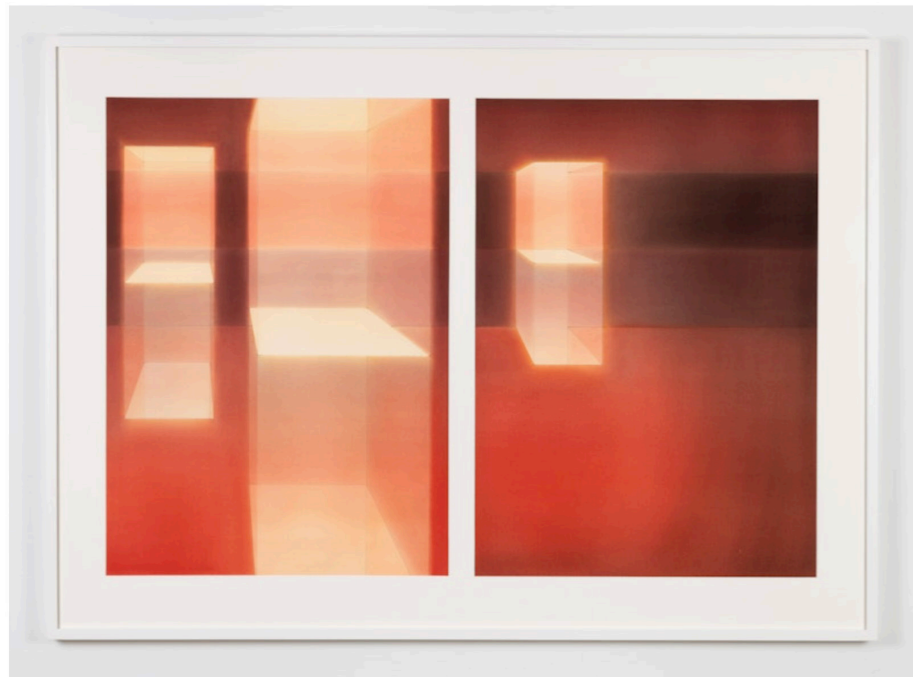


# Clockwise

By Qingyuan Deng



Lauretta Vinciarelli, *Suspended in Red II*, 2005. Watercolor on paper, 30 × 22 inches. Courtesy the artist and TOTAH.

At TOTAH, *Clockwise*, a group show that pairs up twelve artists represented by the gallery—literally forming a clockwise chain of curatorial decisions—promises to illuminate both physically and metaphorically the churning undercurrents of interconnectedness that had not been previously spoken into existence. The resulting labyrinthine of intelligent exhibition-making shines with ingenuity of custodianship, elucidating important minor histories punctured by the glorious speed of life.

ON VIEW  
TOTAH  
*Clockwise*  
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New York

Italian artist Luca Pancrazzi, a mentee of Alighiero Boetti, whose precise attention to the processes of temporal accumulation has been inherited from Boetti's conceptual practice of marking the substance of a singular image over time, selected Montenegrin artist Aleksandar Duravcevic's graphite drawing *Moon* (2022). Pancrazzi's attraction toward the myriad ways in which human perception can be temporally reoriented not only finds its affinity in *Moon* but also regains a larger-than-life vision at the limit of realism. The impossible object of desire that is the black-and-white moon, painstakingly rendered in striking detail only to be confined from a distance by the window of pictorial arrangement, pronounces itself as a fleeing snapshot in the swirling cosmos of memories, unreached by human technology.

The presence of tactility would be conjured up in Pancrazzi's multi-layer painting *Natura Stocastica* (2023), selected by TR Ericsson, who similarly proclaims and investigates private memory as a culture of images mediated by public histories. While Ericsson's fascination with the act of mourning as a melancholic demand at the outskirts of political speech leads to staging the past in the insolvent present, where traumas of life in post-industrial America (the nicotine addiction that partially claimed his mother's life, in this case) can only be gestured toward, *Natura Stocastica* takes the opposite route and insists on the substantial quality of tracing memories, allowing for the material dramatics of repetition. Translating an existing photograph of trees onto the raw canvas, Pancrazzi refutes the painterly illusion of representation and instead designates the reproduced photograph as mere ground for acrylic drops to multiply. Siding with neither photography nor painting in their competing claims for truth, Pancrazzi delegates both to embedded elements in larger structures of optical play, where the fragility and persistence of memory unfold endlessly.



Installation view: *Clockwise*, TOTAH, New York, 2024. Courtesy TOTAH.

On the other hand, Ericsson's untitled silkscreen, which restages the scene of putting down a cigarette on an ashtray (belonged to the artist's deceased mother) as a distilled moment recuperated from archive, takes on a hint of Warholian glamour that celebrates the abundance of public memory, be it cinema or poster, but soon collapses into the abyss of private realm that fruitlessly negotiates the authenticity of personal memory. Everywhere on the inked linen, marks of precarity—fallen confetti signaling fleeting joy, ascending smoke, and signs of wear (what happened to the transfer process?)—proliferate, suggesting that even restaging is affected by the loss of the first time. If for Pancrazzi the drive for a tactile sense of presence mounts to the seduction of seeing through memory, then for Ericsson such drive only points to the contradiction of a suspended life released into the realm of proxies and props, unbounded by specificity yet with its fidelity shrinking in each passing.

For David Austen, the English artist whose interest in the stars confetti in Ericsson's work is very much self-evident, the making of image is an object of contemplation in itself, capable of worldmaking and independent of contexts, the source of inspiration Ericsson meticulously reconstructs. In *Stars* (1999), selected by Melissa McGill, against a red background of timelessness intensively hand-painted, white flaring stars are distributed with no particular pattern. Evoking traditions of medieval decorative art, *Stars* unequivocally centers the metaphysical virility of certain symbols for upholding meaning in the absence of language, without alluding to such meaning itself. The elusive search for image's final destination is echoed by McGill's *Eridanus, the River Constellation* (2023), where a found Hudson River map from 1941 loses its functionality, thanks to the very river it purports to document, abstractly relayed through ink and clay, as if corresponding to a celestial constellation.



Kenny Scharf, *Tar Beach*, 2014. Oil on found painting, 30 × 40 inches. Courtesy the artist and TOTAH.

In addition to living artists, a couple of artist estate are included in the exhibition. The estate of Laretta Vinciarelli, which advocated for McGill's intimate work on paper, presented an equally ethereal watercolor study of metaphysical cubes, *Suspended in Red II* (2005). Vinciarelli's attraction to images of architectural structure manifests itself in a sensitive meditation on the serene infinitude of space. Structure is of concern to Wallace Berman (whose estate selected his never-met daughter-in-law Lun\*na Menoh's 2018 painting *Resonance*, a loosened grid of white collars that interrogates representations of labor and celebrates residues) as well. In Berman's untitled collage grid from 1966, sharing the Warholian interest in the eroticism and violence of mass communication by printing images of radio advertising, the structure of repetition and difference is led into the mystical territory, where Hebrew letters unrecognized by Berman insist on another world beyond populist imagination. Kenny Scharf and Mel Bochner, who selected Vinciarelli and Berman respectively, come face to face in the exhibition and work in opposition to their curatorial choice. Scharf's *Tar Beach* paints the apocalyptic virality of oil leak on an otherwise normal beach with a frenzy of brushstrokes whereas Bochner's heavyweight oil paint diminishes the separation between sign and referent in a dynamic interplay that turns language against itself in *Blah, Blah, Blah* (2023).

*Clockwise* follows no linear chronology and resists the biographical impulse. Instead, in traversing the psychogeography of images across language and time, *Clockwise* writes a speculative history, with its own wealth of alternative facts.

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#### Contributor

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