

PRESS RELEASE

Anna Conway
Purpose

6 March – 31 July 2016



Collezione Maramotti presents the first exhibition in Europe of the American painter Anna Conway. Four new works were created in 2015 especially for this exhibition.

Conway's approach to representation, which is equally precise, methodical, intuitive and analytical, not only involves a depiction of scenes that interweave close observation and pure imagination. She is also concerned in a picture with where we are, at what point in time, who inhabits the space, and what may be going on in his or her mind. In this respect she is as much a short story writer, or a screenwriter, or a reporter as a painter. Her acts of inscription take visual form, and even when a scene is fantastic, beyond the limits of the everyday, for her it must appear true.

We see figures in her paintings. She sees them as actual people, with a past, with a present that may hang in the balance, with hopes and fears. Invented by the artist, the figures are often derived from individuals she has encountered over the course of her life, from childhood to her own motherhood. In painting them, she comes to better understand their possibilities and desires, their vulnerability and inner strength. In making these paintings she also examines her own activity, and her works are in every way about the possibility of representing the world and our place in it, our passage through life.

Conway's paintings are temporal. There is, to be sure, the considerable amount of time she devotes to each painting, with which we, the viewers, return in the slower immersion she offers. But the temporality is also palpable. We become aware that what we perceive is a moment of expectation, a moment unfolding. We sense that something is about to happen, or has, that someone has just stepped

out of a room or will soon return. There are traces left behind, clues to follow. We see an empty room. But she is fully aware of who lives or works there, even when they are absent, or especially in a moment of quiet stillness. Conway has said that she needs to hear the sound in a painting, and that there are various levels of silence, each with a specific acoustic property to their environment. If the wind is blowing, this determines how she paints tall grass. Time of day determines the quality of color and light. Whether we are inside or outside, she knows if it's warm or cold. She knows if the sun is about to rise or set, a specificity that allows her to register and modulate the emotional temperature of the scene and its rendering.

The four new paintings in the exhibition can be thought to present us with scenes set in the early morning, mid-afternoon, twilight, and the dead of night, representing a single day in four distinct locations, which can be attributed to four different inhabitants. A fifth painting, made in 2013, *It's not going to happen like that*, is impossible to locate in time, not only because it is an interior with no window to the outside, but because its external view is a *trompe-l'oeil* landscape and a mirror where we, the viewers, confront ourselves in its immanent, mental reflection—a post-it note which affirms an inner resolve: *It's not going to happen like that*. The paintings which followed were given titles that refer to inspirational affirmations: *Devotion*, *Determination*, *Perseverance*, and *Potential*. They contain pictures-within-pictures or present us with iconic and improbable objects. In *Devotion*, which places us in a vast industrial cattle farm, there is a poster on the wall with an image of a redwood forest captioned with the word RESOLVE. In *Determination*, an African sculpture regards itself in the dark window of a New York high rise apartment. The only sign of life in *Perseverance*, a nearly vacant office that is flooded with light, is an image of the enigmatic statues from Easter Island on an overcast day. *Potential* is dominated by an enormous battleship embedded in a landscape, afloat not on an ocean, but in a sea of green. We are left to wonder: who placed it there, and why? Or is it there at all?

The new paintings made to be shown at the Collezione Maramotti are the result of an exceptional period of engagement for Anna Conway, an artist who has only made twenty-six paintings in the past fifteen years. The five works brought together under the exhibition's title, *Purpose*, suggest that for Conway both painting and life need to be imbued with intention and with mystery, with the aim to represent what can be sensed and observed, what is seen and what is unseen. Ultimately, this is and has always been the task of representation since the first images were inscribed on prehistoric walls, art as an ongoing story which we continue to decode.

A fully illustrated book, including an essay by Mario Diacono, and a conversation between Anna Conway and Bob Nickas, covering the artist's work from 2001 to now, accompanies the exhibition.

Private view by invitation: 5 March 2016, at 6.00pm. The artist will be present

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The exhibition, admission free, can be visited during the opening hours of the permanent collection.

Thursday and Friday 2.30pm – 6.30pm

Saturday and Sunday 10.30am – 6.30pm

Closed: 25 April, 1 May

Info

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Short bio

Anna Conway (b. 1973, Durango, Colorado) lives and works in New York. She received her BFA from the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art and her MFA from Columbia University. Conway's work has been exhibited widely nationally and internationally at galleries and museums. Among others: MoMA PS1, New York; University Art Museum, Albany; American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York; American Contemporary, New York; Guild and Greyshkul, New York; Mitchell, Innes & Nash, New York; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City. In Europe: DePury & Luxembourg, Zurich, and Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels.

Conway received a 2014 John S. Guggenheim Fellowship Award. She has been the recipient of two Pollock-Krasner Foundation Awards, the 2008 American Academy of Arts and Letters William L. Metcalf Award, and Columbia University's Debra Sabato Award for painting.

Her work has been reviewed and featured in *Annual Art Magazine*, *Art in America*, *Art Review*, *Artforum*, *Frieze*, *McSweeney's Quarterly*, *Modern Painters*, *New American Paintings*, *New York Times*, *New Yorker*, and *Time Out New York*, among others. Conway was included in *Art Review's* "100 Future Greats" and its publication and exhibition *Art Review 25: Emerging US Artists*.