

PRESS RELEASE

Anna Conway
Instructions: The Whale

15 June – 15 September 2024



Collezione Maramotti is presenting *Instructions: The Whale* (2023), a painting by American artist Anna Conway that recently entered the collection and will be exhibited to the public for the first time.

After the painter's first show in Europe, held in 2016 in Collezione Maramotti's Pattern Room, this intimate new exhibition marks an emblematic stage in Conway's artistic investigation, launching a series of works (*Instructions*) that explores the idea of animals and their trainers set against the backdrop of a green screen.

The depiction of the screen, a device used in commercial film and television production which makes it possible to isolate a subject being filmed and reproduce it on a different background, reflects her ongoing fascination with the insignificance of human beings in relation to the environment around them, which is often both magnificent and terrifying.

Green screens are also perfectly relevant to Conway's practice, which constructs an image through the successive phases of what could be seen as a personal narrative: as if writing a book or shooting a film, she adds or removes elements from the scene over the course of a long working process.

Alongside the new painting, the exhibition will present a video of about fifty sequential photographs through which Conway documented her progression towards the final work. These informal shots of its development show the evolution of the relationship between artist and image as it gradually came into being.

Guided by method and intuition, by close observation of reality and by pure imagination, Conway's starting point in the creation of *The Whale* was the concept of "rewilding": the recovery of wilderness areas through the reintroduction of native species to their habitats—and, in a broader sense, the relinquishment of human control over nature.

Always passionately interested in the animal kingdom and in potential ways of communicating with it, the artist's meditation has expanded here to include animal trainers, the environment and herself, drawing connections to childhood memories and to Melville's literary genius in *Moby Dick*.

Conway's paintings, which are animated by different intentions and perspectives, and always spring from a sound that the artist has taken as her point of departure, represent questions about people and places that are familiar, yet inscrutable.

The Whale, in which the main characters are a whale and its trainer, is a cinematic, supernatural, dramatic, even biblical work. Despite the highly dynamic iconography—with a stormy ocean and wind swelling the green sails/canvases of a precarious stage set, a wave-battered cliff and a drone filming the action—the scene seems elusive, distilled to an instant, caught in a freeze-frame that is imbued with mystery.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a written conversation between Anna Conway and American critic Bob Nickas.

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Free admission

Thursday and Friday, 2:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Saturday and Sunday, 10:30 am – 6:30 pm

Closed: 1–25 August

Info

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Artist bio

Anna Conway was born in Durango, Colorado in 1973.

She lives and works in New York.

After obtaining her BFA from Cooper Union in New York, she went on to earn an MFA in Visual Arts at Columbia University School of the Arts in the same city.

She has been the recipient of several awards in the US, including the Colene Brown Art Prize (2022), John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship (2014), and Pollock-Krasner Foundation Award (2011 and 2005).

Her most recent solo shows include: Gwangju Biennale (2024); Public Access, New York; Fergus McCaffrey Gallery, New York (2023); Palazzo Bollani, Venice; Mindy Solomon Gallery, Miami; Fergus McCaffrey Gallery, Tokyo (2022); SITE 131, Dallas; Fergus McCaffrey Gallery, New York (2021); ADAA, New York; Fergus McCaffrey Gallery, New York (2019); The Fralin Museum of Art, Charlottesville, VA (2018).