

Lyles & King

Paola Angelini

Newborn From Ashes and Fire

September 7 - October 15, 2022

Opening Reception: September 7, 5-8pm

Lyles & King is pleased to present *Newborn From Ashes and Fire*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by Italian artist Paola Angelini.

A statuesque blonde woman sits atop a galloping horse in the center of *Newborn from Ashes and Fire* (2022). She originates from the Christian myth of the Whore of Babylon, who is historically the bringer of the apocalypse, “[appearing] drunk on the blood of saints, covered in jewels, and riding a scarlet beast with seven heads”¹. In this body of work, Angelini has subverted these connotations and emancipated her from the associations to evil, chaos, and destruction. The woman in the painting has been transformed from the Whore of Babylon into a hieratic presence that represents Woman as a symbol of rebirth.

Angelini’s newest body of work draws inspiration from *The Apocalypse Tapestries* (1373-82), a sprawling medieval tapestry cycle chronicling the Biblical apocalypse. *The Apocalypse Tapestries* influence Angelini’s use of narrative structure and visual symbolism. The paintings are full of fabulously rich iconography: divine and demoniac characters, allegorical bestiary, peasants, warriors, and churchmen—all bearing testimony to the tapestry’s culture of origin. Angelini is also influenced by 20th century Italian art, ancient Greek statuary, Medieval imagery such as the tapestries, Metaphysical painting, and other art historical references which function as a visual archive.

It is unsurprising that in the Christian tradition the Apocalypse is portrayed as a woman. Angelini is interested in this personification of the apocalypse as an icon who contains both beauty and evil. Most of Angelini’s figures throughout are women without distinct identities. They exist in a timeless space—one that is primordial and tri-dimensional. Through this approach, Angelini crafts her own personal lexicon of female archetypes called *eidolon*, a Greek term meaning a spirit-image of a living or dead person, or a shade or phantom look-alike of the human form.

The allegorical value of recurring motifs function as a reflection of the unconscious, unified by Angelini’s focused palettes of three to four colors. Angelini’s material process is integral to her paintings: she begins by layering rabbit skin glue and chalk on linen to create a thick surface. As the canvases dry under sunlight, moisture evaporates from the materials making the canvas rigid and smooth, which then cracks to create an alluring texture. Some paintings are composed of several pieces of primed canvas, sewn together not unlike the tapestries themselves. The unique vibrancy of her texture and color, or “pictorial flesh,” breathes life into the paint. The artist’s synthesis of the language, tight chromatic selection, and compositions are fundamental elements of her visual lexicon.

Angelini aims to realize a vibrant pictorial space—reminding viewers of the storied history and visual pleasure of painting. The figures within the paintings are both vibrating with life yet are as immovable as ancient Greek ruins. In this sense, Angelini’s paintings remind viewers that all matter exists in a state of constant activity from their most base molecular level.

¹ Sady Doyle, *Dead Blondes and Bad Mothers: Monstrosity, Patriarchy, and the Fear of Female Power* (New York: First Melville House Printing, 2019), xi-xii.

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Paola Angelini (b. 1983, San Benedetto del Tronto, IT) graduated from the Fine Arts Academy of Florence in 2010. In 2011 she attended the workshop of Visual Arts at IUAV University in Venice with Bjarne Melgaard, and in the same year she exhibited in the Norwegian Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale. In 2017 she obtained a Master in Fine Arts at KASK Conservatorium in Gent. In 2014 and 2016 she participated in the Artist in Residency program at Nordic Artists' Centre Dale (NKD), Norway, and in the same year participated in the Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa residency in Venice. Her work has been exhibited at Museo Palazzo Pretorio, Prato, IT; Spazio K, Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino, IT; Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona, IT; Brandstrup Galleri, Oslo, NO; Museo Ca Pesaro, Venice, IT; Lyles & King, New York, US; Fondazione Coppola, Vicenza, IT. Angelini is also represented by Galleri Brandstrup, Oslo, NO. She lives and works in San Benedetto del Tronto.