FORNI
Galleria d'Arte

PRESS RELEASE

Title	**IGOR BITMAN** *Europeans*
duration	**16 April - 4 May 2024**
place	**GALLERIA FORNI	Via Farini, 26/F - Bologna**
opening hours	10,30-1pm and 3-7pm	Saturday 10,30-1pm and 4-7,30pm	 closed on Mondays and National Holidays
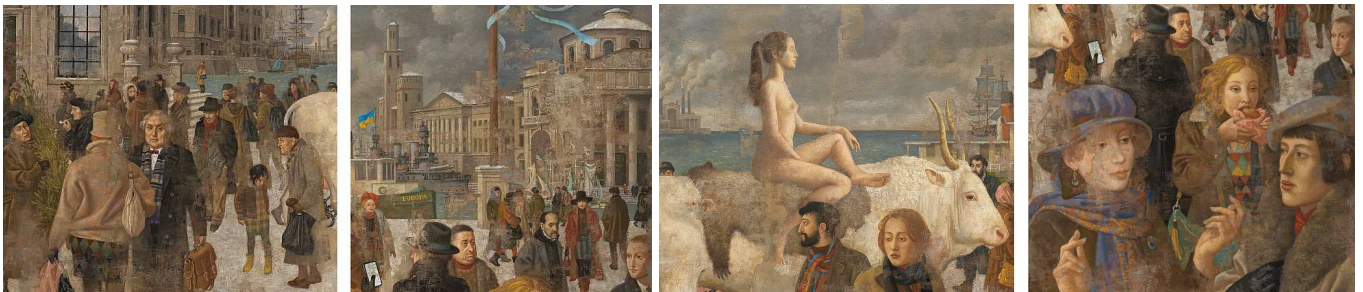
The protagonist of the exhibition is the great painting "Les Européens", which gives the title to the exhibition and around which the entire exhibition revolves, composed of four other paintings, two of which are large, and six medium-sized photographic works.

Igor Bitman, born in Moscow 1953 and living in Paris, is in fact a painter and photographer. With this exhibition he reveals both his artistic identities, usually kept separate. Yet they interpenetrate. His shots, extremely pictorial, reveal a particular attention to light, rhythm, atmosphere, elements equally essential in his pictorial images.

The large painting "Les Européens" was conceived by Bitman in 2005 but completed only last year, perhaps driven by the latest dramatic events that are shaking Europe.
Small, in the background, the flag of Ukraine.
There are numerous characters that populate this large canvas of over two meters, which we have chosen to display in the window, and around which the entire exhibition revolves.
"The Rape of Europe", taken from Greek mythology, is at the center of the painting: Jupiter, transformed into a bull, conquers and kidnaps Princess Europa.
The citations and references to the great masters of the past are evident in this work, from Tiziano to El Greco, from Velasquez to Giorgione. You can recognize the faces taken from masterpieces such as Botticelli's Primavera, Leonardo Da Vinci's Lady with an Ermine, Piero della Francesca's Madonna del Parto as well as a portrait by Ingres and, of course, the self-portrait of Igor Bitman who is confused among the crowd.

The works on display deserve to be seen in person, as the particularly fascinating pictorial matter is an integral part of Bitman's work.
In addition to oil painting and oil pastels, the author also uses the ancient encaustic technique, which involves the use of pure pigments, dissolved in wax, and applied to the canvas with special

tools to obtain a pictorial material dense and consistent. **A technique that the author experimented with Anso (Anne-Sophie Cavalier), pupil, muse, model, with which Bitman gave life to a group of very fascinating works, executed with two hands, which bear the double signature, some of which are now on display as part of this exhibition.**

With these words Enrico Giustacchini presented their works on the occasion of the 2003 exhibition at the Forni Gallery: **Bitman's way of painting "... longs for an absolute classicism, of those impervious to any transience, to any aging. (…) this pair of artists is imbued with the light of a silent and dazzling universe.** And it models algebraic and velvety architecture, redesigns landscapes with golden proportions and impeccable perspectives. It descends into such panoramas as if depositing them after a light flight, after a soft and silent telekinesis from remote cosmos of the soul - rarefied figures and things, ethereal yet alive, passed through blood and lymph, children of a different, solemn and languid chemistry: the same chemistry as ecstasy and dream."

"...a solemn world, ancient because it is rich in history, and therefore apparently eternal and immutable in its identity (...). Thus Bitman's research, although speaking of dreamism would be misleading, gives voice, in the silence of his images, to ancient and archetypal stories. Eternal. Faces, buildings, monuments, "things" that impose themselves with rarefied violence on the scene. (Alberto Sebastiani)

Bitman recently exhibited in China, where he lived for some time working on a series of portraits of great evocative power, some of which are part of the exhibition's corpus.

The camera has always been his working tool, a sort of "notebook", but now it has become his second profession. The most recurring photographic theme is female beauty, nudes and portraits.
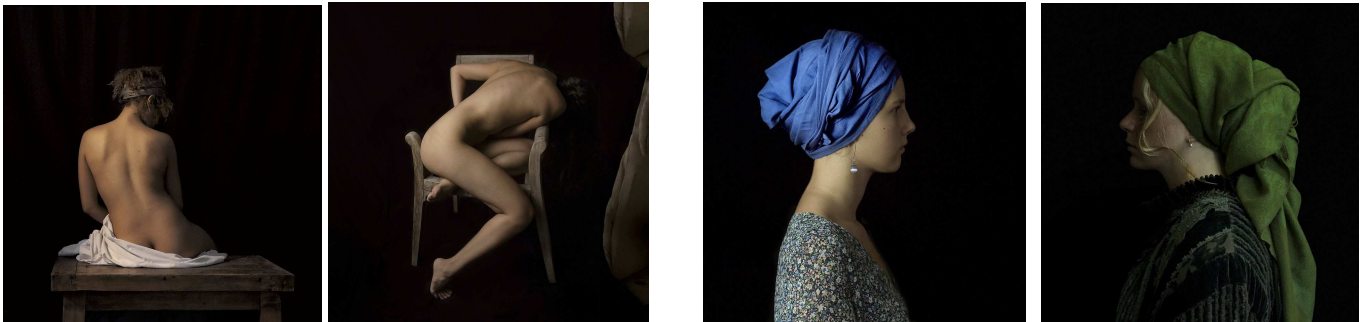
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Igor Bitman was born in Moscow in 1953. He lives and works in Paris.

After completing his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts of the Soviet Union, he participated to the movement of non-conformist painters, from 1973 to 1976.
In 1981 he left his country to move first to Italy and then to Paris, where he has lived since 1986.
Numerous exhibitions of his work have been held in France, especially in Paris, but also in many other European countries, first and foremost Italy (two personal exhibitions at Galleria Forni, in 2003 and 2008), in Germany, England, Switzerland, the Netherlands, as well to Japan, Canada, the United States, and, more recently, China.

In addition to working with oil paint and oil pastels, the author also uses the ancient encaustic technique which he introduced together with Anso (Anne-Sophie Cavalier), performing a series of works by two hands, therefore with a double signature. The meeting with Anso took place in 1999. Initially his model, she later became his student, assistant and co-author. revealing full symbiosis of ideas and intentions in all phases of the creation of the work, from the conception of the subject to the technical realization.

On the occasion of the exhibition "Europei Erranti" at Galleria Forni in Bologna, in 2001, the first "co-signed" canvas was exhibited (2Walk along the seafront of Utopia"), the result of their profound creative partnership.
Since then there have been numerous works created by the two, with their double signature, most of them exhibited in 2003 at Galleria Forni in Bologna on the occasion of the exhibition entitled "Igor Bitman and Anso". From 2003 to today, the paintings bearing the double signature have become rarer, but the artistic partnership continues.

In parallel with painting, Bitman has also dedicated himself to photography for some time, with results that equal the quality of his paintings.

◄ self-portrait by Bitman, detail of the large painting "Les Européens"

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All of the works on display are visible on our website
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