

TEMPLON



VALERIO ADAMI

ARTFORUM.COM, October 7, 2019

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Valerio Adami, *L'incantesimo del lago (The Spell of the Lake)*, 1984, acrylic on canvas, 78 x 103 1/2".
PARIS

Valerio Adami

GALERIE TEMPLON | 30 RUE BEAUBOURG
30 rue Beaubourg
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Valerio Adami will forever remain affiliated with the French intelligentsia of the '70s. Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida wrote essays about him, and in turn, Adami provided them with a fertile ground on which to implement their idea of art as language—one composed of thick black lines delineating sinewy, fragmented mannequins moving through a flat and shadowless space. Here was an art conceived as a *cosa mentale*, or “mental thing,” one that would allow one to “think through the eyes” (so Lyotard). A member of the Narrative Figuration group, Adami is a self-described drawer-painter. To him, the line is a “way of

TEMPLON

II

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thinking,” while color, usually garish and always unnatural, comes in merely to add an *état d'âme*—an intonation to the discourse. His current presentation here, his sixth with the gallery, pulls from a decade less associated with his work: the '80s.

These dozen large-format acrylics show a calmer, and weirder, side to Adami. Here, his figures are usually seen from behind. One, carrying another, ascends a mountain (*L'Ascensione*, 1984). Another rests, abandoned in a languid, maybe morbid, reverie (*Un amore : la morte*, 1990). A third contemplates a brown bluff while languidly navigating stygian waters, in *L'incantesimo del lago* (The Spell of the Lake, 1984). The real star here, however, is color, treated in faded harmonies of burgundy, khaki, and ochre. The paintings become more *painterly*, making room for a floating ambiguity, allowing us to feel rather than decipher them.

Is this phase less verbose, less blatantly erudite? Sure. But the historically determined eyes we cast on these images have also changed—grown accustomed to a new mediatic-technologic environment. In digital space as well, things cast no shadow. Freed from gimmicky postmodern aesthetics, his characters radiate a clearer mood: a foggy melancholy not unlike that cherished by the likes of Julien Ceccaldi, David Rappeneau, or Bunny Rogers, whose serotonin-depleted cartoonish roam artificial landscapes littered with the cultural debris of a recent yet stone-cold past.

—Ingrid Luquet-Gad