



Interview with

Matteo Chincarini

by Giorgia Mauri

Tutto Arabi is pleased to inaugurate a new section inside Tutto Arabi Magazine - LLL dedicated to contemporary art and art history, thanks to the collaboration with Matteo Chincarini, curator and organizer of cultural events. Matteo boasts an artistic and theatrical background, having studied cinema in Rome and at the school of the Teatro Stabile in Verona.

Moving to Milan in 2012, he combined his work as a radio speaker and actor in theater and cabaret with his passion for architectural photography, which led him to exhibit his works in galleries and ateliers.

In 2015, on the occasion of Expo Milano, Matteo presented his work at the Italian Cultural Institute in Munich, starting a professional collaboration with the Italian Consulate in Germany. This experience led him to organize exhibition events and shows, consolidating his interest in the world of art and culture.

Since then, he has taken an independent professional path, founding a business dedicated to art organization. Graduated from Brera Academy of Fine Arts, Matteo Chincarini works mainly in the field of contemporary art, also collaborating with the world of fashion and design.

Milan, the city where he lives and works, represents for him a vital center where fashion and design meet each other, synonymous with excellence and innovation.

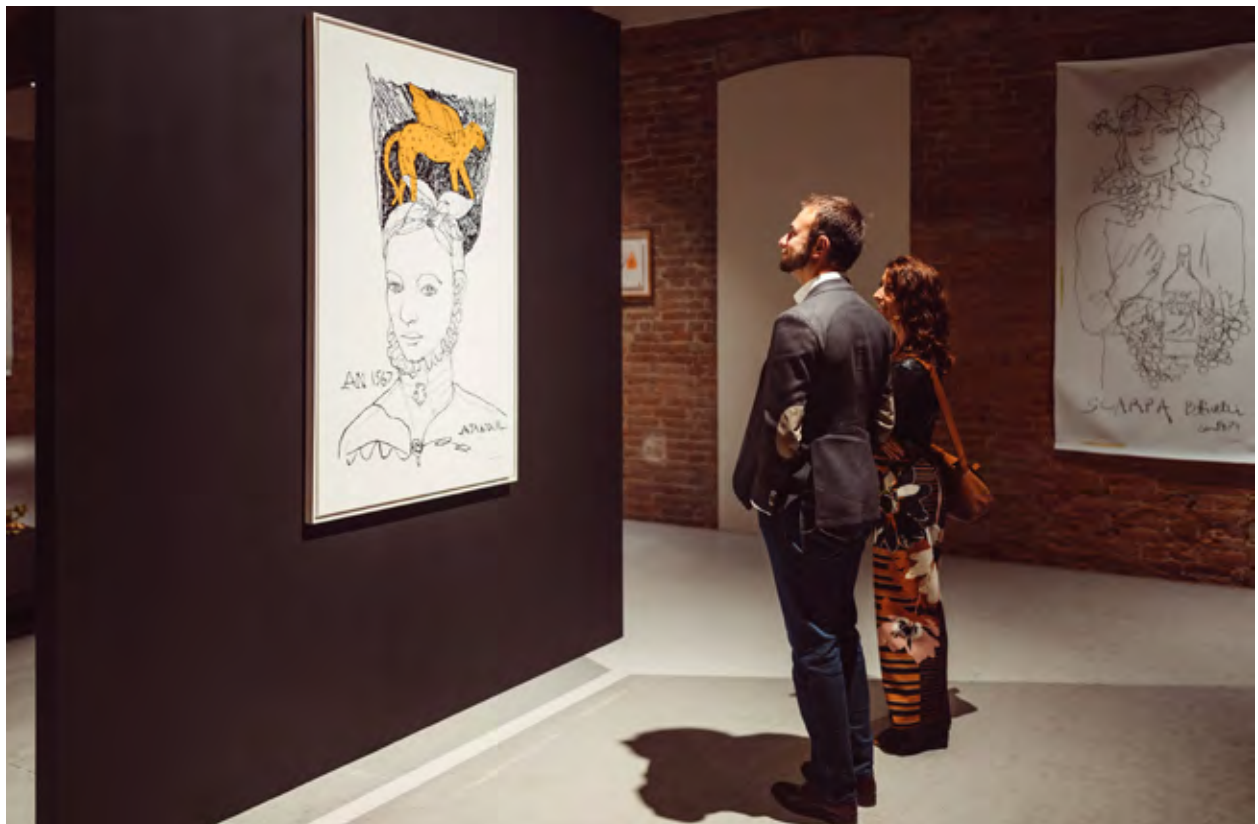
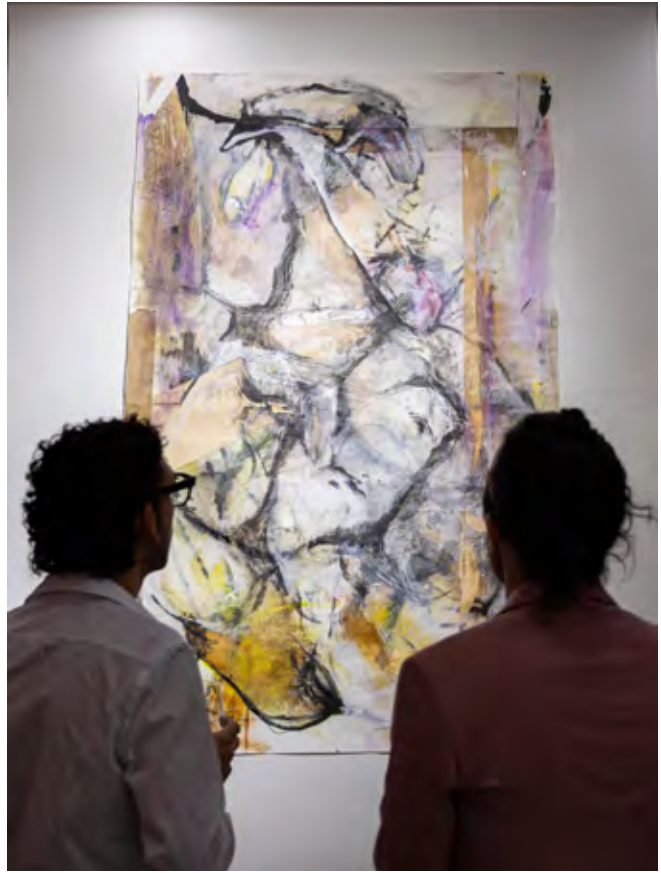
Tutto Arabi: Your training was in theater and film. How does this relate to your work as an art curator?

Matteo Chincarini: I think an exhibition is, for all intents and purposes, a performance and a show. There is a protagonist: the artist, with his or her thought and aesthetic research, and there is an audience that makes this come alive. My theater training has taught me to conceive of each event as a true staging. I like to think of the exhibition as a moment in which the artist and his or her works are performed, and every detail must be carefully attended to.

TA: Fashion and art: how do they complement each other?

MC: Those who live in Milan cannot ignore the topic of fashion, being constantly immersed in this world. In Italy, aesthetic taste and sense of beauty are ingrained in our culture.

Personally, I find fascinating not only the ephemeral and innovative aspect of collections, but also the historical and cultural context that surrounds them. For example, in 2022, we organized an exhibition at the Museo de' Medici in Florence, displaying historical clothes from the 14th to the 18th century that told the story of the evolution of costume at the Medici court. Another example is the Ballo della Luna (Moon Ball), an event I organize annually at the Bagatti Valsecchi Museum that aims to evoke the Milanese Sforza period of the late 15th century where guests wear Renaissance clothes to immerse themselves in an ancient atmosphere to evoke this historical period that laid the foundation for today's fashion.





TA: Where does your work primarily take place?

MC: In addition to collaborating with art galleries and museums, I find it particularly stimulating to work with private entities. Businesses, law firms, studios, bistros, and wineries commission exhibitions to me to offer their clients moments of beauty and connection with contemporary art in a public relations moment. These unconventional spaces add value to the works and create unique experiences. I like to call them new patrons who are passionate about art to support the work of these artists and who want to offer contacts something extra that only art can provide.

TA: How do you select artists for your exhibitions?

MC: Selection is perhaps the most complex part of my work. It is essential to keep a trained and up-to-date eye, attending exhibitions, fairs and openings to catch the most current trends. I prefer artists who work on aesthetics and the figurative, focusing on beauty and creativity. I find that skillful use of color, proportion and perspective is more impactful than works that are too conceptual or abstract, which risk alienating the audience. Of course, each artist is selected to marry well with the space I have to set up; each exhibition is a project in itself and therefore unique.





TA: What projects are you working on that you are most passionate about?

MC: I am currently curating several projects that I am particularly proud of. One is a Land Art exhibition in an abandoned village on Lake Garda, where artists explore the theme of abandonment and return to nature. Another project, in collaboration with the Academy of Fine Arts in Milan, concerns an exhibition on the urban and industrial evolution of Milan in the early 1900s, hosted in the Museum of Design. Finally, I am very excited about a collaboration with a light design showroom, where artists explore the theme of light, highlighting its fundamental role in the visual arts.





Afran

the fabric of time:

The art of giving new life to denim

Between symbolism and contemporaneity

Talking about contemporary art today means best describing the philosophy and concept behind new forms of creativity, which have long since left behind the representation of reality to delve into abstract, profound and complex thoughts. In this column, curated by Matteo Chincarini, a curator and organiser of cultural events and exhibitions, we will try to explore how some representatives of contemporary art are akin to the search for beauty and the fascination with the power of nature, elements that unite them with the readers of the magazine "Tutto Arabi".

The horse, a universal symbol of freedom, strength and connection to the earth, constitutes an extraordinary example in contemporary art practice and underlines how creative expression leads to the creation of sophisticated and imaginative works. Wanting to evoke an intense dialogue between materiality and symbolism, we introduce the works of the artist Afran, pseudonym of Francis Nathan Abiamba.





This Cameroonian artist, who has been working in Italy for years, investigates the symbiosis with one of the most democratic fabrics available to man: denim.

Denim, with its robust texture and ability to age through an organic process of wear and tear, presents itself as a metaphor for resilience and transformation. Used in art to create textures, collages or textile sculptures, this material retains a historical and social connotation, evoking work, travel and an everyday life imbued with authenticity, celebrating scenarios ranging from popular culture to myth, from the epic to the everyday. Afrahan can be considered a sculptor who makes fabric plastic, giving it new meanings through his art. Denim recalls modernity, mass production and adaptability to any context, and highlights the artist's focus on sustainability and critical consumption. The shapes the artist creates recall classical culture and the aesthetics of the ancient canons that have shaped Western culture. Thus Hellenistic heroes, characters from history and literature are reborn, modelled with all those details that denim can provide. Every element of the production is used to form the details of the pieces, such as buttons, zips and buttonholes.



Reuse of material.

This way of reusing materials started at the beginning of the 20th century, when the European avant-gardes broke with the past to explore new means of expression. In particular, the concept of *objet trouvé* ("found object") describes the act in which the artist does not create a work *ex novo*, but elevates an already existing object to art, giving it a new aesthetic meaning. Similarly, the concept of the ready-made, introduced by Marcel Duchamp, emphasises how the artistic act can consist in the selection and recognition of an added value in an everyday object. Afran takes up this tradition, involving contemporary materials such as denim. This fabric, originally associated with work and practicality, is elevated to an artistic material to create works that dialogue with modernity. His sculptures transform denim into a surface rich in symbolism, capable of telling stories of resistance, transformation and identity. In a world marked by overproduction and overconsumption, Afran uses reuse as a tool for reflection and denunciation, bringing attention to issues of sustainability and critical consumption.

Through the creative use of denim fabric, the artist invites us to rethink the value of the materials that surround us and their artistic potential.

Optical illusion?

However, Afran does not limit himself to textile sculptures: his work also extends to painting, with extraordinary oil-on-canvas works that depict denim and its details with such precision as to generate an optical illusion. These paintings, true *trompe-l'oeil* paintings, capture the weave, wear, buttons and folds of denim, celebrating the material itself and its symbolic value. Through these works, Afran narrates not only a fabric, but also its experience and history, playing with the idea of reality and representation. The illusion of denim on canvas thus becomes a metaphor for appearance and substance, inviting the viewer to reflect on the value of the visible and the invisible.

Afran, Francis Nathan Abiamba, was born in Bidjap, Cameroon, in 1987. After attending the Artistic Training Institute in Mbalmayo, he graduated in ceramics. He cultivated painting, his great passion, at the ateliers of the greatest Cameroonian and Congolese painters. In 2006, he opened up to contemporary art thanks to Salvatore Falci, professor of visual arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Carrara (BG). After numerous competitions and group exhibitions, in 2008 he presented his first solo exhibition at the Spanish Cultural Centre in Bata, Equatorial Guinea, a land to which he had travelled in search of his roots. This exhibition opened the door to a series of solo and group exhibitions between Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Spain and Italy, where he now resides. Afran has numerous international exhibitions between Africa, Europe and America, and has received several national and international awards, including the Premio Artivise San Fedele and the Premio Liliana Nocera at the Permanente in Milan. The environmental and identity issues of contemporaneity underpin his artistic investigations. In addition to denim, his favourite material, the artist does not set himself any technical limits in order to recount the complexity of an era marked by radical changes.

His recent exhibitions include:

- *Denim - Stylish, Practical, Timeless. Blue Fabric with a History, Spielzeug Welten Museum, Basel;*
 - *Pei's World. A Brief History of a Chinese Gallery in Italy, curated by Luca Beatrice, Arsenale di Venezia, Spazio Thetis.*
- Afran was among the artists representing the National Pavilion of Cameroon at the Venice Biennale in 2022.*



We chose to start this column on contemporary art in a journal dedicated to Arabian horses by talking about Afran for several reasons. First of all, his use of denim, a democratic and universal material, symbolises the idea of transformation and resilience, values that are also found in the essence of nature.

Denim carries with it an ancient and complex history: it is a fabric that connects the everyday with the mythical, the past with the present. In a way, Afran and his work embody that dialogue between creative force and nature that we wish to explore through this column.

In a world where we often find ourselves rushing without thinking, Afran's art invites us to slow down, observe and rethink the value of things, be they material, symbolic or natural.

And just like Arabian horses, contemporary art brings us back to our essence and the beauty of the journey.