

# frieze

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By Caroline Corbetta

## Alessandro Pessoli

Studio Guenzani, Milan, Italy

A preview of Alessandro Pessoli's intense, lyrical world, a single phrase - pesci freddi meravigliosi nuotano nella mia testa (marvellous cold fishes swim into my head) - was printed in white on the dark blue invitation. The show itself was overwhelming: around 700 drawings, the majority of which were stuck to the walls like fancy wallpaper or placed on a small table, so that anyone could look through them. Made from ink, watercolour, oil paint, tempera, and bleach, these images of flying saucers and dogs, anthropomorphic figures and horses, crowds and places, sucked you into their hallucinatory atmosphere, which swung between being as gloomy as a nightmare or as light-hearted as a sweet dream. It was the first time Pessoli had grouped his work in different series, and they looked like a mix between a lysergic comic strip and Odilon Redon's allegories.

Even though Pessoli draws fantastic figures which inhabit extraordinary worlds, his imagery stems from everyday life and chance encounters: friends popping into his studio or people met at openings; the daily news; songs he listens to while working; a phrase overheard from a stranger's conversation. He doesn't approach drawing as a preliminary stage to painting, but as a hybrid and unpredictable technique that gives shape to his impermanent visions. However, his work is not all autobiography: 'I act just like a filter', he has said of his method, which involves selecting heartfelt, heterogeneous elements, which he then translates into symbols. This kind of 'action drawing' is Pessoli's attempt to understand both the real world and his subconscious. His work pivots on oppositions - he lays down different colours, for example, which he might then attack with bleach; his characters make witty jokes, while expressing anguished thoughts.

This show included a few sculptures Pessoli made a couple of years ago. Scruffy assemblages of various materials such as plasticine, velvet remnants, and tins, these small sculptures were overwhelmed by the drawings and so seemed slightly redundant in an already jam-packed exhibition. However, the strength of Pessoli's production is precisely that it is 'too much' - especially if you compare it to the polished, highbrow style to which many young Italian artists are now conforming. His art is entertaining without being shallow, moving without being pathetic, and intelligent without being overly cerebral. In other words, the kind of work you should experience at first hand.