

HAUSER & WIRTH  
INVITE(S)

LEONARDO

DEVITO

27 NOVEMBER – 20 DECEMBER

WITH  
A TEXT BY

VIOLETTE D'URSO

IN COLLABORATION  
WITH

CIACCIA LEVI





Leonardo Devito, XDetective, 2025. Photo: Romain Darnaud



# A TEXT BY VIOLETTE D'URSO

My dear P,

How lucky you are to stand before these works today, to experience them in person. I'm writing to you from one of the cities that appears in the background of the paintings you're looking at today. Being here, I could only meet Leonardo online, through my computer screen. But it was the most inspiring moment of my year. I was nervous beforehand. I brushed up on my entire art history because... well, just look at his paintings! But the moment he appeared on screen, I knew he wasn't what I'd imagined. Yes, he's a genius painter, but he's also remarkably warm, with an infectious enthusiasm for the things he talks about so beautifully, the things he weaves into his work, plays with, transforms.

Meeting him this way turned out to be a perfect introduction to his art, much like looking at one of his paintings. The edges of my computer vanished and a whole world unfolded before my eyes. His paintings are vignettes from his imagination. And we're all invited in. They reminded me of Gino di Paoli's song, 'Il cielo in una stanza.' When the artist is present, before us or before these models, 'questa stanza non ha più pareti, ma alberi, alberi infiniti.' (This room no longer has walls, but trees, infinite trees).

I asked if he knew this song, probably my favourite in the world. Yes, he said, and he often plays music from the '60s like this while he paints. His studio is in Turin. He goes there every day, religiously, right up until exhibition day – the one you're at now. I think he even brought one of the works with him on the train! He's funny.

I wanted you to see this exhibition because the young girl who lies in the night he painted looks like you. She is watchful, almost wary. She has your face. I think you'd love a little pet dragon like hers. These women have a strength that reminds me of yours; like the brunette one who accepts to look in the mirror and discovers the fire is closer than she thought, licking at her shoulders. This young woman feels as near to me as you do. Leonardo paints his characters with such intimacy.

I wanted you to go so you could see exactly what I mean. I want to do in writing what he does in painting: modern characters in worlds both strange and familiar, living alongside monsters without it becoming fantasy. Don't you want to see things like that these days? Like in medieval art, where monsters appear everywhere because imagination, too, is divine creation.

One highlight of our conversation was learning that one of his inspirations for the show was Scooby-Doo, specifically the hand-painted nocturnal backgrounds in the first season of the cartoon (highly recommend a rewatch). Duccio, that master from Siena, inspired by Scooby-Doo. This is what I love—when two infinities collide. I actually jumped with joy hearing that. It surprised me and made me hungry to make art. To make art from our generation's references and blend them with the Renaissance, with everything that first made us want to make art. To break through every code.

The ambiguous realities that mesmerize me in his paintings remind me of childhood, especially childhood fear. Early in life, we experience things, even terrifying things, without knowing how we're supposed to experience them, unencumbered by others' experience, and therefore more honestly. These paintings make me think of a child whispering, 'Shh,



don't be loud, the monster is sleeping under my bed.' A child who spots a ghost in an empty apartment, but it's dancing, smiling, accompanied by a little dog.

I envy Leonardo for keeping the keys to his imaginary world and for sneaking in those Fra Angelico-esque details. And the exhibition takes its title from one of the most rock'n'roll, most punk albums ever made: David Bowie's 'Scary Monsters.'

This exhibition tells me: 'Yes, other people have monsters too. Look how calm they are. Look how beautiful it is to discover them.' Like the boy in 'Where the Wild Things Are,' wearing nothing but pyjamas, facing enormous creatures. Because they belong to his world, he isn't afraid, he loves them. And really, it's the monsters staring at him, because he's the most fascinating, most complex creature they've ever encountered. Max dances and rests among them, and then he can return to his life. Having tamed his monsters, he can face the night ahead of him, sailing through it peacefully. And we with him.

Leonardo, like every artist I think, is haunted by the idea of death. For him, it isn't tragic. His paintings remind me of 'The Tomb of the Diver,' that Etruscan frescoed stela showing a man leaping into the afterlife from a diving board. Like that tomb, his paintings bring me joy and comfort. They're beautiful, sometimes amusing, and they take something frightening and unknown and render it poetic, gentle.

At the end of the exhibition, you drift slowly back from the world of 'Scary Monsters' toward shore. Gradually, the voices around you take shape. You might even notice a passer-by on the pavement outside, waving, calling your name. After seeing these works, you return to life, but not quite the same, I should warn you.



Your gaze has shifted, having glimpsed that strange world full of kind monsters, harmless dangers and domesticated fears. You walk back into the street, calm, carrying the secret of that world where you belong,

‘Where the wild things are.’

My dear P., I hope to see you soon in person, you and these paintings both, and may we keep telling each other stories.

With love,

Violette





Leonardo Devito, Palazzo d'Oriente, 2025. Photo: Romain Darnaud



# HAUSER & WIRTH INVITE(S)

This initiative reflects Hauser & Wirth's longstanding commitment to building a sense of connection in the places where it works, collaborating with artists (or estates) who may benefit from an additional platform, galleries of different scale and writers addressing new audiences, all in support of a sustainable art ecosystem. By hosting fellow artists, galleries and writers in our Paris and Zurich spaces, we offer wider visibility of their work and ideas to engage with the city's vibrant creative community.

Organized with Olivier Renaud-Clement, Hauser & Wirth Invite(s) is hosted on the second floor of our Paris location and complements our ongoing series of exhibitions by gallery artists on the ground and first floors.



# ABOUT LEONARDO DEVITO

Leonardo Devito (born 1997, Florence) lives and works in Turin. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence, at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna and received his MFA Fine Arts at the Accademia Albertina in Turin. His recent solo exhibitions feature *Candide*, with Domenico Gnoli, Drawing Week Milan, Ciaccia Levi, Milan, 2024; *Teatrino*, Ciaccia Levi, Paris, 2024 and a solo presentation at LISTE Basel with Ciaccia Levi gallery in June 2025. Among the group exhibitions: *Last Night I Dreamt of Manderley*, Alison Jacques, London, 2025 and *X Collection 202: Portrait of a Man*, X Museum, Beijing, 2024.







# ABOUT CIACCIA LEVI

Ciaccia Levi, Paris-Milan was founded in 2013 by Nerina Ciaccia and Antoine Levi in the Parisian Belleville area. In 2020 the gallery relocated to a new space in the Marais - Arts & Métiers district, and in 2022 they opened a second space in Milan. Since its inception, the gallery has focused on presenting the work of international emergent artists, including Amber Andrews, Alina Chaiderov, Srijon Chowdhury, Romane de Watteville, Leonardo Devito, Garance Früh, Francesco Gennari, Daniel Jacoby, Piotr Makowski, Chalisée Naamani, Olve Sande, Sean Townley, Zoe Williams, and the Italian historical artists Lisetta Carmi and Nene Martelli.

Ciaccia Levi, Paris-Milan is also the co-founder of the art fair Paris Internationale.



# ABOUT VIOLETTE D'URSO

Violette d'Urso is a French-Italian writer born in Paris in 1999, currently based in New York. Her debut novel, *Même le bruit de la nuit a changé*, was published by Flammarion in March 2023 and translated into Italian by Mondadori the following year. The novel follows a young narrator investigating the life of her father, who disappeared when she was a child. Armed with an old address book, she retraces his steps, beginning in Naples, his hometown. Through fragments of stories she gathers, objects she collects, and what she learns about the cities she passes through, she pieces together a portrait of a man she never knew.

Violette d'Urso studied medieval history at the CPES at Université PSL and is currently pursuing her studies at the Gallatin School of Individualized Study at New York University.





Leonardo Devito, Letto Fiume, 2024. Photo: Romain Darnaud



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**Gallery hours:**  
Tuesday to Saturday  
10 am – 6 pm

[www.hauserwirth.com](http://www.hauserwirth.com)



