

Luca Caimmi

The Longest Night

Curated by Alex Urso

Every story begins in the dark. We are reminded of this by our ancestors, who hundreds of thousands of years ago experimented with the first forms of social interaction around the fire; we are reminded of this by our children who are lulled to sleep in dimly lit rooms by comforting tales; and we are reminded of this by Luca Caimmi, who has made the absence of light – and therefore, darkness – the ideal canvas for bringing to life fantastical narratives that take us elsewhere. His stories run the gamut, at times dark and yet crisp and light, just like the night when the day before has left no troubling thoughts behind.

ILLUSTRATION AS A MEANS OF ESCAPE

Born in Fano in 1978, the artist trained at the Art Institute of Urbino and the Academy of Fine Arts of Urbino, Caimmi's paintings are visions that start from the real to lead the observer toward fantastical locales. Created primarily with ink and acrylic on paper, the artist's works are, first and foremost, explorations of the surrounding environment. Landscape and local architecture take center stage in his compositions: the Apennine mountains, the valleys of the Marche region, along with rivers, and coastal areas that all showcase a meticulous and almost analytical awareness of space. Yet, reality here serves merely as a pretext, a springboard for venturing beyond the limits of our perception.

The Landscapes Along the Coast series best represents this theme. Starting from scenes depicting amusement parks that have been abandoned or seen at night (remnants of the 1990s "entertainment economy"), Caimmi invites us to wonder whether, in that eerie silence and uncanny stillness, a hidden, fantastical life might emerge once the lights go out. Like the toys in Toy Story, giant gorillas and inflatable frogs come to life only when unseen by human eyes. "I create these fun structures as seen when not used by people. I like to see this overlap with the night," says the artist. "It is almost as if they had a whole other life in the dark, removed from the purpose for which they were created. I like to think of it as an existential reflection on man-made landscapes."

LUCA CAIMMI'S "WILD THINGS"

Some of these works have been created especially for the occasion and never before shown. The pieces in the exhibition feature this double-edge tension that guides all of Luca Caimmi's work. On the one hand, the tangible world with its rigid constructs and architectural elements meant for the entertainment of humans; on the other hand, the dreamlike and natural sphere, almost primitive and fairy-tale-like, made up of exotic animals, strange beings with long horns, and creatures that seem to have come out of a Maurice Sendak's book (like those carrying Giuseppe Penone's enormous trunk – going who knows where and why – in The Procession).

"When I draw and tell stories with images, I like to use unusual protagonists. They are often animals that I find in faraway places or even nearby, in old magazines, in natural history museums, and in my garden, where I observe things as if seeing them for the first time," says the artist. Caimmi's illustrations are like daydreams, frontier visions where limits of time and geography fade away, making way for the unspoken. And thus, the unknown.