



Capodimonte Airport Experience

**Paolo La Motta**

*Il mare bagna Napoli. Sequenze*

**15 May - 10 November 2023**

**Gesac - Naples International Airport, ART GATE area**

**Gate C20, first floor**



**Monday, 15 May 2023, 12.00 pm – Press Conference and Opening**

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**Paolo La Motta's** exhibition will be on display at Naples International Airport (ART GATE area, gate C20) from May 15 to November 10, 2023. The title *Il mare bagna Napoli. Sequenze* is an inverted interpretation of Anna Maria Ortese's famous novel "Il mare non bagna Napoli".

But from the narrow streets of rione Sanità, where La Motta has lived since he was born in 1972, you cannot see the sea of Mergellina, nor can you feel its soft breeze. And the youths living there cannot gaze at the horizon, but only at the peeled off walls of the buildings.



Paolo La Motta knows these youths very well, and in this painting he portrayed them on a boat floating in a grey sea, rowing to reach their own personal goals. *Barca verticale*, an oil on canvas painting from 2022, is the highlight of the 12 artworks displayed in the exhibition. The boat seen from above is also the theme of the canvas titled *Barca diagonale*.

Some of the paintings reflect La Motta's late period style, while two paintings date from a different period: *Ombra e cane* from 2011 and *Anfratto* from 2017. *Barca orizzontale* dates from 2019, while *Bambina seduta*, and *Interno e Interno esterno* date from 2020. The latter paintings are dominated by a vivid red, and depict metaphysical interiors with blurred figures of children playing in the shadow. They are glimpses of a highly iconic existentialism, similar to the other

paintings depicting the boys in the interiors or in the boat. The works *Primo sole*, *Non lo so fare*, and *Orizzontale* date from 2023.

*"In these works Paolo experimented with large formats (they're all more than 1 metre large) and with a new technique. He used the polyptych, but unlike his past experiences with it, this time he didn't leave gaps between the panels, thus creating a sequence (hence the exhibition subtitle)."*

*He also experimented with collage, combining it with oil by superimposition. The palette is different, too. The colours are softer, almost a basic monochrome. Grey stands out. It is obtained by the dilution of clay, a material that*



*Paolo is particularly fond of. These are abstract works, almost analytical fragments of pictorial matter, that testify of a more conceptual reflection on painting. The different panels of each work were not made to be together, but they find their raison d'être when they are combined with each other. Paolo says that «art just happens, you can't premeditate it» and the artist is only a spectator; this is why he doesn't leave his signature on his works (he only signs them on the back)» wrote **Isabella Valente** - Contemporary Art History professor at the "Federico II" University of Naples - in her essay for the exhibition catalogue (Paparo Editore).*



Paolo was born and bred in rione Sanità, a neighbourhood that has remained untouched from external influence, both in a good and in a bad way. The people who grew up there consider it as the true heart of Naples. A place that has remained true to itself over the centuries, with its people, and their never-changing faces and eyes. It is a small-scale mirroring of the immensely varied Neapolitan society. Paolo is impressed by the harmony that underpins this society, and he always extrapolates beauty from the chaos of his neighbourhood, like a sunbeam illuminating a corner of the roofs, or the darkness of narrow spaces.

*“Paolo’s works dedicated to Naples are like an oxymoron: in contrast with the city’s buzzing life, his paintings are often devoid of human presence. They depict highly evocative, quiet and deserted places: empty rooms of the National Archaeological Museum, entrance halls of ancient buildings, geometric sights of roofs as seen from the narrow streets, solitary street corners, shadows cast by the setting sun, an old peeling wall, pigeons on a windowsill, a dog, a shadow, a dark window, an*

*empty football pitch - contemplative images of daily life, fragments of life that he captures on small media. This is how Naples is portrayed in Paolo's paintings: genuine, ancient, and contemporary. He depicts the city in an unusual way, paradoxically quiet and deserted, almost alienating but intensely lyrical” adds Valente.*



### Paolo La Motta. An unconventional painter

*“Two exhibitions at the Capodimonte Museum and Royal Park in 2018 and in 2021, a première exhibition at Palazzo delle Arti di Napoli in January 2018, a beautiful exhibition at Galerie Mercier, in rue de l’Université in Paris, failed to capture Paolo La Motta’s uniqueness. It took me many visits to his studio and many conversations with him to grasp the essence of his art”* said **Sylvain Bellenger**, Director of the Capodimonte Museum and Royal Park, who discovered the artist when he visited one of his exhibitions at the Pan-Palazzo delle Arti di Napoli. Bellenger was very impressed by his talent, and he later asked La Motta to hold an exhibition at the Capodimonte Museum.

*“What really sets La Motta apart is the fact that he lives and works out of the system, while contemporary art is essentially a system”.* This statement by Bellenger was not a criticism of the art system, but rather a celebration of La Motta’s uniqueness: a solitary researcher, in his small studio in the Rione Sanità, where he has lived all his life and from where he reflects the whole world and in particular the world of painting, of which he knows the history, the struggles, ambitions and failures.

Bellenger said that *“in his artistic isolation, La Motta is a cultivated painter. His works teem with references to the world surrounding him, but also to worlds that are distant in space and time. His*



*research leaves him one necessary and obvious choice. His freedom has no alternatives: La Motta is a painter like one is a gardener, a musician or an astronaut - professions that define your life so deeply and affect your relationship with nature, noise, silence, and the starry sky. La Motta is alone like a writer in front of his blank page and when he escapes to sculpture, it is still painting that guides him”.*



Bellenger says that La Motta has the curiosity of an insatiable collector - a great discoverer of works or artists forgotten by history. “A history that simplifies the past, just like the present time simplifies contemporary abundance”.

*“History is written more profoundly by the countless forgotten ones than by the celebrities who blind people and simplify epochs. Particularly sensitive to, and incredibly familiar with these talents that the*

*spatial and mental narrowness of institutions condemns to oblivion or, exceptionally, to rediscovery. His dialogue with the past, with yesterday or the day before, or even further back, is no different from his vision of today’s world. La Motta is their living memory, a memory that’s free and selective, but grateful at the same time”.*

The exhibition ***Il mare bagna Napoli. Sequenze***, by Paolo La Motta, is jointly organized by **GESAC - Naples International Airport** and the **Capodimonte Museum and Royal Park**, in collaboration with the association **Amici di Capodimonte ets.** Exhibition design by **Lucio Turchetta**.

**ART GATE: Capodimonte and Capodichino united by art**

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The 'ART GATE' exhibition space in the boarding area of Naples International Airport is entirely dedicated to the art scene in the Campania region. The exhibitions that are periodically mounted here are meant to highlight the cultural liveliness of Naples, a city rich in history and art but always willing to experiment with new languages and to welcome different cultural instances. They are jointly organized by Naples International Airport and the Capodimonte Museum and Royal Park, two key actors in the tourism development of Naples. The ART GATE space was inaugurated on 23 December 2022 with the exhibition **Salvatore Emblema. La materia del Cielo**.

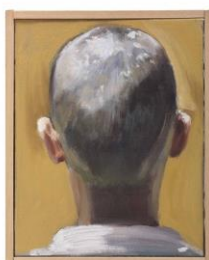
*"The airport is an inclusive place. A crossroads of cultures and languages, but also an opportunity to bring people closer to art. In addition to giving a strong boost to the city's economy and offering quality services to travellers, Naples airport has created a space with a strong connection to the territory, with a view to offering its passengers a cultural experience, generating emotions, and disseminating knowledge and beauty. The collaboration with Capodimonte gave me the opportunity to host Paolo La Motta at the airport, that is the access gate to the place that he depicts with profound love. Naples is a challenging city where it is possible and necessary to cultivate beauty, create economic development and work to overcome social inequalities. And Capodimonte, Capodichino and rione Sanità are a proof of that. I am grateful to Director Bellenger for making the Capodimonte Museum a veritable excellence and a great tourist attraction of which we are proud sponsors", said Roberto Barbieri, CEO of GESAC.*

*"After Salvator Emblema, thanks to the sensitivity and originality of Gesac CEO Roberto Barbieri, Capodichino will now host an exhibition by internationally renowned Neapolitan artist Paolo La Motta. And I am extremely grateful to him for that. The exhibition 'Il mare bagna Napoli. Sequenze', tells a story of changing images, a Neapolitan story, made of literature, colour, cinema, memory, experience and light. They are displayed in an unexpected yet relevant place - an airport, where the sky connects arrivals and departures. Capodimonte, Capodichino, our two names are evocative of our geographical proximity. Thanks to Barbieri's excellent work, increasingly more planes fly over our museum, carrying visitors on a modern Grand Tour and bringing wealth to our city" said Sylvain Bellenger, Director of the Capodimonte Museum and Royal Park.*

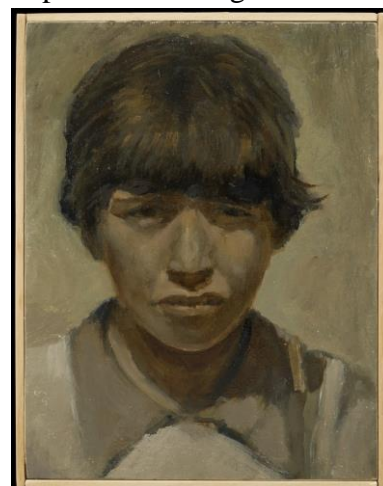
## La Motta and Capodimonte Museum and Royal Park

Capodimonte Museum and Royal Park dedicated two exhibitions to Paolo La Motta. The first one was **Paolo La Motta guarda Capodimonte** (30 June 2018 - 24 February 2019) as part of the exhibition cycle "Incontri Sensibili". This exhibition also featured *Genny* (2007), a polyptych made up of four paintings and a terracotta bust, which plays with two- and three-dimensionality, five elements like the five letters on the back of each work making up the name of Genny Cesarano, a young victim of Camorra who was killed by a stray bullet during an intimidation raid in piazza Sanità on 6 September 2015. In 2019 the Capodimonte Museum and Royal Park purchased the work, which is now part of the Museum's permanent collection.





The second exhibition, ***Paolo La Motta incontra la Sanità*** (18 February 2021 – 16 January 2022), curated by Sylvain Bellenger and Maria Tamajo Contarini, was dedicated to the youths of his neighbourhood: their faces are scrutinized, loved, respected and then captured in the terracotta or modelled by means of a dense and plastic painting. They also feature *Diego*, a portrait of a very young Maradona: half-closed eyes, furrowed brows, a grimace, and the expression of the face that sends out a desperate cry to the world. The portrait was based on a picture of Diego Armando Maradona in his early twenties, which was posted on Facebook by an Argentinian fan a few hours after the death of the champion so loved in Naples for his goals and his humanity. That young man, who would later become the “Pibe de Oro”, lived in a shantytown in Riva Fiorita. In those sad eyes Paolo La Motta recognized the gaze of those who live on the margins of society, the gaze of the “scugnizzi” of Naples, of the kids living in his beloved Rione Sanità. The work was purchased and then donated to the Capodimonte Museum by the Premio GreenCare Association with the support of entrepreneur Gianfranco D'Amato, who also built two football pitches in the Royal Park with the aim of fostering sociality between the youths of Naples, to enhance the social value of the park and to attract a new type of public to the Museum.



### Useful Information

Title: **Paolo La Motta. *Il mare bagna Napoli. Sequenze***

Curated by **Sylvain Bellenger**

Dates: **15 May 2023 -10 November 2023**

Venue: **Naples Airport (boarding area, C20)**



Capodimonte Airport Experience

## Free admission beyond security checkpoint

### Biography

Paolo La Motta is a Neapolitan artist (born in 1972), with an academic background. He has a fair number of exhibitions to his credit, including three major ones: at Galerie Mercier in Paris in 2019 and at the Capodimonte Museum in 2018 and 2021. He lives and works outside the art system and market, without the support of any gallery. He lives and chooses his artist status by the day. At the Academy of Fine Arts, he was a pupil of Augusto Perez, from whom he derived his love for plastic modelling and materials. He is both sculptor and painter, two souls that cannot be separated in him. As a sculptor, he definitely prefers contact with clay, which bends and forms in his hands. After dealing with space and volume in sculpture, he turned to painting to satisfy his need for colour. His wide-ranging visual culture has enabled him to collect and elaborate on the heritage of the past, in particular the Italian and European 19th and 20th century art, which is reflected in his production without undermining its originality and coherence.

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