

# BERNARDUCCI.MEISEL.GALLERY

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## **ROBERTO BERNARDI**

*CASTELLI DI ZUCCHERO*

3 MARCH – 2 APRIL 2016

Bernarducci Meisel Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new still life paintings by Roberto Bernardi of perfectly arranged assorted sweets from Dylan's Candy Bar in New York and Perugia Chocolates from the artist's hometown. Bright monotone backgrounds and intricate reflections are signatures of Bernardi's optimistic and uplifting work. The exhibition titled *Castelli di Zuccherо* translates from Italian to Castles of Sugar as the artist personifies the sweets into fortresses with clever compositional arrangements.

*L'ippopotamo al Tramonto* (2015) depicts an open clip-top glass jar with a green lollipop of a purple hippopotamus, a yellow flower, and assorted striped lollipops. These hint to the title that translated to *Hippopotamus at Sunrise*. The stage for this delectable still life takes place on a reflective red plane against a red orange backdrop. These colors, which also appear in the candies, merge together to create a clear horizon line giving the painting a magical and surreal sensation. Bernardi selects the most delectable treats from Dylan's Candy Bar in New York City and spends countless hours carefully placing and lighting the candies until the perfect composition is achieved. He then photographs the arrangement and uses this highly detailed image as source material for his paintings. Since the camera flattens the image, Bernardi paints what is lost by distorting the perspective and enhancing the painting to make it feel as alive as possible.

In a societal sense, Bernardi's choice of delicacies are a contribution to the lineage of traditional still life themes of *vanitas* and *memento mori*. Seventeenth century well-to-do merchants would commission still lifes of decadent items to remind them that the pleasures in life are temporary and that death will come to them just as fruit will rot and wine will sour. However, Bernardi's still lifes are more optimistic—they do not contain sweets that would spoil in time but consist of candies that have a long shelf life. Perhaps this is a view of a glass half full and a play on the theme of *memento vivere*. Each moment of our lives spent away from toil is there to remind us that small pleasures are imperative to our overall well-being.

Born in the historic Italian town of Todi, Bernardi began working as a restoration specialist in historic Italian churches where he mimicked the technique of renowned Renaissance fresco painters to maintain their delicate work. His work has been featured in notable exhibitions such as a traveling exhibition entitled *50 Years of Photorealism: 1962-2012* which was on view at the Kunsthalle Tuebingen (Germany), Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza (Madrid, Spain), Saarlandmuseum (Saarbrueken, Germany), The Birmingham Gallery of Art (England), Museum of Fine Arts (Bilbao, Spain) and will travel to the Art Museum of Estonia (Tallinn, Estonia), Musée d'Ixelles (Brussels, Belgium), Osthaus Museum (Hagen, Germany), and the Museum of Modern Realism (The Netherlands). In addition, his paintings were included in *Photorealism Revisited*, an exhibition that traveled to the Oklahoma City Art Museum (Oklahoma City, OK) and the Butler Institute of Art (Youngstown, OH) in 2013.

Frank Bernarducci and Louis K. Meisel founded Bernarducci Meisel Gallery in 2000. The gallery is well known for a commitment to established and developing realist artists. The Gallery is located at 37 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenues on the third floor.

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