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# GIUSEPPE STAMPONE

«Tomorrow, tomorrow we'll lower the shutters in protest» he said.
«Come on, let's close up our shop too» said Kâmil, «Come on, come on».
Arms raised in surrender, the shutter of our language descended.

Murat Özyaşar, *Kepenk* [Shutter], in Id., *Sarı Kahka*, Doğan Kitap, 2015

## *Shutter*

essay by Ilaria Bernardi

In the story *Shutter* by the Turkish writer Murat Özyaşar, the obsessive repetition of daily life translates into a mental geography made up of closures, forced paths, and thresholds that lead nowhere. The "Road of Coercion", which the protagonist travels until he is exhausted, is not merely a physical place, but above all an existential condition marked by inertia and the impossibility of opening up. The final image of the shutter – sudden, silent, definitive – thus acts as a metaphor that is at once concrete and symbolic: it is the sign of a limit, of an interruption, but also of a gradual darkening of the gaze.
It is precisely the image of the rolling shutter that Giuseppe Stampone adopts as a critical device for his new series of works – each entitled *Shutter*, indeed – transforming it into an iconographic element capable of questioning the present. His shutters, drawn with a Bic pen, are superimposed on the great masterpieces of art history, themselves meticulously redrawn with the same medium: from Piero della Francesca's *The Flagellation of Christ* (c. 1455–1460) to Beato Angelico's *The Annunciation* (1437–1446), from Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434) to Antonello da Messina's *Veiled Woman* (c. 1475). However, far from being a simple act of appropriation or citation, the drawn copy of the masterpieces of the past, partially hidden by the shutter, creates a visual and conceptual tension: the shutter, in fact, does not completely erase the underlying image, but obscures it, interrupts it, and renders it partially inaccessible.
It is in the tension between the visible and the invisible that the political core of this new series of works by Stampone lies. While the history of Western art has, over the centuries, built up a repertoire of images based on ideals of harmony, ideal beauty, proportion, and transcendence, our contemporary world is instead marked by isolation, fear, and repression. The shutter is thus a metaphor for our times. It is no coincidence that the act of lowering a shutter carries, today more than ever, social and political implications: it evokes, in particular, cities emptied and suspended by wars, as well as fragile economies, but above all the fortified borders and new walls that cross the world, from migration policies to the dramatic global ge-

Opening:
09.04.2026
10.04 - 29.05.2026

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opolitical situation. In this sense, Stampone's new series of works is part of a broader exploration of acting blindly in the present, of turning a blind eye, and of choosing to repress – acts that define our contemporary world.

The decision to intervene on iconic images of the modern Western artistic tradition is not neutral. In works such as *The Flagellation* or *The Annunciation*, the pictorial space is constructed according to principles of rationality, proportion, and order that reflect a worldview grounded in the possibility of knowledge and representation. Covering these images with a shutter means undermining that trust, suggesting that what for centuries has been considered a shared heritage – culture, beauty, humanity itself – as well as the humanistic and social principles underlying it, risks being progressively obscured, rendered inaccessible, or relegated to an inert background.

Stampone's new works fit seamlessly into his ongoing exploration, which has always focused on a critical reflection on the mechanisms of power, educational dynamics, and the systems of knowledge production and transmission. The use of the Bic pen, a humble and universally widespread tool, once again becomes a political gesture: through a slow, repetitive, almost obsessive technique, the artist constructs images that stand in opposition to the speed and dematerialization of contemporary communication. At the same time, the practice of copying and rewriting works from the past refers to a pedagogical approach rooted in academic tradition, yet here it is reactivated in a critical light as an act of remembrance and, simultaneously, as an act of resistance against oblivion.

At a time in history when violence – both symbolic and real – is constantly redefining the boundaries of what is visible and what can be said, Stampone's shutters do more than simply denounce a closure; they make it perceptible, almost tangible. They force us to look again at what lies beyond the "blind wall" of the contemporary; or rather, they force us to confront what we can no longer see, or what we choose not to see: what remains behind, covered but not erased, like a memory that persists beneath the opaque surface of the present, ready to resurface but increasingly difficult to reach.