

Riccardo Previdi: Galleria Francesca Minini.(new gallery opened)

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Francesca Minini, daughter of Brescia gallery owner Massimo Minini, has opened a new gallery in Lambrate, the neighborhood that is becoming Milan's trendiest contemporary art district. Her inaugural show--thirty-one-year-old artist Riccardo Previdi's first solo--took its title from *C'etait un rendez-vous*, a short film by French director Claude Lelouch, shot in 1976. A single, nine-minute shot, the film records a mad dash through the streets of Paris (the director mounted a gyro-stabilized camera on the hood of a Ferrari) that ends at the hill of the Sacre Coeur de Montmartre, where the driver meets up with a young blond woman. With the car running red lights and zooming through half-empty streets in the early morning at incredible velocity and with the sound of grinding gears its only sound track, the film became a cult classic, thanks to both its cinematic virtuosity and its sense of youthful rebellion, which finds its highest form of expression in a gratuitous and magnificent gesture. The film was immediately banned, for fear that people might emulate the driver's transgressions, and the director was prosecuted, which only added to the work's mystique.

Previdi simply had the film projected in the gallery, but in a peculiar way: Viewers entered the space and were "drenched" in light coming from behind the screen, which was made from rigid panels with spaces between them so that the light of the projection could shine through, creating a luminous and mysterious grid (titled *Tatami + Rendez-Vous*; all works 2006) in the otherwise dark room. A smoke machine spread a light fog through the space, reinforcing the feeling that one was experiencing the screening in an old, smoky cinema. *BB*, a double photographic image of Brigitte Bardot, completed the installation, along with *Percorso 275 GTB*, a low, red zigzagging tube (Ferrari red?) with an illuminated light bulb at each end.

Unless this is just an extreme case of cinephiliac devotion, the question remains: Why would a young artist, only two years old when the film was made, decide to share his first solo show with Claude Lelouch, almost as if he were hiding behind the older master? One possible answer lies in a sort of synthetic nostalgia, where the artist chooses a past that is rather recent, although not personally experienced, singling it out as a mythical period, a "golden age." In this case, the choice of Lelouch's film seems perfect; it represents the end of a period of protest and improbable revolution, "the beach, beneath the cobblestones," as one of the poetic student slogans of 1968 put it. The film is romantic and dreamy, what with that blond woman who is the image of beauty and charm, just as the sports car and the flouting of the rules in order to reach love entails a good deal of lightheartedness and a sort of gratuitous youthful heroism. To avoid falling from the romantic into romanticism, from sentiment into sentimentality--perhaps the most serious infraction in today's art world--Previdi has surrounded his emotion with a conceptual and analytical apparatus that serves solely to mask his desire to abandon himself to emotionalism.