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## GIANCARLO LIMONI

### HORTUS CONCLUSUS: THE PAINTED GARDEN

Curated by Francesco Moschini e Gabriel Vaduva

Monday 22nd March – Saturday 17th April 2004      The gallery is open on weekdays from 4pm to 8pm,  
and from 2pm to 8.30pm at weekends

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2004 sees the opening, at A.A.M. Architettura Arte Moderna, of an exhibition (which will be accompanied by a detailed catalogue) dedicated to Giancarlo Limoni. The artist will be exhibiting approximately fifteen recent works in large and medium formats, as well as a series of small watercolours. Giancarlo Limoni's paintings manifest an extraordinarily focused and unwavering desire to penetrate the depths of colour – a chromatic intensity that emerges from the radiant tones of the artist's rapid brushwork – and a similar constancy of focus, too, in his observations of what has always been his subject: nature. But nature, for Limoni, also represents a continually evoked profundity, achieved without any dissipation and with what seems to be great serenity; although there is a disquietude behind his flowers, a sense, in any event, of something hidden, lurking in his work. The dizzying vortex of line in many of his paintings is a sign of Limoni's confidence in his own tools, his command of the instruments he has always sought to use. Thanks to these certainties/necessities, the spaces of Limoni's canvases were initially arranged (according to a criteria both complex and imaginary) in flowing lines of chromatic substance, which then transformed themselves into thick and sumptuous walls of colour. An evolution of this sort, the thickening of a void, a condensing of the field of colour which constricts the outer borders of the forms to the point at which field and forms merge into one, inevitably recalls Pollock. Yet in Limoni all this seems a long way from American Abstract painting, just as his poetics seem very distant from other work or artists of his own generation, and at the same time a deliberate step in the direction of Monet and the luminosity of Turner seems increasingly obvious and important. Limoni's handling becomes more immaterial, less impetuous, and the result is a freshness of line that becomes more obliging, a more serene spontaneity, a confidence, therefore, that comes across as the very heart of a particular spirit, of a new capacity for artistic emotion. Certainly the artist's recent works have seen a dramatic transformation, one which inevitably suggests Hermann Obrist's "cyclamens" and a whole tradition that stretches from William Blake to William Morris, finally softening into the "fluidity" of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Limoni's obsession/fixation with overwhelming fullness still remains, as though a curtain or a thick bank of vegetation were forcing us to peer hard into the work in order to make out yet more details in what is a sort of kaleidoscopic blow-up. But this obvious *horror et amor vacui* now begins to make way for moments of more diluted rarefaction: like Walter Benjamin's angel, a baroque wind ruffles any attempted fixity. Up until the end of the millennium glimpses of landscape were present in his work, acting as barriers behind which a hint of background could still be made out and suggesting a deliberate suspension of time, a sort of limbo, but now ever-more-frequent deflagrations and dizzying dynamisms suggest a clear desire to achieve an expressionistic deformation of the work as a whole. Now Limoni's "flowers" increasingly descend from above, or are portrayed looking down from the painting's zenith: the composition and arrangement of the forms pushes at the physical limits of the painting. Yet an element of baroque disorder always insinuates itself, opening up veritable "mystic gulfs" with the rapid brushstrokes whose fury initially just ripples the surface but then builds up to bubbling lava-like eruptions. The only apparent resistance to this new wave of tensions that the artist has set in motion seems offered by a certain terracotta-army-style fixity that characterises some of his recent compositions. But then an element of *cangiantismo*, redolent of Barocci and Beccafumi, softens any fixity to the point at which any degree of calm is undermined by the reverberating colour, waves of it propagating, as in Odile Redon. However, as I suggested at the start, the new direction that Limoni's poetics have taken seems to begin with the role he assigns to the line as the basis for structure – following in a tradition that runs from Henry Van de Velde to Walter Crane's theoretical work in "Line and Form": all, however, invigorated by Limoni's continual plunging into material in all its various forms, and in which he is unafraid to measure himself against the visual dynamics of František Kupka's growing circle and spirals, the unstoppable vortices of Umberto Boccioni's "States of Mind", the tarry whirl of David Burliuk's material and the "planetary" dilations of Wassily Kandinsky, and then onwards up to the freneticism of Pollock and the multidirectional brushwork of Emilio Vedova. But for Limoni all of this is overshadowed by the terse ineffability of Mondrian's trees which, spectral as pure shades blooming out of the painting's ground, seem to most clearly foreshadow Limoni's current experiments in which, alternating density and the dilution of the material, his work becomes pure apparition, both overwhelming and elusive.