

STEFANO RICCI

JE LES AI VUS

Cineteca di Bologna editions

October 4th – November 22nd 2025

Chaussée d'Ixelles 337 | 1050 Bruxelles

opening reception with the artist

Saturday, October 4th from 11am to 8pm

signing session at 3pm



From Saturday, October 4, 2025, Galerie Martel Brussels is delighted to present *Je les ai vus (Li ho visti)*, the third solo exhibition devoted to Stefano Ricci, and the first time the singular world of the Italian artist is being shown in Belgium. This exhibition brings together drawings created for the reopening of the Modernissimo cinema in Bologna, alongside *Avvistamenti*, a series of freer works, improvised observations that open the exhibition to other poetic and sensitive resonances.

The art of the movie poster is, by its very nature, an art of attraction: of desire, seduction, the unexpected, shock, surprise, and flamboyant grandiloquence. Its primary function is to lend the stained-glass window of cinema the power to hypnotize the crowds and lure them into the darkened theater. It is a luminous trap, combining the traits of religious baroque with the transgressive and marginal illusions once invented by fairground entertainers.

The drawings Stefano Ricci produced daily, over the year of the reopening of Bologna's great historic cinema, the Modernissimo, clearly do not belong to this category. Movie posters seek to awaken the curiosity and desire of passersby; Stefano's works, instead, address the intelligence and sensitivity of those who have already seen the film.

The images presented in this exhibition offer a plastic enigma, a kind of minimalist emblem of each film seen, where the title becomes the motto and the image a crystallization of the subjective experience of projection. They suggest what remains of a film if one were to distill it into a single figure, in the mental shorthand we use as a stage for remembering the films we have just watched, the characters of novels we have just read, or the people we have just parted from after a first encounter.

These phantoms with unfinished faces, their silhouettes woven from abstraction, the ancients called *phantasiae*. They have always stood at the heart of Stefano's work, but in an intimate and secret register, whispered and unspoken. His art has always held the power to remain silent about certain aspects of what he sought to depict or narrate. Here, however, is an occasion to glimpse more of the expressivity of his visual language, his sensibility, and his power of abstraction. For we too have seen these films, some among the greatest in the history of cinema.

First of all, there is the light, which conceals as much as it reveals, spread by the artist on paper in dazzling white strokes to evoke the grain of celluloid and the shimmering surface of the screen. These images speak to us of the *qualia* of cinema, the ineffable affects that this monumental device (the darkened hall, the projector's beam, the giant screen) modulates within us photon by photon.

And so, the imprint of the film that we try to summon at the theater's exit usually slips away from us, just as the work of dreams slips away at the instant of waking. It is that precious moment of silence always broken too soon by the hesitant comments of fellow spectators, even as the elusive unity of the film still glows within us in its purest form, like a constellation of fleeting, luminous intensities: the outline of a figure radiant with grace; the sketch of a gesture or a posture that told us all we needed to know about a character or a situation (but did the others perceive it as I did? And what did they see that I did not?); those invisible threads of the plot whose secret choreography we fleetingly discerned, a complex system of tensions manipulated by an off-stage puppeteer; that look, that smile of the kneeling actress that pierced our hearts in Ozu's *The Flavor of Green Tea over Rice...*

Clearly, the images in *Je les ai vus (Li ho visti)* do not belong to the thunderous rhetoric of movie posters. They quietly invite us to extend the silence that should follow the screening of a great film, and to undertake, for ourselves, that intimate work of interpretation which preserves its enigmatic trace. But for those familiar with Stefano Ricci's sober, intriguing, and enchanting oeuvre, this body of work also serves as a kind of magic key, a Rosetta stone suggesting its inner workings: starting from the films we too have seen, we now know much more about those that only Stefano has seen and imagined.

Thierry Smolderen

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Stefano Ricci, *Jules et Jim* 1962, 2024, 52 x 68 cm, acrylic, Indian ink, tempera and pigments on paper © Cineteca di Bologna / Courtesy Galerie Martel



Stefano Ricci, *Blow-up* 1966, 2024, 52 x 68 cm, acrylic, Indian ink, tempera and pigments on paper © Cineteca di Bologna / Courtesy Galerie Martel



Stefano Ricci, *Les Chansons d'amour* 2013, 2024, 52 x 68 cm, acrylic, Indian ink, tempera and pigments on paper © Cineteca di Bologna / Courtesy Galerie Martel



Stefano Ricci, *Avvistamenti/07*, 2024, 59 x 21 cm, ink and white acrylic paint on paper © Sigaretten / Courtesy Galerie Martel