

# AMANITA

## *Social Practice*

Cristina BanBan, Paul Cooley, Dan Flanagan, Federico de Francesco, Cristina de Miguel,  
Robert Nava, Marco Pariani, Marco Paul

313 Bowery, New York, NY  
Opening June 27, 2024, 6 – 8 PM

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Community, scene, movement, friendship. What makes that up? Whoever keeps showing up.

The eight painters in *Social Practice*, Cristina BanBan, Paul Cooley, Marco Paul, Robert Nava, Cristina de Miguel, Marco Pariani, Federico de Francesco, and Dan Flanagan represent a loose group of artists who have committed to showing up for each other, sharing resources, trade secrets, honest critiques, insider gossip, another body at the opening. As Flanagan once explained to Paul: “The collectors are one front, the gallerists are another. And we artists are another, and we have to look out for each other.” Creatively, materially.

Some of these artists have known each other for more than a decade (Flanagan and Nava), others met through Paul Cooley, who has curated shows that include most of the artists in *Social Practice* at his traveling space Deli Grocery. In some cases, they were introduced to each other by Marco Pariani, who has a knack for creating community. As all but de Francesco have had studios in Bushwick, (Nava: “Bushwick is the colosseum of painting”) there was simply a lot of bumping into each other. Eventually familiar faces turned into something else as dinner invites were extended and group studio visits became consistent crit sessions of the kind that is difficult to find post-MFA. Over the past few years, these artists have provided each other with incisive, essential witness. There’s a reason.

Proximity helps, so does a shared impulse towards generosity. Yet as loving and altruistic as these artists are, there’s no shame in admitting that one gives company to like-minded people. Or as BanBan put it, “I trust them because they understand painting.” And, what each of these artists understands about painting is immediacy. Though these artists represent a spectrum stretching from figuration to abstraction, these painters are united in their commitment to the moment. Each artist gives life to that principle in their own way.

de Francesco, who earned his PhD in economics twenty years ago, explained it: Random Walk Theory. An economic hypothesis that first appeared in the early 1900s, it claims that the stock market cannot be predicted, but it can be modeled as a random walk made up of a series of unpredictable steps. When de Francesco approaches the canvas, he enters a kind of totalizing present where the next moment, through action and gesture, has to be discovered again and again. de Miguel similarly describes her paintings as a “record of the moment.” Indifferent, in a way, to the final product, what engages de Miguel while she paints is paint itself: its potential for movement, how it reacts to velocity, gravity. A submission to the present while retaining the strength to guide the moment requires a high degree of attunement. Even BanBan and Pariani, who incorporate a great deal of planning in their works, rely on intuition when it’s time to execute paint on canvas, evident in their gestural, ferocious mark making. These are not artists who fuss—they attack. It’s painting with a bit of gut in it.

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You can see it in their drawings. In the visual diary that Paul Cooley draws every day, and how that becomes a painting about what's right in front of him: his window, his view. In Marco Paul's stash of looseleaf sketches in a big folder, Nava's palm sized sketchbooks filled with scribbled cats, clowns, and skeletons, Flanagan's tranced out, manic pictures, or what de Federico described as BanBan's "masterful drawings," each line an expression of fluency. Drawing is part of the practice of transmuting source material. Each artist makes something different from the immediacy of drawing. Pariani collects reference images that are thoroughly deconstructed, ransacked, in the act of drawing. He paints a canvas and carves his rendition of these images into the wet paint using his fingers until he finds a form that undoes the source material, abstracting it thoroughly in an instinctive gesture. That's one way. But, for example, where Nava's work, *Weekend Crunch*, is immediate in its offering of a child's iconography (alligator attack), Flanagan's works are immediate with a patina, a splash of paint on the road that's been run over about a thousand times, de Miguel's, as fresh and loose as a wave. The immediate, the present, the moment: these artists represent the diversity that can be found in one principle.

And the different ways of approaching the moment can be learned. Marco Paul, the youngest of the group ("All these artists are mountains to me") is getting closer to it, by watching, speaking, through that suggestion Nava gave him, about the acrylic markers. There's no hard line of influence amongst these artists, just the flower of fertile exchange. There's diversity to be found in friendship, similitude in the isolation of the studio. Put it all in a gallery and watch all that exchange play out.

– Shanti Escalante-De Mattei

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**Cristina BanBan** (b. 1987, Barcelona, Spain) lives and works in Brooklyn. She earned her BFA in Fine Arts from the University of Barcelona. Cristina's paintings are firmly centered on the female form. She depicts voluptuous figures in a palette of fleshy hues whose forms often overlap and stretch expansively toward the canvas' edge. BanBan's work combines elements associated with modernist European figuration with traces of gestural abstraction. Energetic forms emerge and withdraw from the canvases amidst a rapid attack of loose brushstrokes, punctuated by fields of color that build into layered textured compositions full of expressive motion. Solo exhibitions of BanBan have been presented at Skarstedt, London (2023); Perrotin, Tokyo (2023); Skarstedt, New York (2022-2023); Perrotin, Paris (2022); Perrotin, Shanghai (2021); 1969 Gallery and Albertz Benda, New York (2021); WOAW Gallery, Hong Kong (2020); 1969 Gallery, New York (2020); 68 Projects, Berlin (2019); the Dot Project, London (2018).

**Paul Cooley** (b.1989, New York, NY) lives and works in Brooklyn. Paul is a self-taught painter starting in the graffiti world and passing through the outsider school inside of NYC. One of his accolades includes a traveling art gallery program 'Deli Grocery' which Paul founded in 2018. During a five year period Paul hosted residencies and shows with many MFA holding artists who would encourage Paul and teach him about art history. Paul Cooley's approach to painting is tactical and romantic. The subject matter is formal, and the application of paint is fast. The work is about time and presence. Paul is thinking of painting as a performance or record of the light. Paul's drawing practice similarly focuses on daily record with an emphasis on humans he interacts with most. Paul Cooley has recently shown work at Marquee Project's, Deli Grocery, and now, Amanita.

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**Dan Flanagan** (b. 1983, Madison, WI) lives and works in Brooklyn. Flanagan studied at the New York Studio School prior to receiving a BFA from Kansas City Art Institute in 2008. Dan creates both flamboyant abstract works and vibrant graffiti-inspired figurative sketches in acrylic and spray paint. Flanagan explores the various qualities of acrylic, oil, and spray paint; he engrosses himself in an intuitive process, the result of which he won't step back to observe until the piece is near completion. Throughout Flanagan's work, the vibrancy of New York City remains his ultimate inspiration. Most recently, his work has been exhibited at Secci, Milan (2024); Jupiter Contemporary, Miami (2024); Eighteen, Copenhagen (2023); Harper's, New York, Los Angeles, and East Hampton (2023, 2022 and 2021); EXPO Chicago, online (2021); Mulherin Toronto, Canada (2019); BBQLA, Los Angeles (2019 and 2017); and Marvin Gardens, Ridgewood, NY (2018).

**Federico de Francesco** (b. 1979, Calabria, Italy) is a classically trained violinist and holds a Ph.D. in macroeconomics from UCLA. Inspired by a visual language deeply connected to music and mathematics, Federico de Francesco's drawings and paintings record the sensory transformation of the heard to the seen. Federico's expressionistic surface employs a light touch as if to recollect the nuances of a musical score. The effect is a spontaneous act or gesture that has been secretly refined through the study of color and light. He has been featured in exhibitions at Tennis Elbow, New York, NY; Van de Weghe Fine Art, East Hampton, NY; Rental Gallery, East Hampton, NY; Regina Rex, New York, NY; and most recently Ross + Kramer Gallery, East Hampton, NY.

**Cristina de Miguel** (b. 1987, Seville, Spain) lives and works in Brooklyn. She received her BFA from the University of Seville in 2010, and her MFA in Painting from Pratt Institute, New York in 2013. De Miguel's approach to painting is emotional, thinking in formal terms but balancing it out with a let-go attitude. De Miguel insists on the materiality of the painting by fragmenting the figure, so the figure is not the central point of the painting but the act of painting in itself. The iconography in her work alludes to action, velocity, and the possibilities of the body -bodies that melt physically, in the same way paint drips and melts too. Solo exhibitions of de Miguel's work have been presented at Almire Rech Gallery, London; Fredericks & Freiser Gallery, New York; Marquez Art Projects, Miami; The Journal Gallery, New York, and Villa Magdalena, San Sebastian, among others.

**Robert Nava** (b. 1985, East Chicago) received his BA in Fine Art from Indiana University Northwest in 2008, and his MFA in Painting from Yale University School of Art in 2011. Rendered through a raw, energetic mixing of spray paint, acrylics, and grease pencil, his large-scale paintings of fantastical beasts exude a playful candidness that defies the pretensions of high art and invites viewers to reconnect with the unbridled imagination of their childhoods. His work reacquaints viewers with an almost childlike capacity for fantasy and creativity, while offering a meditation on the loss of innocence and its recuperation. Nava's work can be found in the collection of Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris, France; Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, Florida; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, California; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas; The Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio; Orange County Museum of Art, Santa Ana, CA, and Zuzeum Art Center, Riga, Latvia. His art has been exhibited in various solo exhibitions, including Amanita at Fondazione Iris, Night Gallery, Pace East Hampton, Pace Palm Beach, Vito Schnabel Gallery, and Sorry We're Closed in Brussels.

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**Marco Pariani** (b. 1986, Busto Arsizio, Italy) studied at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan from 2005 to 2010. He lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Pariani is highly regarded for his vividly hued abstracted canvases that push the boundaries of the genre by exploring new techniques and embedding contemporary culture into his abstractions. Pariani's process is labor-intensive, involving many layers of gesso that are tinted in different colors and sanded down to create a uniquely textured surface, a preparation that takes many days to complete. Resting in the center on top of this ground typically resides an abstracted image rendered in frenetically calligraphic strokes, where one can just barely make out the original motif, revealing the strangeness and absurdity of his source images in the process of their deconstruction. By contrast to the ground, these amorphous images are quickly applied with spray paint. The disparity in the tempo of creating the background and foreground results in a sense of rush and adrenaline reminiscent of graffiti. Recent solo exhibitions include Skarstedt, Paris; Skarstedt, London; Cheim & Read Gallery, New York; V1 Gallery, Copenhagen; and Deli Grocery gallery, Brooklyn.

**Marco Paul** (b. 1992 Chicago, IL) lives and works in Brooklyn. He received a B.A. from the University of Michigan, Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and a M.F.A. in 2018 from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York. In Marco Paul's paintings, humans and non-humans do not merely coexist in the dream-world of abstraction, they are one, the same particles of matter and paint. The human figures seem to contemplate, frolic, play, observe and sense. They grow in and out of the world surrounding them. Vulnerable, in and out of love, navigating existence, being here. You sense an optimism akin to rebellion in the work. Recent solo exhibitions include V1 Gallery, Copenhagen (2023), The Journal Gallery, New York (2022), Deli Grocery Gallery, New York (2021) and Thierry Goldberg Gallery, New York (2020).