

Untitled, 2021



all artworks:Untitled,2022,unless otherwise stated

VERA GIRIVI: INTIMATE SILENCE

Anna Zorina Gallery, Los Angeles

December 10, 2022 – February 4, 2023

A self-taught artist living in Genoa, who sees herself as a wife and mother whose hobby is painting, **Vera Girivi** is a natural-born talent. Interested in making art as a child, she put it aside until her early-50s, in around 2013. A painting, from that time, of a chicken with a juniper tree and a house on a plot of land surrounded by water – which she recently posted on Instagram – reveals the purity of her vision and the sincerity of her desire to paint again. After seeing works of naked women by the Italian modernist Amedeo Modigliani, she was inspired to paint nudes – not in a way of copying him but in the discovery of a subject matter that fit her vision and natural painting style.

Besides Modigliani, Girivi (her pseudonym, derived from her family names: Giovanna, Riccardo and Vittorio) has looked to Marc Chagall, Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse – and more recently, Alice Neel – for inspiration, but she has rarely seen their actual artworks. Portraying middle-aged women (most often nudes, never self-portraits) in decorative interiors, the painter purposely depicts her imaginary subjects as imperfect rather than idyllic. Working instinctively, she twists her subjects' physical forms – especially the bodies of corpulent women – and often paints them reflected in mirrors, with figures sometimes reflected repeatedly within the same picture. Once she sets the characters on the canvas, she fills the space around them with floral or striped wallpaper, tiled floors or patterned rugs and old-fashioned furniture.

There are fewer nudes than there are clothed figures in the 17 medium-scale canvases (all untitled) in the exhibition, but some of them are amongst the stand-out works. One depicts a colourful room with an ocean view and a naked woman propped on a chair with its upholstered back partially hiding her body, and a mirror distortedly reflecting the scene. A second picture portrays a bathtub in the centre of an ornate room with a woman taking a bubble bath,



but the bather is visible through the side of the tub. And a third canvas, equally strange, captures a nude posing in a room full of mirrors, with a negligée draped over her shoulder and her backside reflected, improbably straight-on, from all three angles. Of the clothed figures, a painting with two women seated before a folding mirror in which only one of them is twice reflected, reveals the imaginative charm of Girivi, who has previously stated: "Mistakes create beauty." In her mind and hands, they truly do.

PAUL LASTER