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ITALIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY FOR THE UK

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AN INTERVIEW WITH  
THE DIRECTOR OF THE  
V&A MUSEUM

THE STORY OF ISTITUTO  
MARANGONI IN LONDON

DISCOVERING THE  
ITALIAN ARTIST  
MATTEO MASSAGRANDE



ITALIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
AND INDUSTRY FOR THE UK  
London, Manchester & Edinburgh



“[...] luckily, there is a light that we, Mediterranean people, were able not to lose.” These few words by the French philosopher and author Albert Camus perfectly encapsulate the spirit of *Luci della Grecia*, the new collection of paintings by Matteo Massagrande.

The celebrated Italian painter, renowned for his architectural interiors, embarked on an artistic quest to explore and discover the quintessential quality of the Mediterranean light through a series of landscapes and architectural compositions inspired by Greece, its land, and its sea. This is a journey to the cradle of Western civilisation, an ideal one for all these paintings were conceptualised and executed within the confines of Massagrande’s studio.

The world conjured up by the Italian Master – although it may at first glance appear realistic – is in fact a figment of his own imagination, yet strongly grounded in the observation of reality itself. Moreover, it is also inspired by the great masterpieces of the past that Massagrande has so intently studied since his youth, and which often serve

as the starting point of his compositions. His works are filled with erudite historical citations. However, these are not direct, literary references but faint echoes mediated through Massagrande’s artistic practice. Behind many of the paintings in this cycle we can feel the presence of Giorgione, Andrea Mantegna, Balthus, Arnold Böcklin, and Giorgio De Chirico.

Not dissimilarly from De Chirico – his more mature self, rather than the founder of the *scuola metafisica* – Massagrande employs traditional techniques and chooses traditional subjects, which are charged with symbolic meanings. This is particularly evident in the monumental *Luci della Grecia I*, a lyrical depiction of Villa Guardamangia. Through a process of abstraction and synthesis, Massagrande opens up for us to contemplate the townhouse that served as the residence of the young Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip, during the early years of their marriage while the Duke of Edinburgh was stationed in Malta as a naval officer. This is a celebration of familial love.

Massagrande’s exemplary draughtsmanship and unparalleled virtuosity of brushstroke speak of compositional rigour and freedom of expression. Dispensing with the classical idea of mimesis, Massagrande expertly captures the spirit of the place through the skillful combination of different architectural elements, harmoniously recomposed by the brush of the Maestro, and using multiple focal points, which quite literally draw the observer into the composition. The human figure is absent – like in most of Massagrande’s paintings – but the light, which is the real protagonist of his works, guides the viewer through the enfilade of rooms to the distant garden.

The palette employed in the interior is muted, the colours are delicate and pastel-like, in stark contrast with the blazing Mediterranean light that awaits beyond the colonnade. This is the *magic realism* of Matteo Massagrande. ♦

**Alessandro Lorenzetti**

Gallery Director of Pontone Gallery

*Picture courtesy of Pontone Gallery*

*Luci della Grecia III* (2022) oil and mixed media on board 40x40cm



## Luci della Grecia

*The magic realism of Matteo Massagrande*