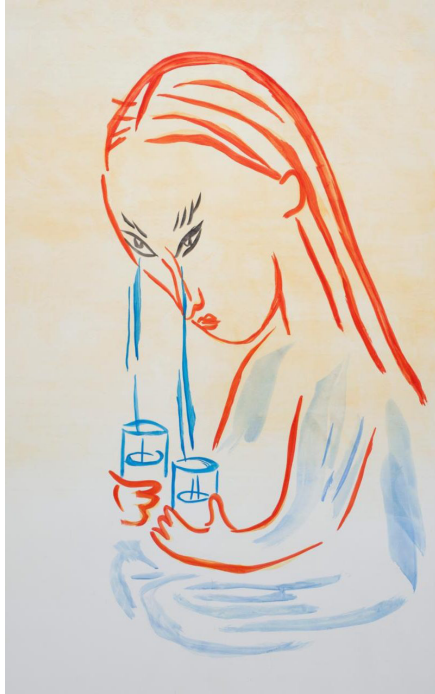


METRO PICTURES

Roux, Caroline. "Camille Henrot at Fondazione Memmo: melancholy and humour," *Telegraph.co.uk* (August 5, 2016).

The Telegraph



Camille Henrot, *A Long Face*, Fresco, detail, 2016

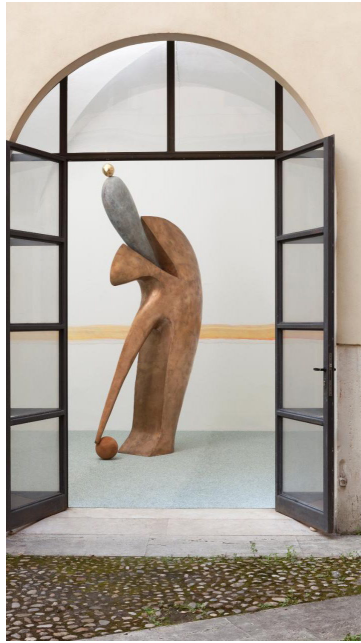


Camille Henrot, *Monday*. Installation view, Fondazione Memmo, Rome

The Fondazione Memmo is in the beautifully restored 16th-century Palazzo Ruspoli in the centre of Rome. A less than obvious presence on the street, its neighbours in Via Condotti and Borgognona are more conspicuous by far: this is the city's luxury shopping district. But while the fondazione's mission - to show contemporary art - might seem removed from the business taking place at Céline and Gucci nearby, customers of those high-end stores would find plenty to relate to at the Memmo this summer. Huge frescoes show a woman whose tears are filling two tiny glasses; and a man carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. A bronze sculpture appears to be in pilates position; another waiting for a text message that might never come.

If that sounds gloomy, then the exhibition here by young French artist Camille Henrot is anything but. It is indeed called Monday, after that most melancholic and chaotic day of the week, but its inherent anxiety is laced with a very acute humour.

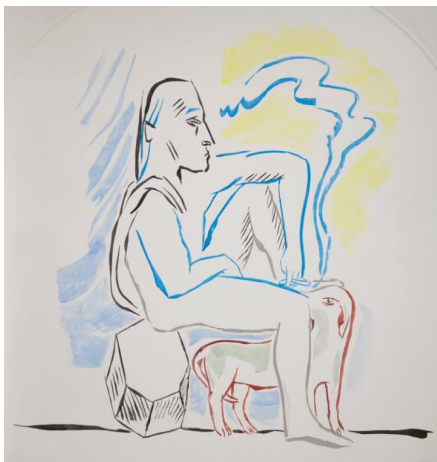
Henrot, now resident in New York, is one of the art world's rising stars. She won the Silver Lion (for the most promising young artist) at the Venice Biennale in 2013 for a work called *Grosse Fatigue* – a dense and mesmerising moving image collage that attempted to tell every possible variation on the Creation Myth in 13 frantic minutes. Henrot likes a story, so for this exhibition she spent a month exploring Rome before Monday started to take shape, pulling out the threads of an ancient city loaded down with history and religion. Perhaps the very idea of Monday even seems cathartic here, after the impossible grandeur of the Catholic Sunday as it glitters and rumbles through the place.



Camille Henrot, *Monday*. Installation view, Fondazione Memmo, Rome

Henrot also seems to like taking on heavy tasks. In the case of *Grosse Fatigue*, it was the enormous amounts of researching, resulting in enormous amounts of material. Here, having chosen her subject, she decided to create vast frescoes, in the traditional style, straight on to the walls of Memmo's three capacious exhibition spaces. While two Venetian stucco specialists worked ahead to make the background of marble dust and lime putty, Henrot herself then painted her imagery onto the wall in Japanese Aquarelle, in the huge continuous gestures such work demands. It took three weeks of solid work, and by the time we met, on the opening day in late May, she was suffering from a badly damaged back, leaving lunch straight after the main course to get to her osteopath on time.

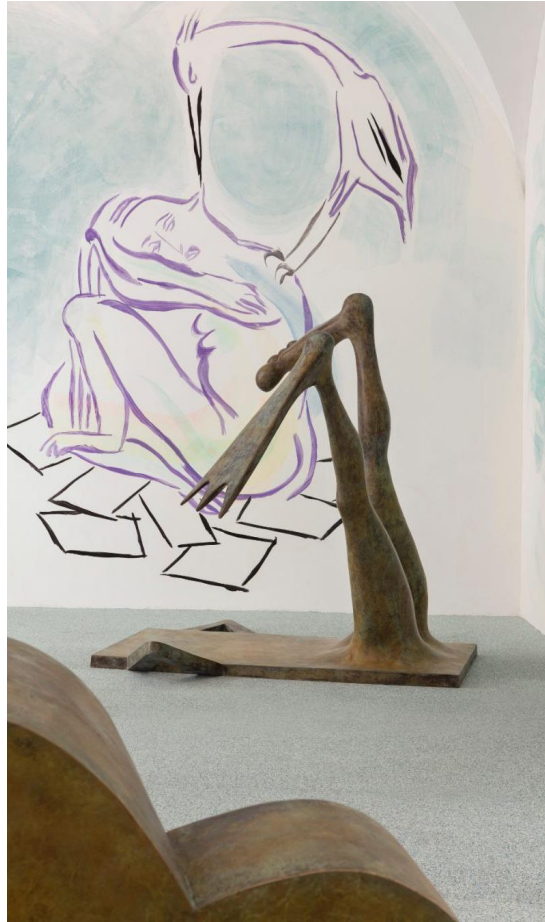
The resulting work is at once exquisitely beautiful, finely executed, funny and tragic. These are the preoccupations of the young professional 21st-century woman: vanity, disappointment, denatured by sex, guiltily addicted to smoking. The contemporary girl crying into the glasses appears to be a turned-about Virgin Mary; she holds the vessels where normally we'd see Mary's outward giving breasts and clearly obsessed with herself, not a crying infant.



Camille Henrot, *It is a Poor Heart That Never Rejoices*. Fresco, 2016



Camille Henrot, *Monday*. Installation view, Fondazione Memmo, Rome



Camille Henrot, *Monday*, Installation view. Fondazione Memmo, 2016

The series of bronze sculptures dotted through the space, and made in a foundry in Naples, start in the same vein of a Monday morning's misery – there's *Derelitta* in which a woman struggling to rise from her bed is derived from a dramatic Boticelli painting of a distressed woman barred from entering a palace. That strange rectangular form with one leg lifted is doing the sort of calisthenics that privilege muscles over emotions. But moving on, there's a looped form with a crown and a foot on a ball – a fabulous synthesis of the Roman preoccupations of religion and football. The cardinal returns in a figure of a dog in a *biretta* (the three-peak headdress) – according to Henrot there's no shortage of dogs dressed as the Pope on the internet. The city itself gradually insinuates itself into the show.

Lit by bright white neon bulbs (perhaps to allude to Monday's status as "day of the moon"), the exhibition is at once an allegory of the modern woman's life, and a gentle assessment of a city where contradictions abound.

Next year, Henrot will take on the huge spaces of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. Her plan is to develop each day of the week accordingly, and this exhibition will play its part: the wall-paintings have been produced in such a way that they can be moved as complete panels. I would strongly advise you to see the show here, though. In the context of Rome, and such great surrounding beauty.