



Valentina D'Amaro, "Untitled", 2011, oil on canvas, 80×100 cm. On view at Galleria Rubin.

“As strange as it may seem, these greens really do exist.”

Inside the work of Valentina D'Amaro

Text and interview: Inga Santa Maria, Art Consul for Galleria Rubin · August 2026

There are paintings before which the first word that comes to mind is “impossible”. The green of this canvas is one of them: so vivid, so saturated, that it looks as if it came off a screen, invented out of thin air. And yet it did not. This is where today’s story begins.

“As strange as it may seem, these colours can genuinely be seen in nature,” says Valentina D'Amaro. “It happens under particular circumstances, in certain seasons, with specific conditions of light and of grass growth.” And she adds a detail that raises a smile: “Sometimes people have told me, astonished: you know, on my travels I’ve actually seen your bright green meadows!” Here is the first reversal: the green that looks artificial is real. Perhaps it is we who have stopped noticing it.

Valentina D'Amaro was born in Massa in 1966, studied painting at the Brera Academy in Milan, and today lives and works between Milan and La Spezia. In 2016 she was one of only two Italians chosen by Phaidon for “Vitamin P3”, a global survey of contemporary painting: an accolade that counts double, coming as it did from outside Italy. She paints landscapes, but landscapes almost always without figures, where nothing happens and, for that very reason, everything does.

Her process begins far from the canvas. She starts from photographs, always her own, though she is not looking for anything in particular: “I open myself to what the images might suggest. I look at them, I feel how they resonate in me, and I choose the ones with the greatest expressive potential.” Then comes a quieter phase: “I meditate on each shot

until I arrive at a kind of mental image of the work to come.” To close in on that ideal image she works by subtraction rather than addition: she pares away the anecdotal detail, the incidental foliage, and distils everything to its essence. The painting is born twice, first in the mind and then on the canvas.

And colour? For her it is not a garment thrown on at the end. “Colour is hugely important: it sustains the work, animates it, and gives it visual authority. Through its vibrations it evokes energy, vitality, other subtler realities.” We tend to think of green as a colour that soothes, that reassures. Valentina knows it can do the opposite: “Certain tones, handled with particular techniques, can flare and vibrate, asserting themselves on the eye more than you would think.” To get there she has developed a technique all her own, built from slow layerings of paint, coat upon coat, like tuning an instrument.

There is, though, a question that green cannot help but raise: does it come from a screen? From video games, from the way we now see the world through displays? Valentina’s answer is honest and surprising. “In my landscapes of the 1990s I really was chasing strong contrasts and acid colours, to reflect on our vision of nature, by then mediated by the digital.” But then she pushed further. Beyond the play of natural against artificial, towards something deeper and more mysterious: “What interested me was the subtle yet powerful energy that renews the mystery of life.”

Here an ancient and beautiful word enters: *viriditas*. Hildegard of Bingen, the medieval nun and mystic, used it for the vital, creative energy that runs through the plant world: green as a force of the spirit before it is even a colour. This is what Valentina is after. “I wanted to affirm the dignity and sacredness of nature, on which we all depend,” she says. It is why figures never appear in her paintings: in place of human stories, trees, meadows and forests suspended in a dimension outside time. That green, then, is a state of the soul before it is a landscape.



Valentina D'Amato, “Untitled”, 2025, oil on canvas, 43×58 cm. On view at Galleria Rubin.

Now to the other canvas in the show, painted in 2025, fourteen years after the opening green. Here everything has changed: no more green, but a snow-covered mountain, a blue sky dotted with small clouds, the snow raked by long shadows. “It is an ideal mountain, more than a real one,” Valentina explains. And the light, which reads like dawn, is no accident: “The so-called golden hour is a special moment for me. The light turns enveloping and warm; it speaks of calm, peace, connection. Add silence, and you have the ideal condition for opening into a contemplative state. That is exactly what I wanted to recreate.”

You might say the first painting shouts and the second whispers. Valentina gently corrects this, and the correction is telling: “The first asserts itself with force, but also with composure. More than shouting.” And she is keen to make one thing clear: the difference between the two works is not just the passage of time. Her practice unfolds in cycles, each with its own inspiration and its own technique: geography in the “Switzerland” series, the hours of the day in the “Vespro” cycle, *wonder* in the “Viridis” series. Cycles that alternate over the years and sometimes overlap, while remaining utterly distinct from one another.

In the green of 2011 the hill pushes forward and closes off the view, the vegetation pared to its essence, that vibrant green set against a white, motionless sky. The 2025 mountain is the exact opposite: colourful, luminous, open, pinned to a precise hour of the day. And yet something binds the two canvases. “What they have in common is a sense of suspension, of silence and of mystery.” Between one painting and the next, though, there is also a personal path: “Over time, a growing interest in spirituality has shaped the way I see things, in terms of depth, awareness and even positivity.”

Both are “Untitled”, and not out of laziness. It is an invitation: to leave viewers the room to bring their own story. Fittingly, asked to name a painter through whom to enter her world, Valentina offers a single name, Edward Hopper: the master of silences and of waiting, who knew that a still image can hold more life than a thousand stories.

Look again, then, at that green and that snow. They are not a meadow and a mountain. They are two ways of painting the same thing: the silence that vibrates beneath appearances, asking only that we stop and look.

The two canvases by Valentina D’Amaro, “Untitled” (2011, oil on canvas, 80×100 cm) and “Untitled” (2025, oil on canvas, 43×58 cm), are on view in the current group show at Galleria Rubin, held over until September 2026.

For information and visits: WhatsApp +39 347 719 8672, paologalli@galleriarubin.com. Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 3:00–7:30 pm.