

# ARTFORUM

## Alessandro Pessoli

GUENZANI VIA MELZO 5

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September 19–November 8

Alessandro Pessoli's installation evokes an atmospheric theater set: a stage on which a mysterious story is acted out. Two paintings, one large, one small, adorn the walls; a sculpture occupies the center of the room. Even the show's title seems the prologue to a tale: "*Bucaneve testa che piange e sorride la mia faccia a Marzo*" (Snowdrop Head That Cries and Smiles My Face in March). It is a nonsensical narrative that perhaps gives voice to the exhibition's myriad images. Viewers discover that the titular snowdrop might be the sui generis enameled majolica sculpture that lies on a table reminiscent of the tall, narrow cots in operating rooms. The sculptural body is supine, dissected into parts, and lacking a head, arms, and feet. It is cold—almost frozen—and props up curious floral excrescences near its lower limbs that are themselves not unlike snowdrops sprouting amid winter frost. Because of its pastel hues and stylized forms, the figure is not in the least macabre and in fact has a fairy-tale-like, surreal spirit. The large painting, rendered in oil on canvas with enamel and spray paint, depicts a *Head That Cries and Smiles*, 2008. Presented against a sky-blue background and given a halo, the depicted subject has a nearly religious appearance but also seems like a joke: A stylized Madonna, simultaneously crying and smiling, melancholy and ironic. The work is both a personal icon and an amused take on either art history or other equally long traditions. The smaller canvas is a self-portrait. Pessoli appears with a very long neck; he's a Parmigianino-like comic-strip figure, portrayed hiding behind a black mask of sorts. But instead of looking like something out of a morbid contemporary news item, the figure—in one of Pessoli's subtle signature twists that nearly go unnoticed—seems to engage in a childlike game of peekaboo. For this knowing artist, nothing is more honest than a decision to mix cruel reality with ludic fantasy, down to the flower that blooms from his subject's head.



Alessandro Pessoli, *Testa che piange e sorride* (Head That Cries and Smiles), 2008, oil, enamel, and spray paint on canvas, 53 x 51 3/8"