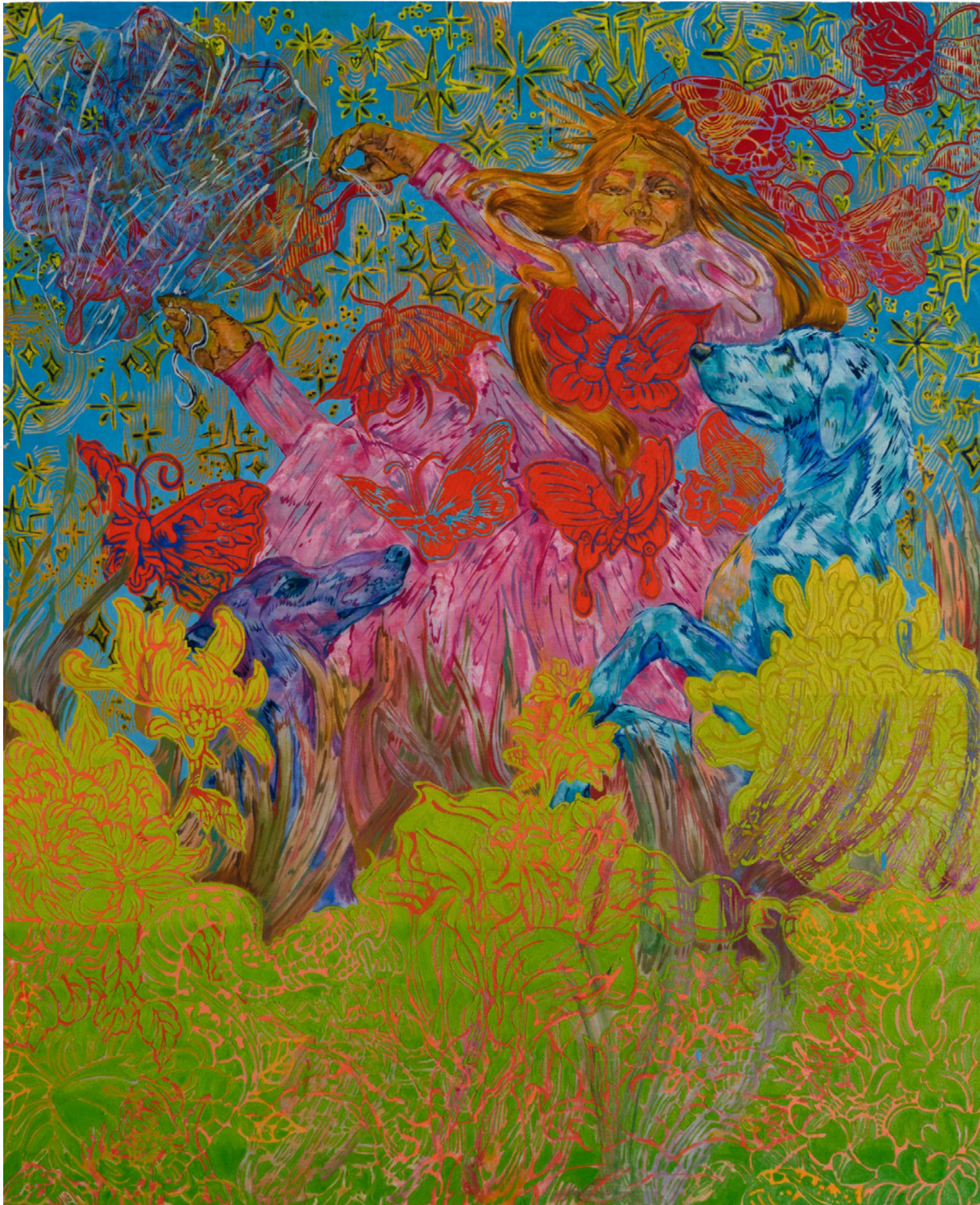




“Life is never more fun than when  
you’re the **UNDERDOGS**  
competing against the giants.” ROSS PEROT

from left to right. Tony, Fabio, in the middle the artist Wang Xiyao, Alessandro and Bruno



## THE UNDERDOGS.

**Alessandro , Bruno , Fabio and Tony**, four art collectors living in 4 different places and working in complete different fields but united by the mere and most pure passion for Art . At first, when we were introduced by Marta Orsola and heard their story last June in Art Basel, it reminded of me of 2 things: the song of Gino Paoli “eravamo quattro amici al bar”; and the other sharing a similar yet different beginning with the founders of galleria continua : (my greatest inspiration in the contemporary Italian art history of art gallerists / art collectors ). The four members of the Italian collective Fabio Zivoli, Alessandro Mistretta, Bruno Izzi, and Tony Pecoraro are Introverted , humble , and yet inspiringly passionate about Art! Underdogs have built an impressive art collection of ultra-contemporary art at the heart of their friendship .

**Art Talk Magazine: Underdogs is a term which refers to “a person or a group who have little status in society, or considered to be the weakest and the least likely to win”; Why did you choose this name to represent your group?**

**The Underdogs:** At the beginning of our journey, we were just four friends with a genuine passion for art, but with limited financial resources compared to other collectors and with no background in the art world. At that time, we were totally unaware of the art world; we were definitely at a disadvantage! We liked to think that, with only our skills, we could have bridged this gap. It’s been 7-8 years since then, but we remain Underdogs and we work hard everyday to avoid that the bridge would collapse. Now, the choice is yours to bet on us!

**ATM: Today we were just discussing with a friend the democratisation of art . How can art fairs , museums, galleries be more inclusive and not belong to a certain art elite as it was just before covid. Do you feel you represent a new type of art collector per se? Do you feel you could be an inspiration to the new generation and therefore, what would be the most important advice you would give to someone who would start collecting today?**

**TU:** Collectors, unless they aim to speculate, have historically played the role of patrons throughout the centuries. We are, in a personal way, continuing this tradition by supporting young artists in their early careers. Not only financially, but giving them a little bit of experience, advice, suggestions in order to lead them not to make genuine but inevitable mistakes by making the wrong choices. We don’t believe we represent a new type of collectors because each collector is unique and follows his way. We are simply curious, with no filters or prejudices as we deeply think a collector should be. Our main advice for young collectors is to always stay curious, disregard trends, and not necessarily seek answers within an artwork. Additionally, immerse yourselves in the never boring art world with all its contradictions. Finally, we are pretty sure that in 2023, art is definitely democratic, talking about opportunity to benefit from it. Not sure if it’s also democratic if you want to own a piece of it.

**ATM: What inspires you about art ? what triggered you all to start collecting and decide to collect together ? What are the benefits of “group- collecting”? you mentioned having a budget facilitates a budget ?**

**TU:** As is often the case, human beings have within them a talent or passion that remains hidden or latent and that, if one is lucky, can suddenly come

*At the beginning of our journey, we were just four friends with a genuine passion for art, but with limited financial resources compared to other collectors and with no background in the art world.*



Emilio Gola - Hide and seek - oil on canvas - 2023 - 80x120 cm

out and, the more it has been hidden, the more disruptive it comes out when it is recognized and released. I think for each of us this happened (talking about art passion) in a certain personal way. Then this passion that brought us together matured a deep friendship without which we could never have been what we are as a shared collection. Our coming together involves not only pooling economic forces but also accepting a motivating challenge: extracting the best from each of us, despite the objective limitations we face, and striving to create a synthesis that highlights our strengths. Even personal and individual ambitions, which could in a way undermine the resilience of the collection, are instead the fuel for us to always give of our best and work for the sake of the quality of the collection.

**ATM: Can you tell our audience how it works? Where do you find your artists, which art fairs do you visit? How do you find time to visit all the galleries and art fairs? Sometimes it feels like it's a job in itself! Do you take turns visiting art fairs?**

**TU:** We discover artists in various ways, primarily through Instagram, but occasionally also during art fairs. We follow major art schools such as Yale, Columbia, Hunter and the Royal College of Art, to name a few. We have purchased from artists before or during their degree shows, as happened recently with Li Hei Di, an artist who subsequently joined Kohn Gallery and Pippy Houldsworth. However, this shouldn't make it seem easy; on the contrary, it's quite challenging! Every year, there are over 100 students only at the Royal College. It requires to study, invest a lot of time, have a keen eye, and a lot of luck! We travel often, it's true, although not always all together. At least two of us always travel together, which makes everything more

enjoyable. In addition to major Italian art fairs, we also participate in the most important fairs in Europe, such as Paris, London, Basel, Barcelona, and sometimes Madrid or Cologne or Marseille. Due to limited time, we dedicate entire weekends visiting museums or galleries, mainly in Milan and Turin, trying to see as much as possible. Everytime we travel, also for fun or vacation, we try to carve out time for art. It's not a job, it's just a huge passion we couldn't live without.

**ATM: Are you, or will you show your collection publicly, either physically or digitally?**

**TU:** Absolutely yes. We want to share as much as possible of what we love and collect. We have started loaning a couple of works to foundations and museums, but our main goal remains to exhibit our collection in a public space. Currently, our collection is divided among our four homes. Bringing it together in one place would mean a lot to us. It's a significant step that we hope to take in the near future even if it requires availability of funds we still don't have.

**ATM: In his notes Larry Gagosian writes "Art is just money on walls". How much is your collecting also motivated by financial considerations? What is the ultimate goal of building your collection?**

**TU:** Walter Benjamin is his essay "Unpacking My Library", writes: "Naturally, his [the collector] existence is tied to many other things as well: to a very mysterious relationship to ownership (...); also, to a relationship to objects which does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value – that is, their usefulness – but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate. The most profound enchantment for the collector is the locking of individual items within a magic circle in which they are fixed as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition, passes over them".

*Fringe Brava - Mongoose in the Yard - acrylic, graphite, wax pastel, collage, metallic pigment on cut canvas - 2022 - 185x115 cm*





from left to right. Alessandro & Fabio with Ludovic Nkoth's work

When collecting works from emerging artists, we don't primarily focus on financial aspects as we don't intend to sell. Joking among ourselves, we often say that we would be quite happy if, in twenty years, we could at least recover what has been spent. We don't have a well-defined final goal; we will evaluate our journey when the time comes.

Collecting and immersing ourselves in art enriches us; we do it primarily to satisfy our personal need. We would be happy to convey our love for art to as many people as possible. To achieve this, we definitely want to make our collection as public as possible, with new loans and, as already mentioned, by trying to exhibit our collection.

Ludovic Nkoth - The Last Note - acrylic on belgian linen  
2020 - 152x122cm

**ATM: You send us the image of a painting by Giuditta Branconi. What made you choose Giuditta as the artist/artwork to represent the Underdogs collection? Do you know all the artists whose work you collect? How important is the artist in your choice of art you collect?**

**TU:** We chose Giuditta as a symbol of the new generation of young Italian artists who are finally gaining space and recognition internationally. Italy is witnessing an extraordinary artistic awakening, and it's incredible to see how these artists are united and friends with each other! Our last three acquisitions were works by Italians: Giuditta Branconi, Clarissa Baldassarri, and Emilio Gola. We know almost everything about the artists we collect. Some of them have become our friends, and we stay in touch with many messages, trying to meet them during events or whenever there is a chance. The artist plays a fundamental role in our acquisition choices. Since they are emerging artists for whom information is not readily available, they themselves share their poetics and the meanings behind their works. An empathetic bond often develops with the artist. However, the final decision always rests on the artwork itself; even if the artist might be challenging to deal with but their work is extraordinary, we would still acquire it. Fortunately, there are very rare cases where we have decided to collect works by artists with whom we no longer wanted to engage.



Lydia Ourahmane - Wax belly - Wax, Brass - 2019-  
bust 83cm, waist 66cm, hip 91,5 cm



from left to right. Alessandro, Bruno & Fabio with Zeh Palito's work



from left to right. Alessandro, Fabio, the artist Alessandro Scàrabello & Bruno