Francesco Pacelli
selected works

The research spans sculpture, immersive installations, and drawing, employing a variety of materials and techniques, including ceramics, synthetic materials, metals, graphite, and light. Drawing on science and biology, spirituality, philosophy, architectural history, and alchemy, it explores the relationships between nature and artifice, magic, and cosmic narratives.

Matter plays an active role in this process, not merely as a medium but as a generative and conceptual force. Its physical properties, inherent behaviours, and capacity for transformation become a source of unexpected possibilities, allowing forms and meanings to emerge through it. The work gives form to alternative organisms and environments, inhabiting a shifting boundary between the familiar and the unknown. These mysterious yet plausible entities resist complete rationalisation, existing in a state of ambiguity between recognition and abstraction, reality and otherness. They become physical expressions of an attempt to bridge different modes of understanding, where rational thought and intuitive perception converge. Through the study and transformation of matter, the research investigates the nature of reality itself.

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/SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2026

Arida notte
at Emerge project space, Pescara (Italy)
text by Maurizio Viceré

Nessun boato
at Anni Wu, Milano (Italy)
text by Zoë Dea Luca Legge

2025

nineteeneightyseven
at Des Bains, London (UK)
curated by Des Bains

2024

Dark Forest
at El Chico, Madrid (ES)
Two artists show with Estefanìa Flores
curated by Amina Berdin and Jorge Van den Eynde Gray

2023

Stones and Stars and Spells
at Des Bains, London (UK)
curated by Des Bains and Marta Orsola Sironi

2021

Holobiont Rapsody
at Eastcontemporary, Milano (Italy)
Two artists show with Stach Szumski
curated by Eastcontemporary, text by Claudia Contu

2020

Notturno
at UnaVetrina, Rome (Italy)
Site-specific project curated by Giulia Pollicita

2019

Fishy fishy fishy X
Rehearsal, Milano (Italy)
curated by Rehearsal

Abisso elastico
Current Project, Milano (Italy)
curated by Current Project, text by Francesco Pieraccini

2018

Ballata Vogelkop
Display, Parma (Italy)
curated by Rossella Moratto

/SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS AND FAIRS

2026

Total liquidation
2026 Lagos Biennal - *The museum of things unseen*
curated by Andy Rankin

Discontinuo Vetrina
Vetrina Collettivo Flock, Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto (Italy)
curated by Collettivo Flock

Ensemble
Fondazione The Bank ETS, Bassano del Grappa (Italy)
curated by Cesare Biasini Selvaggi

Finestre
Studio con finestra, Pesaro (Italy)
curated by Lucia Camela and Ricardo Venturi

Arco Madrid 2026
DES BAINS gallery booth, Nuevas Galerias
Two artists presentation with Sophie Jung

2025

Ovunque ci fermiamo l'altrove si fa casa
Spazio Torrso, Pesaro (Italy)
curated by Elena and Alicya Ricciuto

Centrotavola
Art residency*, Borgo Cannistrà, (Italy)*
curated by Collettivo Flock

2024

Bagliore (site specific project)
Art residency, Frosolone (Italy)
curated by Le Fonticelle di Frosolone

Dawn is now once again
at Greenfield project space, London (UK)
curated by Yasmin Vardi, Louise Oates and Emma Papworth

2023

Ring ring ring
at Pal project gallery, Paris (France)
curated by Andy Rankin

Lingua morta
at Divario space, Rome (Italy)
curated by Davide Silvioli

Cozzie Livs, Part II
at Des Bains, London (UK)
curated by Des Bains and Tom Bull

Fuori porta
at Villa Pacchiani, Santa Croce sull'Arno (Italy)
curated by Ilaria Mariotti and Caterina Fondelli

Emotional fluctuations
at Tube Culture Hall, Milano (Italy)
curated by Vittoria Martinotti and Rea

2022

On hearing of an absence
at Haus N, Athens (Greece)
curated by Dinos Chatzirafailidis

Formes vivantes
at Manufacture et Musée National, Sèvres (France)
curated by Judith Cernogora

Poggio tempesta
at Contemporary fire, Cerreto Guidi (Italy)
curated by Caterina Fondelli

Abbiamo invitato un po' di artisti nello spazio
at Osservatorio Futura, Torino (Italy)
curated by Osservatorio Futura and Giacinto Di Pietrantonio

This must be the place
at Composit Flagship store, Milano (Italy)
curated by Edoardo De Cobelli and Sara Van Bussel

2021

Corpoacorpoacorpo#2
curated by Surplace Varese and Anonima Kunsthalle
Text by Massimiliano Guareschi

Les dances nocturnes
Spread Museum, Entrevaux (France)
curated by EastContemporary

Address unknown II
Edicola Radetzky, Milano (Italy)
curated by Fiorella Fontana

Starry speculative nights
Spazio Volta, Bergamo (Italy)
curated by Edoardo De Cobelli

Entr-acte
Renata Fabbri, Milano (Italy)
curated by Chiara Guidi and Alessia Romano

In-festa
Coatto project space, Milano (Italy)
curated by Marta Orsola Sironi

2020

Luna calante
Residenza La Fornace, (Italy)
curated by Edoardo Manzoni and Giada Olivotto

Virtual archipelago
online project https://reactcontemporary.com/virtual-archipelago
curated by Re_act Contemporary art Lab

Baitball (01)
Palazzo San Giuseppe, Polignano a Mare (Italy)
curated by Like a Little Disaster

2018

Tetsuo's body
9hours Hotel Otemachi, Fuchu, Tokyo (Japan)
curated by Marcello Barison and Andrea Samory

Formes vivantes
Musèe National Adrien Dubouchè, Limoges (France)
curated by Jean-Charles Hameau

Screen tearing
Dimora Artica, Milano (Italy)
curated by Andrea Lacarpia

/EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

2026
Finalist, *Selva Art Prize*

2025
Art residency curated by Le Fonticelle di Frosolone, Pesaro, Italy

2024
Finalist, *E.ART.H. Foundation* contemporary art prize

2022
Postnature and contemporary creation, Seminar / Institute for Postnatural studies Madrid

2018-2020
Artistic direction of Dimora Artica project space, Milano

2016
Assistant of Roberto Cuoghi for the making of the exhibition *Putiferio*

2013
MS in Industrial Design, Politecnico di Milano

/PUBLICATIONS

2026

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2023

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https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/lingua-morta-dallunita-alla-varieta-della-pittura/
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2020

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2019

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2018

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Arida notte
solo exhibition at Emerge project space, Pescara
2026

It is the night that deprives the curve of its wholeness. It grants only a fragment of it. The rest remains beyond the threshold of the visible. The curve never describes a place; rather, it establishes a liminal condition, a point of inflection at which space and time lose their narrative specificity.

Establishing a centre of gravity for this exhibition is no easy task. The works initially seem to disperse, making their very withdrawal a defining feature. Yet each intervention appears to possess its own particular trail, an innate impulse marking out a path and its subsequent mutation. It is precisely within this uncertain process of transformation that Pacelli's practice reveals its post-exotic nature[1]. The works do not present themselves as definitive entities, but as sculptural narrators of a collapsed yet surviving ecosystem. Through accumulation and juxtaposition, these fragments attempt to shape a gothic archaeology of tomorrow, following unstable trajectories. The tin-alloy infiltrations scattered across the fireplace, for instance, evoke silver frames liquefied by the action of a temporal radioactivity.

Pacelli's research explores the polarisation of matter, inhabiting the territories of both abyssal biology and alien cosmology. Yet a distinctly human dimension emerges in the recurring grotesques[2], embedded in sculptural details and in the frottage on semi-transparent fabric. This site-specific intervention, much like a bespoke garment, envelops the wall while simultaneously inhabiting two antithetical environments. Through the morphology of its surfaces, the viewer is drawn towards an alchemical elsewhere, experiencing a subtle sense of vertigo. The elusive trail described by the artist encounters a centripetal force attempting to hold it back. This tension becomes particularly evident when matter turns into a vector of light: a flexible light source emerges from the body of the work, extending into the surrounding space through a series of curves. An elsewhere of energy unfolds beyond the boundaries of the exhibition space. The heterogeneous nature of the interventions, from sculptural presences to the quasi-images suspended on fabric, does not fragment the experience but amplifies its archipelagic character.

The exhibition thus becomes a narrative ecosystem, where the distance between works carries the same ancestral density as matter itself. Matter returns transformed, shaped by the breath of the skies: scorched by the sun, eroded and eventually smoothed by the wind. Ultimately, Francesco Pacelli's practice reveals itself as an obstinate pursuit of a vanishing point. Each work is a geometric and poetic body subjected to forces that bind it to space, while its intimate trajectory strives outwards, towards a formal liberation that always lies one millimetre beyond matter. Pacelli neither decorates the collapse of the world nor seeks consolation in visions of the future. Instead, with the patience of an argonaut, he positions himself at the precise apex of the curve, proceeding from there with meticulous caution.

extract form the exhibition text by Maurizio Viceré
ph credits Pierluigi Fabrizio

1. Post-exoticism is an avant-garde literary concept and universe conceived by french writer Antoine Volodine. Its defining features include fragmented narratives, post-apocalytpic settings, the coexistence of dreaming and wakefulnessm and a radial sense of estrangement from matter, experienced as a space of memory and resistance.
2. A form of wall decoration featuring paintings of stucco work characterized by fantastical, monstrous, and bizarre figures.



Installation view from *Arida notte*, solo exhibition at Emerge project space (Pescara, IT) / 2026

Or just a vague sense of nostalgia is an artwork made on voile fabric, conceived as a light, transparent, dreamlike narrative that engages in dialogue with the architecture of the space that houses it. It unfolds as a sequence of faded images, created through the frottage technique and arranged so that each one gradually connects and blends into the next. The result is a kind of cinematic film, in which visual references to collective archaeological memory, cosmic mythologies, and beliefs that predate scientific thought intertwine in an open narrative to be explored through the gaze. The images emerge and overlap like traces of a distant imaginary world, leaving behind a fragile and temporary visual presence that gradually fades away, like a water stain drying on a wall.

Or just a vague sense of nostalgia
Oil pastel on voile fabric
about 9m x h 40cm
2026







The series draws inspiration from the compositional principles of certain rock formations and inorganic aggregates, which develop through processes of layering and accumulation. By pouring liquid resins into grooves formed in sandy mixtures, volumes and geometries take shape, resembling natural formations and seemingly distant from any human origin, yet still retaining traces of human intervention. The series aims to set in motion an autonomous process of formation, relying mainly on the properties of the materials used and the passage of time. The formal intervention is limited to the introduction of a circular mark, evoking the cyclical and repetitive movement of mechanisms that have long fallen into disuse: perhaps the gears of an ancient mechanical system or components of a device for measuring time.



Mistero Tempo (I)
Sand, ceramic powder, epoxy resin, pigments
27 x 27 x 5 cm
2026







Mistero Tempo (II, III)
Sand, ceramic powder, epoxy resin, pigments
27 x 27 x 5 cm
2026



The work brings together the material and physical dimension of sculpture, grounded in presence, with the ephemeral and elusive nature of light. The sculptural body develops in a state of suspension, slightly raised above the ground and in dialogue with the architecture of the space. Along its linear extension, a circular element interrupts the continuity of the form, introducing a moment of stillness and concentration. Medieval grotesque-inspired figures seem to emerge, aggregate and proliferate across its surface, as manifestations of a process of material transformation. The sculptural body does not seek representation or refer to any recognisable form. Rather, its configuration evokes and suggests a temporal relationship with space, appearing simultaneously as an archaeological relic, slowly shaped by atmospheric forces, and as an entity from a possible future. A presence suspended between past and future, suggesting a story of transformation, adaptation and persistence.

Abbagliaggine (tra il plausibile e il sospeso)
Clay, inox steel, epoxy resin, pvc, aluminum, flexible LED light
4,3m x 3m x h 35cm
2026





Altare (how rare is true poetry?)
Clay, epoxy resin, synthetic clay, pvc, aluminum, acrilic spray
41 x 87 x 29 cm
2026







Installation view from Arco Madrid, two artists booth with Sophie Jung / Des Bains gallery, London / 2026

These works seek to create a scene suspended between plausibility and ambiguity. The use of charcoal contributes to a sense of dustiness and vagueness, depriving the images of a clear sense of scale. The imagery draws inspiration from elements and landscapes of natural origin, which are visually altered, modified, and shifted until they lose their original references and become something else. The result is a landscape that appears plausible yet unreal, where elements of natural and human origin merge, escaping any single interpretation. The volumes and the composition of the landscape initially seem to offer familiar points of reference, allowing the viewer to orient themselves and grasp the space. Yet, this apparent sense of recognition gradually dissolves. The subject continues to crumble, resisting any clear or definitive reading.





Polvere (light endures)
Charcoal on cardboard
cm 206 x 146
2026

Nessun boato
solo exhibition at Anni Wu, Milano
2026

Nessun Boato, Francesco Pacelli's solo exhibition at Anni Wu, transforms the gallery spaces into a hovered, hushed environment—the contemporary equivalent of the primordial void referenced by the title itself, No Rumble: the absence of sound in the cosmic vacuum. The exhibition is conceived by delving into a foundational image, the seventeenth-century engraving Chaos by Abraham Van Diepenbeeck. Conceptually distant from the modern notion of disorder, and born of a time when science and spirituality were deeply entangled, this work instead depicts chaos as a source phenomenon. A vortex—dark yet matricial—where clouds, lightning, and animal figures begin to align into a primordial order. Echoing these constitutive elements, the artworks unfold within a space the artist has reconfigured as a tabula rasa, a necessary ground for investigating origins, finitude, and the mechanisms by which the human mind constructs meaning and reality from the undifferentiated.

This potential space opens with *Inesorabile (a few billion years isn't actually that much)*, a series of four oil drawings on board through which Pacelli evokes the inescapable. He invites us to question the absolute cyclicality of the Sun and the finitude it inscribes within mortal life. Although unimaginably long when compared to human time, the existence of this mother star is temporally defined, as is the entire system it generates and upon which it depends. The painted light reveals an image we will never see with the naked eye, and with it delivers the weight of a question that human temporality allows us to dismiss: whether to accept the transience of our existence or to explore the limits of our intelligence to interrogate that finitude as an act of biological and existential resistance. A symbolic entity that simultaneously contains both beginning and end, the Sun projects us into a remote future to give form to an event that does not yet exist, demonstrating how our consciousness is always an act of projection and interpretation of reality.

As we allow ourselves to be dazzled by this rhetorical urgency, beside us an orderly row of flies glides along a golden rail. *Tra la fine e l'inizio il nulla stelliforme* is a sculptural group composed of two elements, one of which runs along the walls of the first exhibition room. The bronze sculpture draws inspiration from a recurring subject in ancient Egyptian protective amulets, where the insect was attributed qualities of resilience and tenacity, making it an ideal symbol of protection against evil forces. These salvific characteristics are multiplied into a cosmic sequence, in which the flies lose their entomological identity and are sublimated into a small constellation. The fly, a symbol of biological persistence, becomes a star, a symbol of mythical permanence, turning the work into a bridge between the materiality of the ancient symbol and the abstraction of the astronomical one. We connect dots, search for figures, construct narrative lines to orient ourselves within reality; this composition, suspended between abstraction and figuration, embodies the principle of proximity—through which the mind unites distinct elements into a coherent whole—demonstrating how the organization of chaos is a fundamental perceptual instinct.

In the bronze triptych, *Some things need an impulse to move (III, IV, V)*, the binary becomes twofold, deepening the theme of transformation through biology and alchemy. Sinuous, pulsating yet crystallized, the three organic sculptures reveal themselves in all their symmetrical imperfection, reflecting the constitutive principle of most life forms. This barely perceptible asymmetry generates an ambiguity— a leitmotif of Pacelli's practice—inviting a physical and personal reading. The viewer's perception is once again activated, called upon to complete or interpret the form. If the organic and potential shapes allude to an intermediate stage of matter, bronze embodies its alchemical counterpart. Historically, the crucible of transmutation into gold, the metal here becomes the herald of a path of inner transformation. The porous, chiaroscuro-marked hollows represent the impulse to evolve from raw matter to spirit, from the passivity of chaos to the creation of meaning.

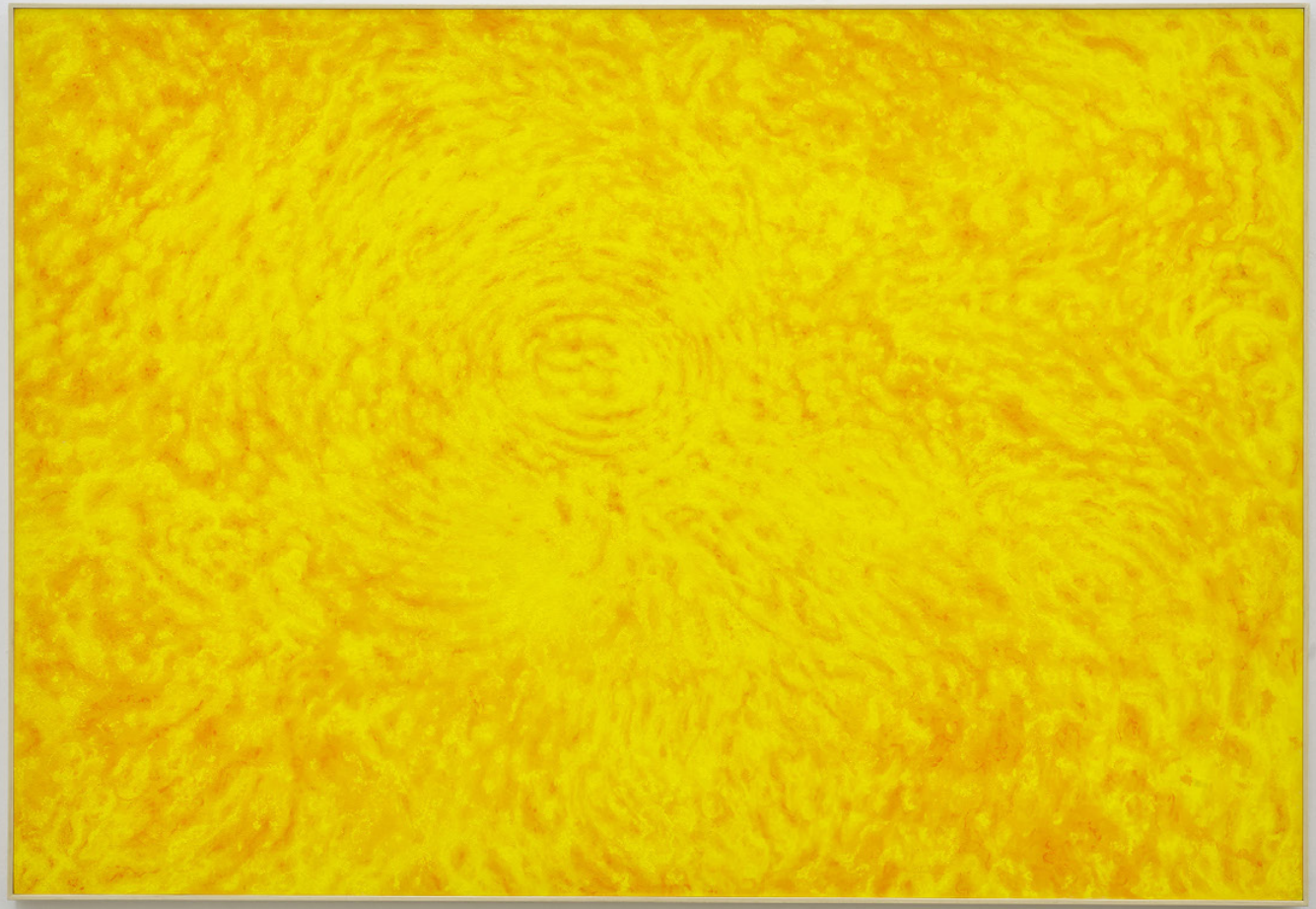
On the lower floor awaits *Nebulosae*, another oil drawing devoted to the celestial dimension, this time crowded by a blanket of clouds. Forms in perpetual becoming, devoid of fixed contours, clouds are a threshold to a murky world, partially inaccessible, perhaps threatening. Whereas solar light previously suggested an almost positivist openness, it is now filtered, guiding us towards an uneasy yet necessary and complementary path. As Van Diepenbeeck reminds us, beyond the abyss of clouds lie infinite creative possibilities. Reality stops only when we decide not to push further. In some way, this is recalled by the second element of Tra la fine e l'inizio il nullastelliforme, which emerges from the ceiling, offering itself to our gaze after having crossed the gallery walls.

The two small works anticipate *Lassù, a milioni di kilometri, risiede l'immaginifico*, the final installation of the exhibition, where the dense veil of clouds materializes, ready to be pierced one last time. This site-specific work closes the exhibition, condensing its themes into a total perceptual experience. A panel seals off the gallery space, leaving open only a narrow slit through which we are invited to observe a sidereal scene: a chimerical creature, seen from behind, abandoned in a moment of solitary rest and immersed in a landscape of sand, stone, and perhaps shells, deserted and almost sterile. The lens, the quintessential tool of scientific exploration, now bends to a poetic one: it no longer reveals an objective truth, but the projection of an archetype. The indistinct figure appears as an almost alien hybrid, born of our imagination the moment it is freely projected into the universe. The space beyond the lens dissolves into mystery, giving way to a mental space. Here, cosmic silence is inhabited by something fragile and indefinable, born from the encounter between our gaze, eager for form, and the darkness of the universe. The rumble is a place.

text by Zoë Dea Luca Legge
ph credits Oscar Giacomini



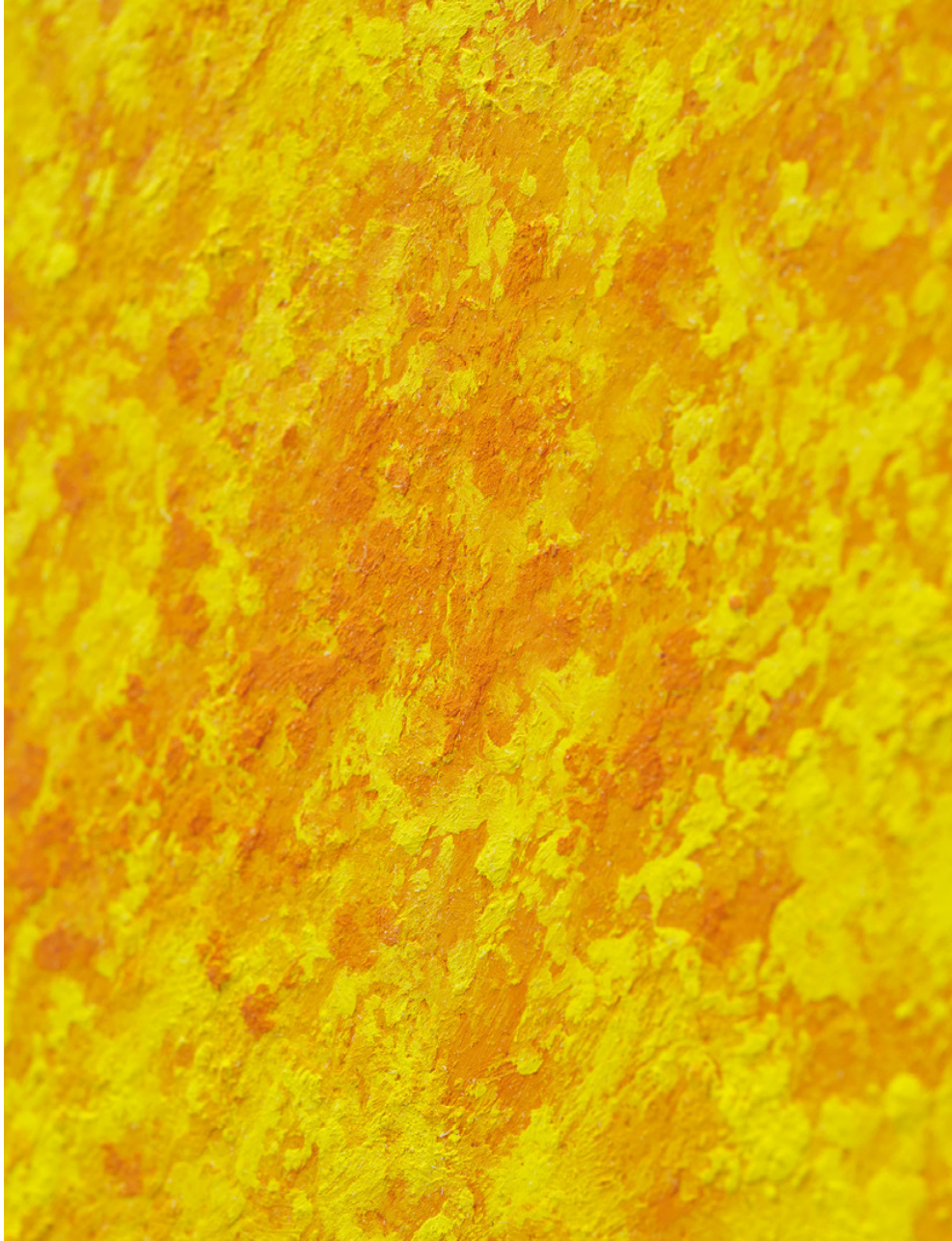
Installation view from *Nessun boato*, solo exhibition at Anni Wu (Milano, Italy) / 2026



Inesorabile (a few billion years isn't actually that much), I
oil stick on board
cm 94x136
2026

Inesorabile (a few billion years isn't actually that much) is a series of four oil drawings on board evoking the inescapable. The invitation is to question the absolute cyclicality of the Sun and the finitude it inscribes within mortal life. Although unimaginably long when compared to human time, the existence of this mother star is temporally defined, as is the entire system it generates and upon which it depends. The painted light reveals an image we will never see with the naked eye, and with it delivers the weight of a question that human temporality allows us to dismiss: whether to accept the transience of our existence or to explore the limits of our intelligence to interrogate that finitude as an act of biological and existential resistance. A symbolic entity that simultaneously contains both beginning and end, the Sun projects us into a remote future to give form to an event that does not yet exist, demonstrating how our consciousness is always an act of projection and interpretation of reality.

extract from the text by Zoë Dea Luca Legge





Tra la fine e l'inizio il nulla stelliforme is a sculptural group composed of two elements, one of which runs along the walls of the first exhibition room. The bronze sculpture draws inspiration from a recurring subject in ancient Egyptian protective amulets, where the insect was attributed qualities of resilience and tenacity, making it an ideal symbol of protection against evil forces. These salvific characteristics are multiplied into a cosmic sequence, in which the flies lose their entomological identity and are sublimated into a small constellation. The fly, a symbol of biological persistence, becomes a star, a symbol of mythical permanence, turning the work into a bridge between the materiality of the ancient symbol and the abstraction of the astronomical one. We connect dots, search for figures, construct narrative lines to orient ourselves within reality; this composition, suspended between abstraction and figuration, embodies the principle of proximity—through which the mind unites distinct elements into a coherent whole—demonstrating how the organization of chaos is a fundamental perceptual instinct.

extract from the text by Zoë Dea Luca Legge



Tra la fine e l'inizio il nulla stelliforme (I)
bronze
cm 30x180x53
2026





Some things need an impulse to move, IV
bronze
cm 17,5x26,5x7,5
2026





Some things need an impulse to move, V
bronze
cm 16x20,5x6
2026



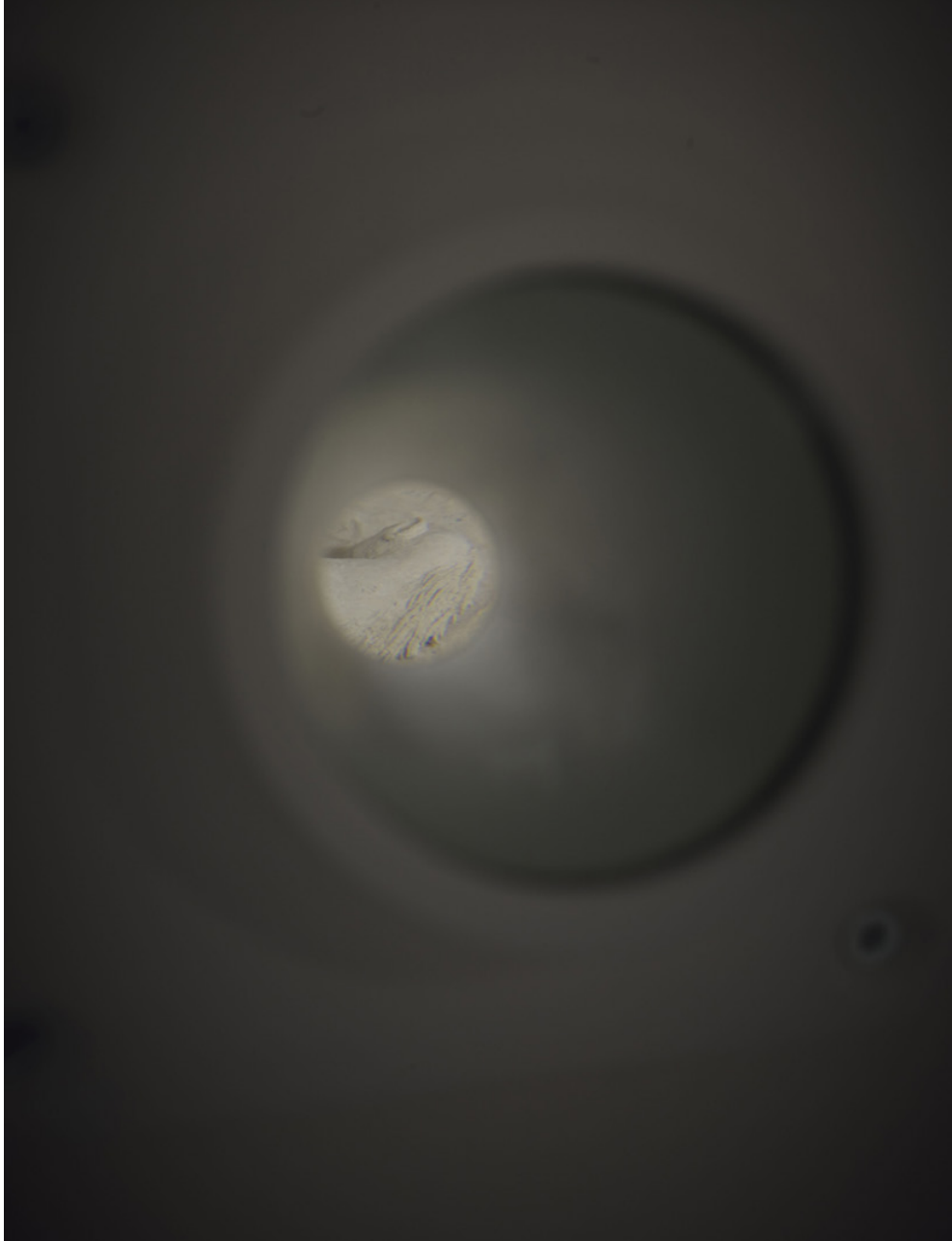
Some things need an impulse to move, III
bronze
cm 16x19x7
2026



A panel seals off the gallery space, leaving open only a narrow slit through which we are invited to observe a sidereal scene: a chimerical creature, seen from behind, abandoned in a moment of solitary rest and immersed in a landscape of sand, stone, and perhaps shells, deserted and almost sterile. The lens, the quintessential tool of scientific exploration, now bends to a poetic one: it no longer reveals an objective truth, but the projection of an archetype. The indistinct figure appears as an almost alien hybrid, born of our imagination the moment it is freely projected into the universe. The space beyond the lens dissolves into mystery, giving way to a mental space. Here, cosmic silence is inhabited by something fragile and indefinable, born from the encounter between our gaze, eager for form, and the darkness of the universe. The rumble is a place.

extract from the text by Zoë Dea Luca Legge

Lassù, a milioni di kilometri, risiede l'immaginifico
site-specific installation
overall size variable
2026



nineteeneightyseven
solo exhibition at DES BAINS, London
2025

What happens before anything happens.

nineteeneightyseven turns toward that suspended, pre-human interval where matter hasn't yet committed, where form is still negotiating its own arrival, where time has not yet stepped forward. The year preceding the artist's birth becomes a lens, a way of examining the world as pure potential.

Pacelli engages this territory with precision rather than mysticism. The exhibition gathers five wall pieces and three sculptures, each one emerging from a different technical universe. Colored-pencil drawing, mark-making, wood engraving, metal casting, Raku ceramics, and hybrid material processes sit together without resolving into a single style. Their dissonance is intentional: each technique behaves like a separate hypothesis about what matter might do before it becomes matter-as-we-know-it.

The wall works read like fragments from parallel systems, small portals with their own internal laws. Some suggest surfaces stabilising for the first time; others feel like artefacts from an early stage of consciousness, before representation attaches itself to memory or narrative.

The three sculptures on the floor complicate the field further. They are not monumental, yet they exert a dense gravitational presence - objects that seem caught mid-transition, as if arrested between one state of being and another. Metal, clay, composite structures: all of them feel slightly unanchored, as though still testing the rules of their own formation. There is no pursuit of formal unity here. Pacelli intentionally fractures his vocabulary, allowing each work to articulate its own logic. Yet the exhibition never drifts into chaos. Subtle framing, recurring spatial gestures, and a shared atmosphere of suspension bind the pieces into a loose constellation. It's coherence without closure, structure without simplification.

What emerges is a lucid ambiguity, a space where origins do not function as singular events but as a series of thresholds. The works sit on these thresholds, alert to the strange intelligence of materials before they choose their final shape. They examine the world not as it is, but as it might be in the quiet instant before becoming.

nineteeneightyseven is not a reconstruction of the year before the artist's birth. It is a proposition: that the "before" is never past, never closed. It continues to hum beneath everything - a field of beginnings that remain unfinished, and perhaps must remain so.

Text by Maria Valeria Biondo
ph credits Studio Adamson



Installation view from *nineteeneightyseven*, solo exhibition at Des Bains (London, UK) / 2025

Adele (particles colliding)
ink on paper
42 x 30 cm
2025

Transmutation of a seashell into a butterfly
coloured pencils on paper
42 x 30 cm
2025











I promise I've heard a stone whispering
soft pastels on paper
93 x 69 cm
2025





Time before time (Luce), series
wood boxes, dried sphagnum moss, ceramics, LED light
75 x 30 x 8 cm
2025





Tempesta
engraved wood
42 x 30 cm, 2025



Wind, exhausted, not yet
acrilic spray on paper
42 x 30 cm, 2025



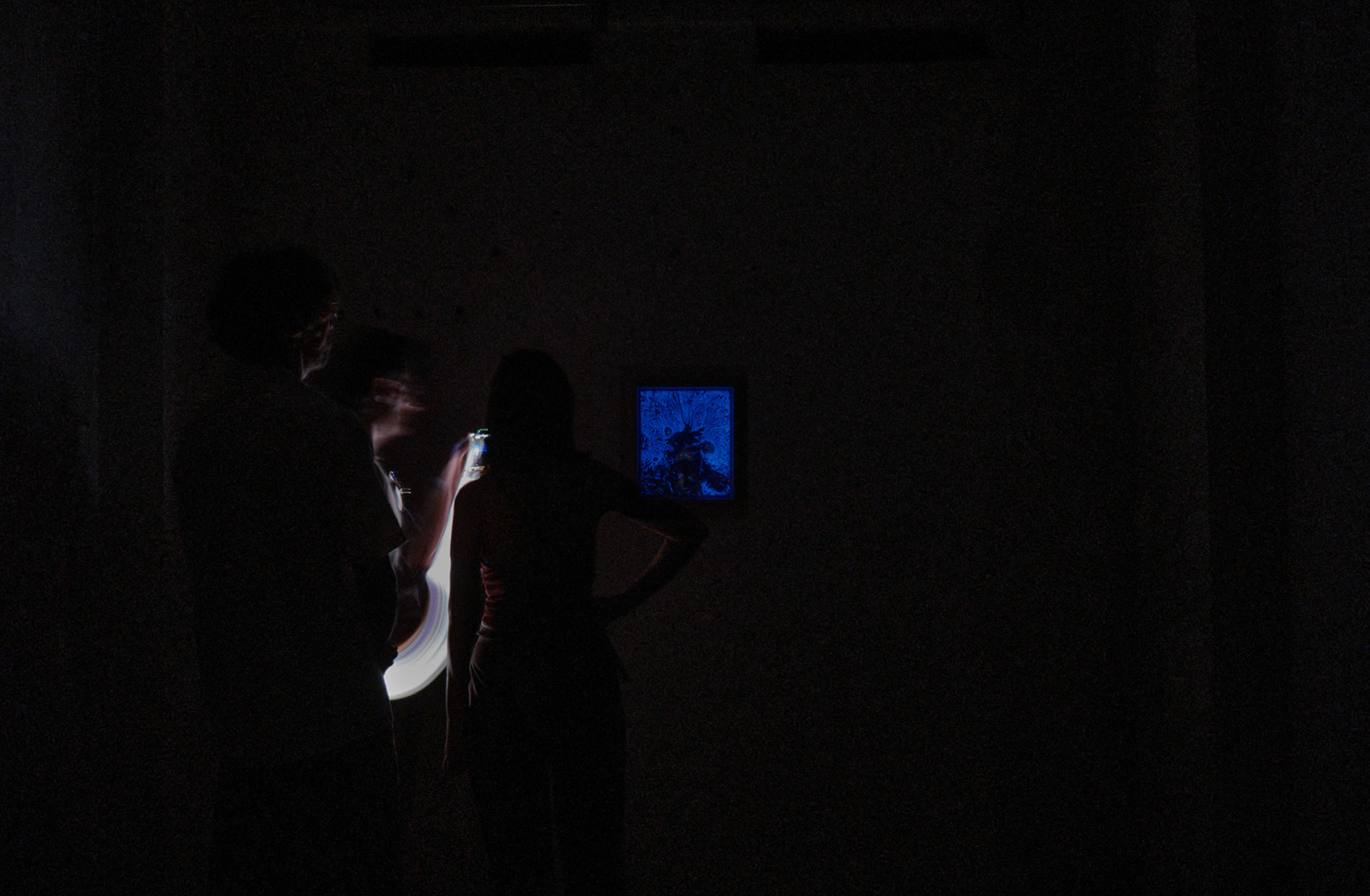
Time before time (Fuoco), series
wood boxes, epoxy resin, Raku ceramics, cellulose fibers, vinyl glue, plaster
70 x 100 x 4 cm
2025



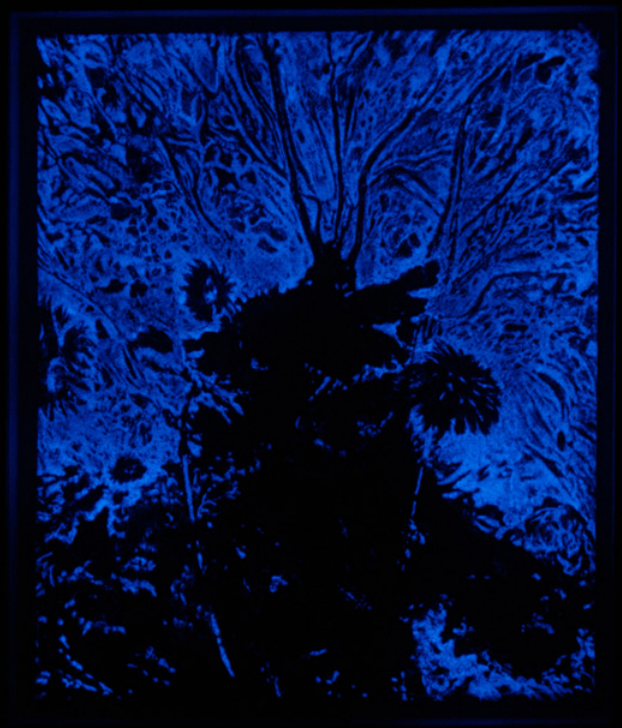


Time before time (Suolo), series
wood box, epoxy resin, wood chipboard, clay, pewter
70 x 30 x 4 cm
2025





The work connects darkness and light, the underneath with the above. Starting from the same engraving plate, two different pieces have been created, each questioning invisibility, dialoguing with the architectural space, and exploring the sensory limits of sight. In daylight, a blind embossing reveals the subject through a subtle deformation of the paper. Meanwhile, in a dark room, phosphorescence makes the work fluctuate within a black, unsettling space without borders or physical references.



Queen (La vita delle falene)
Phosphorescent pigment on Hahnemuhle paper
Etching, limited edition of 30
30x35cm
2025

ph credits Eleonora Cutini

Dark Forest
Two person exhibition with Estefanìa Flores at El Chico, Madrid (ES)
curated by Amina Berdin and Jorge Van den Eynde Gray

The exhibition embodies the concept of the Dark Forest to engage with two seemingly opposing forces: magic and technology. The Dark Forest is a recent expression introduced by sci-fi writer Liu Cixin in the book trilogy The Three-Body Problem. In this prophetic body of work, Cixin crafts a metaphor suggesting that Earth, naively viewing itself as a center of light and life, searches for connections within a seemingly silent, cold universe. This universe, like a forest at night, teems with creatures that remain hidden, silently blending into darkness to avoid potential predators.

Today, in the current digital discourse, the Dark Forest refers to all those informal and untracked digital practices that create private yet inclusive spaces of shared knowledge as a form of resistance towards bots, algorithms and all forms of tracking. Concealment is integral to this concept and closely parallels the way magic has often manifested: in darkness, away from the mainstream, sharing knowledge cautiously with only a select few members. No need to say that historically “the occult” was often employed as a synonym for magic, and secrecy provided ideal conditions for enchantments, alchemical experiments, and invocations. Our history has always unfolded without acknowledging the practitioners dwelling in the shadows. As the silent creatures that move quietly and undisturbed in the forest, these virtual and magical practices operate covertly, to protect the niche communities inhabiting these rarefied spaces.

The exhibition space itself is envisioned as a Dark Forest, where the works of Estefanía B. Flores and Francesco Pacelli delve into the mysteries and secrets of magic and technologies. A little corner or cavity in the depths of the forest that might evoke spaces of digital conviviality and the linguistic, visual and material ways through which magic operates and transforms reality and our perception of the world.

Francesco Pacelli departs from organic matter and the realm of the undetermined, often playing with processes reminiscent of the alchemic world. His works can be understood as the result of a thoughtful reflection on the properties and the intelligences of materials that the artist mixes and merges to transform their materiality and thus appearance. In this occasion, the artist has engaged with the expressive and conceptual tensions of image making: visibility and invisibility, individuality and the double, light and darkness.

Ultimately, Dark Forest explores the realm of the ineffable or symbolic, often tied to magical thinking, and offers alternative imaginaries to the current technologically-driven reality. Technic and magic are explored as opposing systems of reality in Federico Campagna’s eponymous book. While the first permeates and dominates the world as we know it today through a persistent categorisation and quantification of reality, the latter can be seen as a form of resistance. Magic indeed “works to challenge our perceptual and emotional bases for engaging the world [and] encourages us to think metaphorically”. Through the works of Estefanía B. Flores and Francesco Pacelli, the exhibition summons supernatural beings and portals to other dimensions, revealing the hidden processes and technologies of magic.

extract from the exhibition text by Amina Berdín and Jorge Van den Eynde
ph credits Goro Studio

1. Federico Campagna, Magic and Technic: The Reconstruction of Reality, Bloomsbury, 2018.
2. Jamie Sutcliffe (ed.), Magic, The MIT Press, 2021.



From *Dark Forest*, duo show with Estefanìa Flores held at El Chico (Madrid, Spain) / 2024

The imagery of this series of drawings is inspired by the dichotomy between light and darkness, between brightness and shadow. They explore a formal spectrum ranging from highly legible dimensions, where the subject and figurative elements emerge forcefully, to moments of greater abstraction where marks and gestures take on a predominant role. The subjects seem at times distant and inaccessible, almost resting on hypothetical seabeds or carried by the wind. At other times, they seek the welcoming safety of a contained, static dimension. Dry black-and-white materials provide narrative continuity and coherence to a succession of images that nevertheless maintain a vague, undefined quality of plausible but not entirely graspable subjects. The suggested worlds refer simultaneously to our own and to others. Possible alternate realities where events have materialized differently from how we know them. We search for them, but they remain impossible to fully get. Butterfly wings lose their characteristic shapes to become geometric components; a star becomes liquid, while sinuous dynamics create the illusion of movement in rarefied bodies reminiscent of vegetal elements displaced by light forces, vibrating waves, or faint air currents.



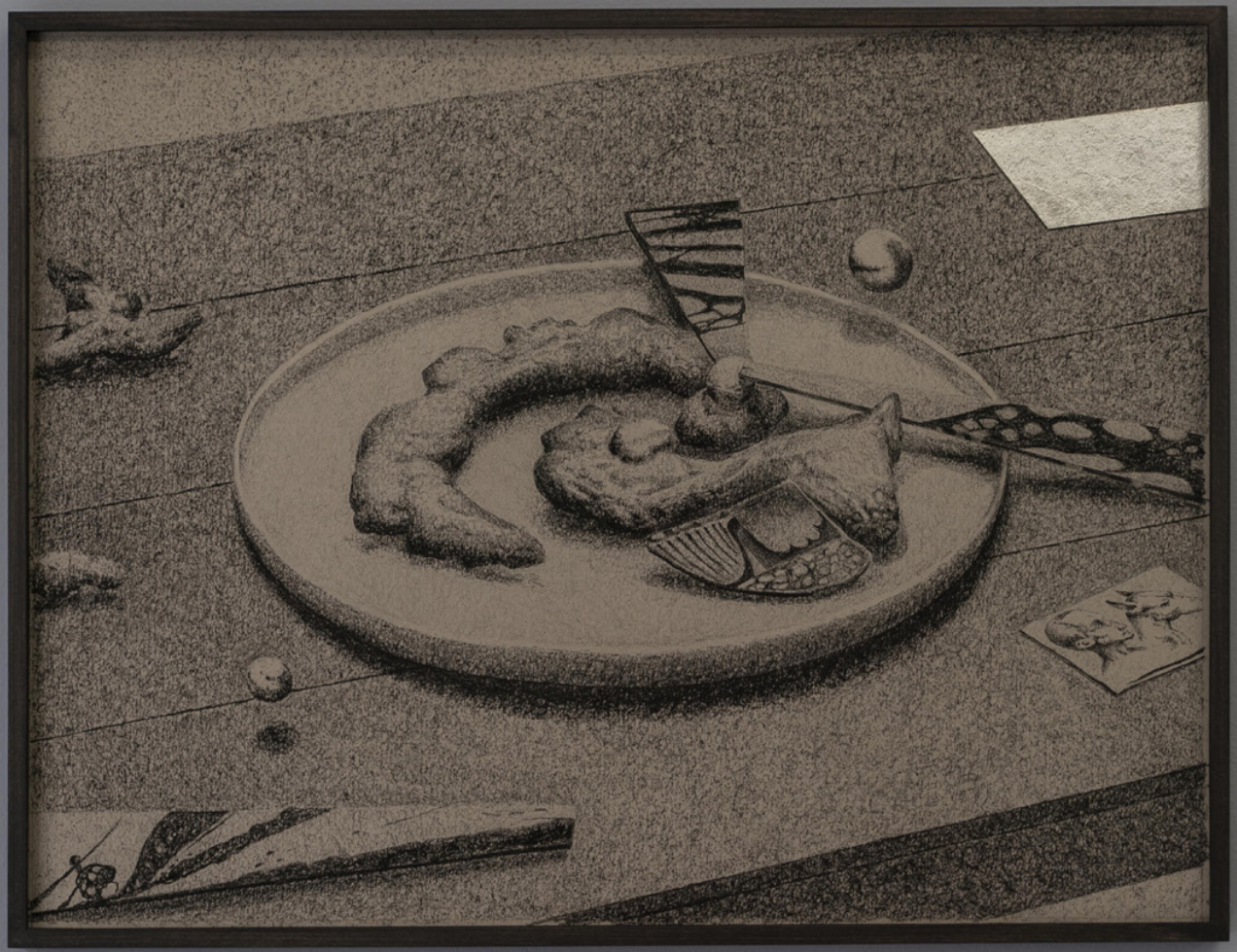
The lack of sunlight in spaceless lands
Soft pastel and gold leaf on cardboard, wooden frame, anti-reflective glass
Dyptich, 140 x 100 cm
2024





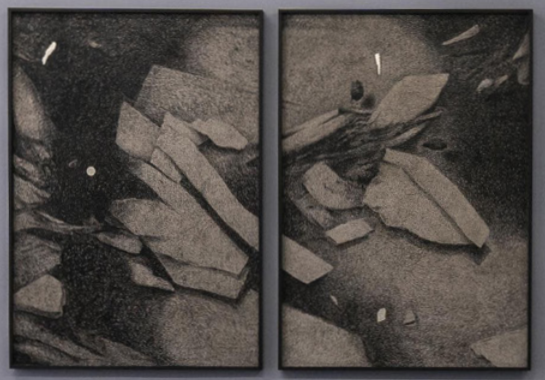


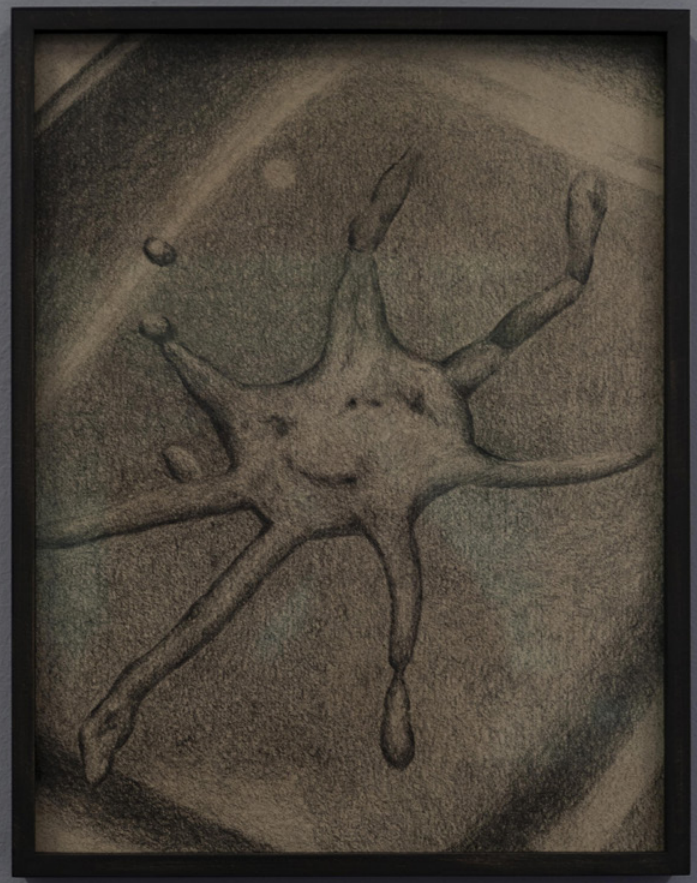
Brezza (some currents follow unpredictable paths)
Oil pastel on cardboard, wooden frame, anti-reflective glass
Dyptich, 140 x 100 cm
2024



Butterflies (the future is nonexistent)
Charcoal and 24k gold leaf on cardboard 47 x 63 cm
2024







How liquid is a star?
Charcoal on cardboard, wooden frame, anti-reflective glass
28 x 36 cm
2024



The three states of matter are a confusing concept
Charcoal on cardboard, wooden frame, anti-reflective glass
49,5 x 38 cm, 2024

Camouflage is a ceramic installation composed of multiple small elements, conceived to disappear into the architectural space. Scattered throughout the room as sporadic entities, their shapes and colors blend seamlessly into their surroundings, mimicking the behavior of animals that adapt to their environment to evade predators and preserve energy for survival. Each piece camouflages itself against nearby sculptures, echoing the color of the dark floor or the texture of the ceiling. Organic, abstract, and ambiguous forms seem caught in an attempt to escape, driven by an invisible force that simultaneously pulls them toward the ground and propels them upward, distorting their shapes and dissolving their presence within the space.

Camouflage (series)
Glazed ceramics
Variable dimensions: smallest 14x5x8cm, largest 12x12x40cm
2024







For its rare optical properties, calcite was historically used in magical rituals to double the power of a spell. Thanks to its intrinsic characteristic of high birefringence, any image passing through this mineral is split and duplicated, creating a striking visual effect. This splitting creates two alternatives from a single source, an act that is both magical and scientific. Based on this principle, three amulets have been created, each engraved with a symbol tied respectively to the forces of the cosmos, the Earth, and the unknown world. The duplicated symbols are: an analemma, the elliptical path traced by the Sun when observed from the same terrestrial point over the course of a year; an anthropomorphic cricket, symbolizing a mysterious and dark imaginative interiority; and a hut inspired by an ancient rock carving, representing humanity's ancestral connection to the land and the planet.

Shift (Il cosmo, La Terra, L'ignoto)
Calcite, silver cast frame, steel chain
Variable dimensions: smallest 2x2x1,5 cm aprox, largest 6x4,5x1,5 cm aprox
2024











The installation consists of hundreds of phosphorescent components able to absorb sunlight throughout the day and to emit a faint blue-violet light at night. For optimal viewing in an outdoor environment, it was crucial to choose a location far from city light pollution. The work has been temporarily exhibited at the top of a mountain in Molise, Italy, accessible by foot with the assistance of a professional landscape guide. The installation is therefore an apparition, a manifestation. It is an attempt to establish a dialogue with a landscape, with a mountain. With the Sun and the Moon. With a timeless land. With the magic of matter. The dim and faint light of the work evokes the passing day, marked by the impending arrival of night and darkness. Through phosphorence, *Bagliore* tries to capture and extend in time and space the presence of a star as important to life as the Sun itself. Its light is absorbed and emitted over a few night hours in a small area of a mountain landscape. Viewers' senses need to adapt to perceive the work. Sight becomes sharper to compensate the poor light of a landscape defined exclusively by the delicacy of Moon rays. The mountain embodies a transitional space between day and light, simultaneously real and imaginary.

Bagliore
Organic and inorganic components, steel, acrylic gel, phosphorescent pigment
Installation about 20x5m
Photo edition of 5
2024

ph credits Eleonora Cutini





Stones and Stars and Spells
solo exhibition at DES BAINS, London
2023

There is a sense of uncertainty that hovers over Francesco Pacelli's newly developed body of work. Based on a set of ambiguities, the works create bizarre juxtapositions between familiar and unfamiliar to the mind of the spectator. The main series, titled Utopias, consists of a set of organic-shaped sculptures, reminiscent of cosmic artifacts or childlike observations. These alienating forms reveal a sense of urgency in their making. Uneven and irregular, yet polished and flowing, they possess the ability to turn the experience of the viewer into a tactile one. This is mostly achieved through the assembling of various elements and the preservation of the human trace on their surfaces.

The series takes shape from a Thomas More literary dream from the 16th century. As the artist sees it, utopia is both for a body and a model to aim. Through textual ambiguity, Pacelli expands the possibilities of reading, while questioning pre-existing patterns. The titles of these works are also quite perplexing. It is almost as if there is something hidden behind the overly descriptive subtitles within the parentheses. Titles such as *Utopias (Joyous Black Hole)*, and U*topias (young non immortal thoughts)*, allude to an ascension to a mysterious, paradoxical world, one that could turn utopias into dystopias.

The *Utopias series* seems anthropomorphic to the extent where one might get the sensation of the works spying on them, casting their immaterial gaze upon the audience. This element immediately creates a tension between the human and nonhuman, and adds a sinister atmosphere of dissolution, while carrying some mortuary undertones. The lurked fear of the unknown takes a different, more unnerving turn in Utopias *(wax wings and golden shadows)* and *Utopias (young non immortal thoughts)*, which act as dismembered parts of the human body that have been replicated and are now called to function as completed organisms.

One of the most crucial elements in Pacelli's practice is his diverse selection of materials. Besides the more traditional sculptural options, Pacelli has also been involved with materials that are quite uncommon in the fine arts such as natural and synthetic resin, metal powders or several minerals coming from the soil. Drawing on the visceral and poetic power of these materials that were taken from different landscapes, the artist invites a free-form and spontaneous approach to art making, which has enabled him to create an intuitive body of work. The viewer is thus confronted with the vulnerability evoked by the materiality of these natural forms, worked out in a way where they realize their fragile nature.

Whether it is through the merging of conceptual elements and sources of inspiration from different spheres and fields, or through the continuous experimentation with new processes and materials, Pacelli provides a setting for a world filled with unrealized possibilities. Hidden by a strategy of perception that conceals itself in the act of negation, his work pursues unheard otherworldly narratives that transgress the border with the uncanny in the most unexpected ways.

Text by Dinos Chatzirafailidis
ph credits Studio Adamson



Installation view from *Stones and Stars and Spells*, solo exhibition at Des Bains (London, UK) / 2023

The *Utopias series* takes its name from the sixteenth-century work by Thomas More, in which the author imagines an island, a physical and idealized place, inhabited by an ideal society based on principles of sharing and peace. While today is meant as an abstract ideal model, the word *Utopia* has therefore a physical origin linked to the landscape, although it derives from the literary invention of a flying island. Through this cycle of works I try to create a unitary set of eco-systems in which the superposition of various materials helps to stratify images of both heavy and light ambiguous landscapes, which seem to levitate in mid-air above the floor or close to the walls. The transformation of materials is at the center of a process in which utopia and uchronia mix, generating possible alternative scenarios and territories linked to social models that constantly try to fulfill themselves, failing in their actualization. Broken utopias, models in a state of transformation.



Utopias (tenebroso or invisible fire)
Stainless steel, Eps, polyurethane, cellulose, plaster, bark, cosmetic pigments, epoxy resin, glue, tulle
20x15x11 cm
2023



Utopias (distraction and dispersion)
Stainless steel, Eps, polyurethane, aluminium powder, cellulose, plaster, pewter, glass micro-spheres, stainless steel spheres, acrylic pigments, mica powder, epoxy resin, glue, cotton, tulle
185x24x19 cm
2023





Installation view from *Stones and Stars and Spells*, solo exhibition at Des Bains (London, UK) / 2023



Utopias (young non immortal thoughts)
Wood, stainless steel, Eps, polyurethane, sawdust, aluminium powder, cellulose, plaster, acrylic pigments, glass micro-spheres, epoxy resin, glue
147x49x29 cm, 2023





Utopias (wax wings and golden shadows)
Wood, stainless steel, Eps, polyurethane, sawdust, aluminium powder, cellulose, plaster, acrylic pigments, glass micro-spheres, cosmetic pigments, epoxy resin, glue
142x64x49 cm
2023



Some things need an impulse to move is a series of small bronze wall sculptures based on a principle of perfect symmetry or slight asymmetry, drawing inspiration from the biological structures of the natural world. The absence of explicit figurative references shifts the focus toward the material itself. In alchemical thought, bronze is considered one of the materials closest to gold, thus embodying a dual notion of material and spiritual elevation. This transformation reflects humanity's pursuit of self-knowledge and its exploration of the world.







Some things need an impulse to move (I)
Bronze
23x11x12 cm
2023



Some things need an impulse to move (II)
Bronze
23x11,5x12 cm
2023

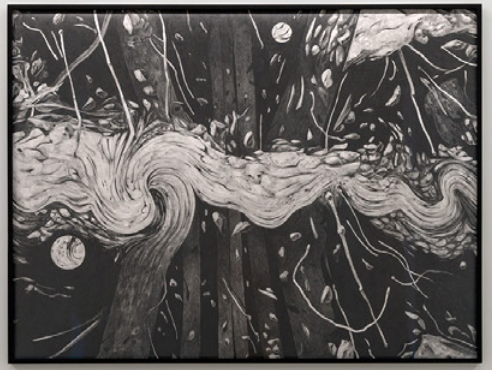
Ring Ring Ring
group exhibition at Pal project, Paris 2023
project conceived and curated by Andy Rankin

Total Liquidation raises questions about our relationship with images. The exhibition showcase 555 visuals of artworks that have disappeared (lost, stolen, damaged, destroyed). Every hour, a reproduction is randomly selected. If it has not been sold, it is dissolved in a large vat of water in the middle of the gallery. Total Liquidation blends both old masters and contemporary artists, thanks to research conducted as part of the Oblivion Collection. The list of participating artists is announced, but only those purchasing a reproduction will know the name of the artist who provided the visual. For artists in the public domain, buyers will automatically be informed of the artist's identity.

The project took a second exhibition step in occasion of the Lagos Biennal 2026 - *The museum of things unseen*







From *Lingua Morta*, collective exhibition at Divario (Rome, Italy) / 2023
ph credits Studio Daido

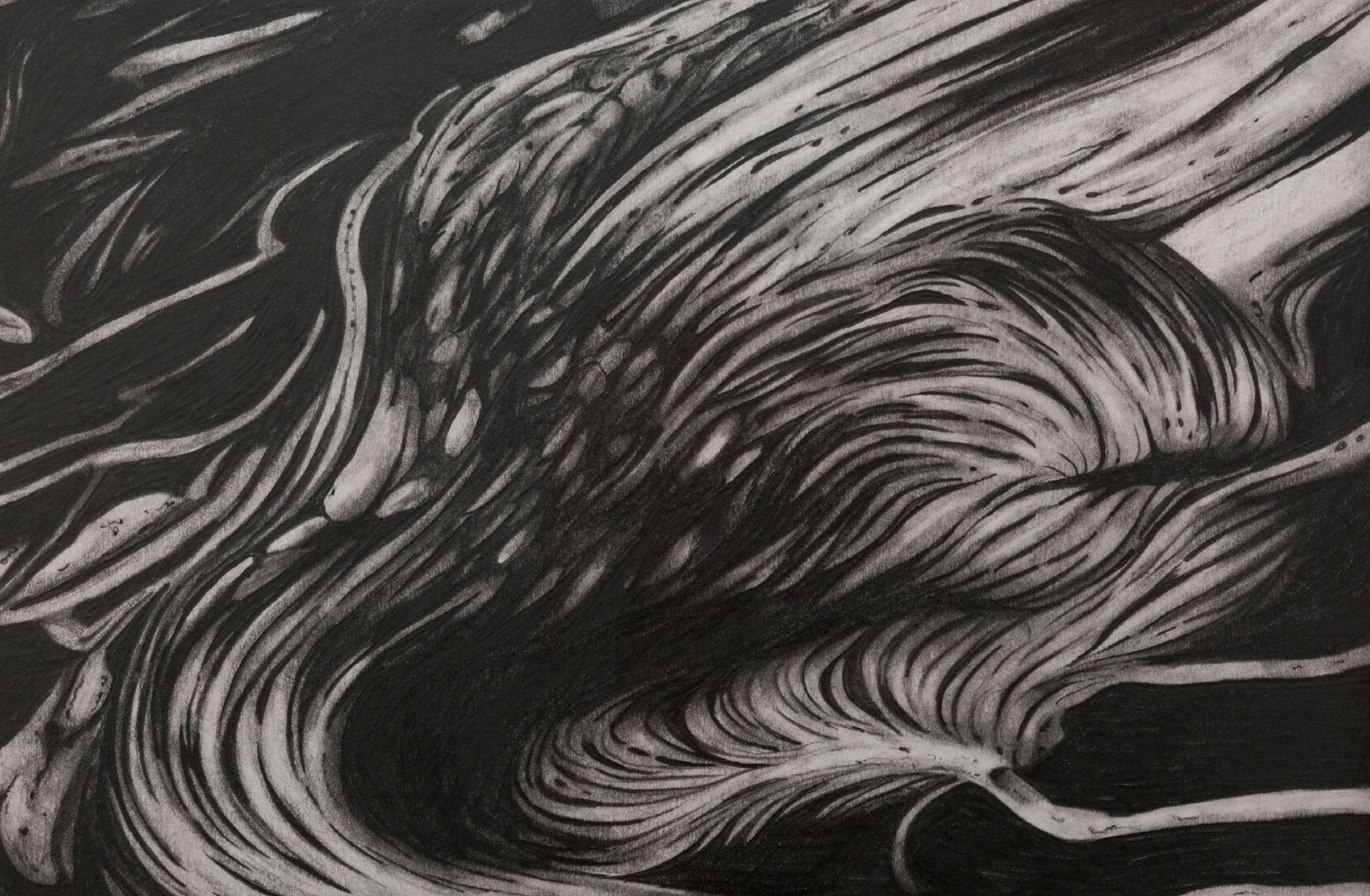
Thoughts flowing, searching for energy in its potential state. There wasn't much wind on that day series tries to explore an altered condition of reality in which the components that are part of it it are able to man-tain a perceptual physical dimension, which can be found through the iridescent materiality of graphite, while remaining however within the boundaries of a non-figurative dimension. The intent is to investigate the imminent moment preceding the formation of an image, a figurative limbo where areas and shapes are not representative of a specific and realistic subject, although being able to activate speculative visions and possibilities.



There wasn't much wind on that day (III)
Graphite on paper
94,5x71,5x3 cm
2023



There wasn't much wind on that day (IV)
Graphite on paper
31,5x38,5x3 cm
2023





According to the *Assemblage Theory* by philosopher Manuel De Landa, a society is similar to a biological organism whose organs and therefore whose constituent parts are made up of the individuals and the micro/macro communities that make it. At the same time, the eco-system we live in is the result of the superposition of billions of organic/inorganic parts interacting together to form a complex system, an expanded landscape-object which becomes unity and plurality at the same time. The *Lava Salva* series draws its imagery from this suggestion. Through the use of heterogeneous clays and by overlapping glazes with different melting temperatures, several individual ceramic parts are joined together through the firing process. The fusion of the enamel creates aesthetic and formal tensions at the contact points of the surfaces, making the shapes alive and plausible within this container-world, free in its possible formal associations and constrained within its morphological boundaries.



Lava salva cremeweiss
ceramics
22x19x14 cm
2023



From *On hearing of an absence*, collective exhibition at HausN, Athens / 2022



Echoes draws inspiration from the mythical figure of the Ouroboros, the snake devouring its own tail to form a closed circle. In opposition to a linear conception of time, circularity evokes a condition of continuity, recurrence, and interconnectedness, in which beginnings and endings become indistinguishable. It reflects a deeper connection with the elements and dynamics of nature, where matter and energy are constantly undergoing transformation through cycles of dissolution and regeneration. Within this perpetual motion, opposing forces coexist and interact in a continuous and recurring process of contraction and expansion. The circular form becomes a symbol of an existence that is not oriented towards a final destination, but unfolds through repetition, transformation, and the return of things.

Echoes
Epoxy resin, fabric, steel, plaster, polyurethane foam, acrilic spray, synthetic feathers
144(diam)x14 cm
2021

ph credits Nikos Katsaros





There wasn't much wind on that day (I, II)
Graphite on paper, wooden frame, anti-reflective glass
61x85x4 cm each
2022

ph credits Pierpaolo Cervetti

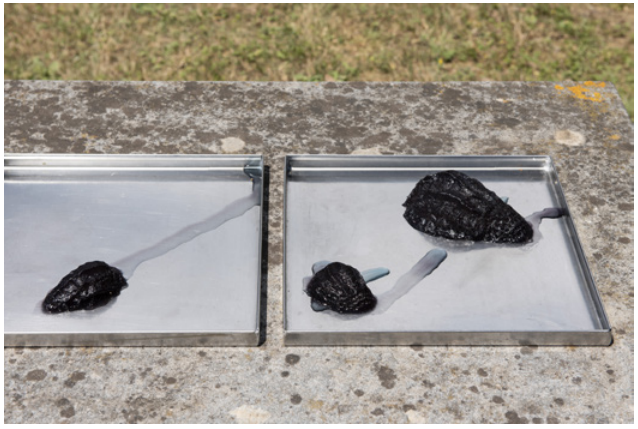






Installation view from *Poggio Tempesta*, group exhibition at Contemporary Fire (Cerreto Guidi, Italy) / 2022

Gelatine is a material traditionally associated to childhood for its colors and smells. It's funny. It's edible but it looks like pure artifice. Collagen and sugar make it fragile and elastic at the same time, creating those characteristic translucent tremors when shaked. Placed inside steel tanks capable of containing their future changes, the small organic entities of the artwork firstly present themselves with defined shapes. By the time passes, frozen gelatine melts and those small soft islands tragicomically change their appearance, until they disappear. It is a work of presence and absence at the same time, of disappearance and reappearance, of non-linear cyclicality. I exist, I disappear, I am present again, I am leaving again.







Entusiasms are always high at the beginning
Edible gelatine, inox steel
94x30x7 cm
2022

ph credits Margherita Nuti

As for artistic languages, technical codes often bring with them filters that represent an obstacle to an immediate reading of the proposed contents. The subject thus becomes a mysterious entity, avoiding logics of complete rationality. *Termo servo aero electro magneto elasticità* is both the title of an aerospace engineering exam and a nursery rhyme, a tongue twister that can only be solved through a slow and layered contemplation of the materic overlaps of an assembly that becomes camouflage, shifting towards the definition of an altered materical dimension.

Termo servo aero elettro-magneto elasticità
Aluminium, clay, EPS, inox steel, epoxy resin, acylic resin, cosmetic pigments
61x72x160 cm
2022

ph credits Mattia Pastore









Makapansgat stone is an almost three million years old object. It was found in a South African cave far from similar natural sources, near the remains of Australopithecines. Although is uncertain wheter it is an artifact or a natural object, the place of discovery suggests that the stone was transported as a stylized face was recognized in it. This aspect makes it the first and oldest form of symbolic image known nowadays. This stone led to the making of a series of several works in soap, a perishable consumable material that through daily use will be gradually smoothed until disappearing.

Masks
Soap, pigments, essential oils
Appr. 9x5x4,5 cm each
2022

ph credits Michele Stroppa



Installation view from *This must be the place*, group exhibition at Composit Flagship Store (Milano, Italy) / 2021



A sculptural body activating visual memories without an explicit and direct statement. Ambiguity finds space in the texture, in the impressions left by the fingers, in the bronze finish. Several bodies in a precarious equilibrium support each other till the moment they become a solid and harmonious nucleus of formal hints. Meaning is sought in the same way shapes are chased in clouds.

Betaparanoica
Glazed ceramics
21x17x16 cm
2021







Broboblob
Glazed ceramics
24x25x18 cm
2021

From *Les danses nocturnes*, collective exhibition at Spread Museum (Entrevaux, France) / 2021

Holobiont Rapsody
Two person exhibition with Stach Szumski at Eastcontemporary, Milano (Italy)
2021

What can we learn from bacteria and other microorganisms that live on our phones, or from the mushrooms lingering between the moss and lichens in our forests? Let us journey beyond our all-too-human world, made up of capitalist cycles of production and consumption, where people's identities are bound to their Amazon carts and social media profiles. Let us wander to the close world of animals, bacteria and microbiomes — a world situated right in front of our eyes and yet often overlook. The exhibition space of eastcontemporary, temporarily closed due to current COVID-19 regulations, becomes a peephole that we can gaze through in an attempt to magnify the shape of our microscopic neighbours through the works of Polish artist StachSzumski (b.1992, Gdansk) and the Italian Francesco Pacelli (b.1988, Perugia).

The four acrylic paintings by Stach presented at eastcontemporary hold a direct link to the microscopic. The canvasses titled The Issue of Office Bacteria are inspired by the clash of spasmodic cleanliness in office environments and the vitality of microscopic life forms contained within. When looking at them, we are surprised by the powerful monochrome images, looking extremely familiar and alien at once. They seem to be frightening at first, but they are certainly not threatening. Exhibiting Stach's work on bacteria is ironic at the very least, given the current health situation. Yet, by looking at the majestic pieces, we might be inspired to step away from the aspect of fear that the spikes depicted and the words 'bacteria' or 'virus' now evoke. It might be worth asking, instead, what we have gained from the virus and the deceleration occurred through lockdown. How did we change in response to this new rhythm? I think the bacteria on our skin have felt this deceleration too.

Similarly, to bacteria, mushrooms and lichens live next to one another in symbiosis — helping one another to thrive together. Their connections create networks that are invisible to the human eye but make their colonies organised and in constant communication. Francesco's work aims at giving an aesthetic form to this natural entanglement. More so, his sculptures, which look extremely abstract at a first glance, hint at the organic structures that, with their shapes, curves, thorns, make us wonder what the microscopic world in a forest might be like or feel like if our human senses could tackle it. The soil is the epidermis of the Earth. It is crossed by nerves, pores, fluids. It is the matter through which mushrooms communicate with one another and sense each human that steps on it. This earthly radio system draws abstract lines that Francesco aims to synthesize through sculpting, holding matter, pushing matter, leaving traces. Who knows, perhaps one day he will be able to speak the language of lichens and mushrooms.

Text by Claudia Contu



From *Holobiont Rapsody*, duo show with Stach Szumski held at Eastcontemporary (Milano, Italy) / 2021



Synthetic states of dissolution (detail)
Glazed ceramics, sand, soil
Variable dimensions
2020



Abyssa
Glazed ceramics
22x28x55 cm
2020





Haliomagma
Glazed ceramics
30x22x12 cm
2020



The work consists of a bird feeder conceived as a point of connection between the human and animal worlds, through the ritualistic and aggregating act of eating. Feeding becomes a shared gesture that establishes a temporary relationship between different species, creating a space of coexistence, exchange, and mutual proximity. An everyday action is thus transformed into an opportunity to observe and reconsider the boundaries between human and non-human life, and the possibility of establishing forms of interaction beyond language and cultural conventions.

Bridges (Il richiamo)
Glazed ceramics, bird feed
71x37x10 cm
2020

ph credits Edoardo Manzoni





Installation view from *Notturno*, site specific project at UnaVetrina (Rome, Italy) / 2020



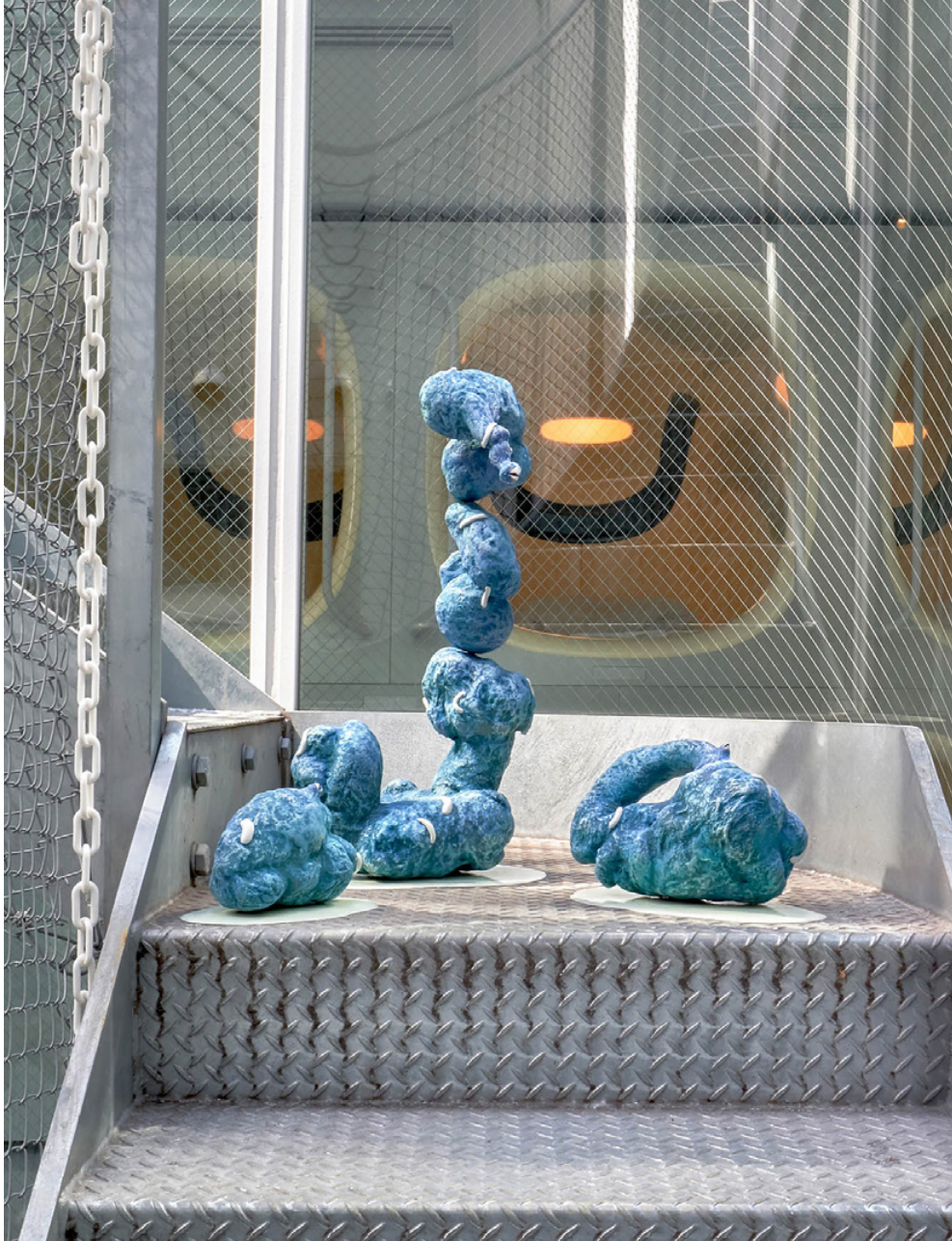

519
518

The body and the ways it can interact and transform the environment around it are at the center of this work. It was made specifically for the collective exhibition Tetsuo's body. The offsite project took place within the spaces of a capsule hotel in Tokyo, a place made up of extremely iconic architectural features in which the body is thought of in its most synthetic, efficient and somehow dehumanized way. The capsules are clean, functional but also sterile containers and the works in some way adapted to this aseptic environment, outlining future possible transformation scenarios for human beings.

extract from the exhibition text by Marcello Barison

There is so much to lie about it that I don't know how to start
Epoxy resin, cellulose, polyurethane resin, acrylics, pigments, taxydermy element
Variable dimensions
2019

ph credits Martin Holtkamp and Maaserhit Honda





Installation view from *Fishy fishy fishy X*, solo exhibition at Rehearsal Project (Milano, Italy) / 2019

The work presents ambiguous and organic features and shapes, where suspended elements are connected to other parts placed on the ground through flexible light tubes that define the geometry of the sculpture. Light is treated as a physical material, becoming the most important element as it allows it to completely envelop the space in which it is installed. If it is in an outdoor space, light also shifts the fruition of the work to a moment of darkness, thus let it become a nocturnal sculpture.

You did love it so, you did love it like a son
Epoxy and polyurethane resins, XPS, cellulose, alluminium, wires, ceramics, acrylics, spray paint, flexible LED light
Max dimensions 4x4x3 m (without wires)
2019

ph credits Cesare Lopopolo





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