

Francesco Pacelli

*selected works*

The research mainly focuses on sculpture, immersive installations, and drawings. I work within a variety of media, such as ceramics, synthetic materials, metals, graphite, and light, by exploring several techniques. My main references are related to science and biology, spirituality, philosophy, history of architecture, and alchemy. I try to investigate through these worlds and topics the relationships between nature, artifice, magic and cosmic stories.

The resulting imagery concurs in creating alternative organisms and environments, in a shifting balance between what is accepted as real and a dimension of otherness. I'm intrigued by the idea of creating mysterious entities, avoiding logics of complete rationality. These unreal yet plausible scenarios, perceivable but not completely recognisable, live in a verisimilar realm. They are the sculptural expressions of an interest in building a bridge between different mental models, giving physicality to concepts that are in a fluid state between the rationalism of the mind and the intuitiveness of the soul. I try to explore reality through the study of matter while trying to understand matter through the transformation of reality.

Perugia, Italy / 1988  
Lives and works in Milano, Italy

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represented by Des Bains, London (UK)

## /SOLO EXHIBITIONS

### 2026

*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 Estefania 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

*Notturmo*  
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

*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 Torso, Pesaro (Italy)  
curated by Elena and Alicya Ricciuto

### Centrotavola

*Residency, Borgo Cannistrà, (Italy)*  
curated by Collettivo Flock

### 2024

*Bagliore (site specific project)*  
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 Silvioni

*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**  
*Macina*  
ViaFarini.Work, Milano (Italy)

*Corpoacorporo#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)

*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*  
Musée National Adrien Dubouché, Limoges (France)  
curated by Jean-Charles Hameau

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

**2016**  
*Future artists*  
Nerve Visual Gallery, Londonderry (Northern Ireland)

## **/EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**2026**  
Finalist, *Prisma* 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

Observations by Untitleddb, [https://www.instagram.com/p/DY7is7\\_Gnqo/?hl=it&img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/DY7is7_Gnqo/?hl=it&img_index=1)  
[https://www.instagram.com/p/DY7is7\\_Gnqo/?hl=it&img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/DY7is7_Gnqo/?hl=it&img_index=1)  
<https://daily-lazy.com/2026/02/dl-review-nessun-boato-francesco-pacelli-at-lc-contemporary-milan.html>  
<https://www.coeval-magazine.com/coeval/francesco-pacelli>  
<https://kubaparis.com/submission/558094>  
<https://saliva.live/exhibitions/cf232f26>  
<https://www.ofluxo.net/nessun-boato-francesco-pacelli-lc-contemporary-milan/>

## 2025

<https://daily-lazy.com/2025/12/francesco-pacelli-at-des-bains-london.html>  
[https://desbains.co.uk/Francesco\\_Pacelli](https://desbains.co.uk/Francesco_Pacelli)  
<https://www.exibart.com/arte-contemporanea/le-fonticelle-di-frosolone-le-fondatrici-della-residenza-molisana-si-raccontano-in-questa-intervista/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/DON8Od5Dbfs/?hl=it>

## 2024

<https://www.neo2.com/expo-dark-forest-de-estefania-b-flores-y-francesco-pacelli/>  
<https://artmirror.org/exhibitions/1175-dark-forest>  
<https://www.exibart.com/mostre/flores-e-pacelli-un-dialogo-sullinvisibile-la-mostra-da-el-chico-di-madrid/> <https://www.daily-lazy.com/2024/05/dawn-is-now-once-again-at-greenfield.html>

## 2023

<https://flash---art.it/2023/11/francesco-pacelli/>  
<https://kubaparis.com/submission/370884>  
<https://www.galleriesnow.net/shows/francesco-pacelli-stones-and-stars-and-spells/>  
<https://saliva.live/exhibitions/2c960c15>  
<https://hestetika.art/francesco-pacelli-stones-and-stars-and-spells-a-londra/>  
<https://artslife.com/2023/12/03/stones-and-stars-and-spells-francesco-pacelli-in-mostra-a-londra/>  
<https://formeuniche.org/francesco-pacelli-des-bains/>  
<https://desbains.co.uk/Francesco-Pacelli-Stones-and-Stars-and-Spells>  
<https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/lingua-morta-dallunita-alla-varietà-della-pittura/>  
<https://divario.space/exhibition/linguamorta-collettiva>  
<https://pal-project.com/en/expositions/ring-ring/>

## 2022

<https://www.contemporaryartlibrary.org/project/on-hearing-of-an-absence-at-haus-n-athen-athens-26528>  
<https://www.daily-lazy.com/2022/12/on-hearing-of-absence-at-haus-n-athen.html>  
<https://quadriennaleodiroma.org/francesco-pacelli/>  
<https://www.ofluxo.net/poggio-tempesta-group-exhibition-at-poggio-tempesti-florence-italy/>  
<https://artslife.com/2022/06/03/poggio-tempesta-un-nuovo-polo-culturale-per-larte-contemporanea-in-toscana/>

<https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/raccogliertempesta-collettiva-di-giovani-artisti-in-un-nuovo-centro-culturale-nel-cuore-della-toscana/>  
<http://formeuniche.org/intervista-studio-tre-tre/>  
<https://artslife.com/2022/03/27/di-universi-creativi-e-narrazioni>

## 2021

<http://scandaleproject.com/macina/>  
<https://kubaparis.com/macina/>  
<https://kubaparis.com/les-danses-nocturnes/>  
<http://tique.art/six-questions/francesco-pacelli/>  
<http://formeuniche.org/holobiont-rhapsody-eastcontemporary>  
<https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/holobiont-rhapsody-dove-linvisibile-diventa-visibile>  
<https://www.ofluxo.net/holobiont-rhapsody-stach-szumski-francesco-pacelli>  
<https://www.exibart.com/arte-contemporanea/holobiont-rhapsody>  
<http://artmirror.org/exhibitions/650-stach-szumski-and-francesco-pacelli-at-eastcontemporary>

## 2020

<http://www.daily-lazy.com/2020/12/holobiont-rhapsody-at-eastcontemporary.html>  
<https://residenzalaforname.com/lunacalante>  
<https://tzvetnik.online/article/luna-calante>  
Interview on <https://ossevatoriofutura.it/fragilita-della-specie>  
Interview on <https://artslife.com/2020/04/19/arte-balsamo-della-psiche>  
<https://reactcontemporary.com/virtual-archipelago>  
<https://tzvetnik.online/article/baitball-01-a-group-show-at-palazzo-san-giuseppe>  
<https://scandaleproject.com/baitball-01-ill-slip-an-extra-shrimp-on-the-barbie-for-you>  
<http://www.daily-lazy.com/2020/02/baitball-01-ill-slip-extra-shrimp-on.html>  
<http://artmirror.org/exhibitions/469-tetsuo-s-body>

## 2019

<https://www.ofluxo.net/tetsuos-body-off-site-collective-exhibition>  
<https://anti-materia.org/eyecandy-1/2020/1/23/semana-2052-tetsuos-body>  
<http://www.daily-lazy.com/2020/01/tetsuos-body-at-nine-hours-hotel.html>  
Interview on HESTETIKA Magazine, Vol. 36  
Formes vivantes\_Musée National Adrien Dubouché\_Catalogue\_Silvana Editoriale  
<https://www.tribune.com/L-ecosistema-delle-incognite>  
<http://www.balloonproject.it/francesco-pacelli/>  
<https://anti-materia.org/eyecandy-1/2019/11/4/semana-1941fishy-fishy-fishy-x>  
<http://www.daily-lazy.com/2019/10/francesco-pacelli-at-rehearsal-project.html>  
<http://artmirror.org/exhibitions/403-francesco-pacelli-at-rehearsal-project-space>  
Small Zine n. 32\_Una realtà mutante\_Intervista a cura di Gregorio Raspa  
<http://scandaleproject.com/fishy-fishy-fishy-x-francesco-pacelli/>  
<http://formeuniche.org/dialogo-con-francesco-pacelli/>  
<http://www.balloonproject.it/innesti/>  
<https://anti-materia.org/eyecandy/tag/ABISSO+ELASTICO>  
[http://tzvetnik.online/portfolio\\_page/francesco-pacelli-at-current/](http://tzvetnik.online/portfolio_page/francesco-pacelli-at-current/)  
<http://www.balloonproject.it/screentearing/>

## 2018

<http://www.daily-lazy.com/2018/12/francesco-pacelli-at-display-parma.html>  
<https://www.neo2.com/francesco-pacelli/>  
<http://atpdiary.com/francesco-pacelli-ballata-vogelkop-spazio-display-parma/>  
<https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/naturalia-et-artificialia-2/>



**Magonebbia**  
Charcoal and acrylics on wooden board  
cm 36 x 46  
2026



**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 cyclicity 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 nullastelliforme* 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

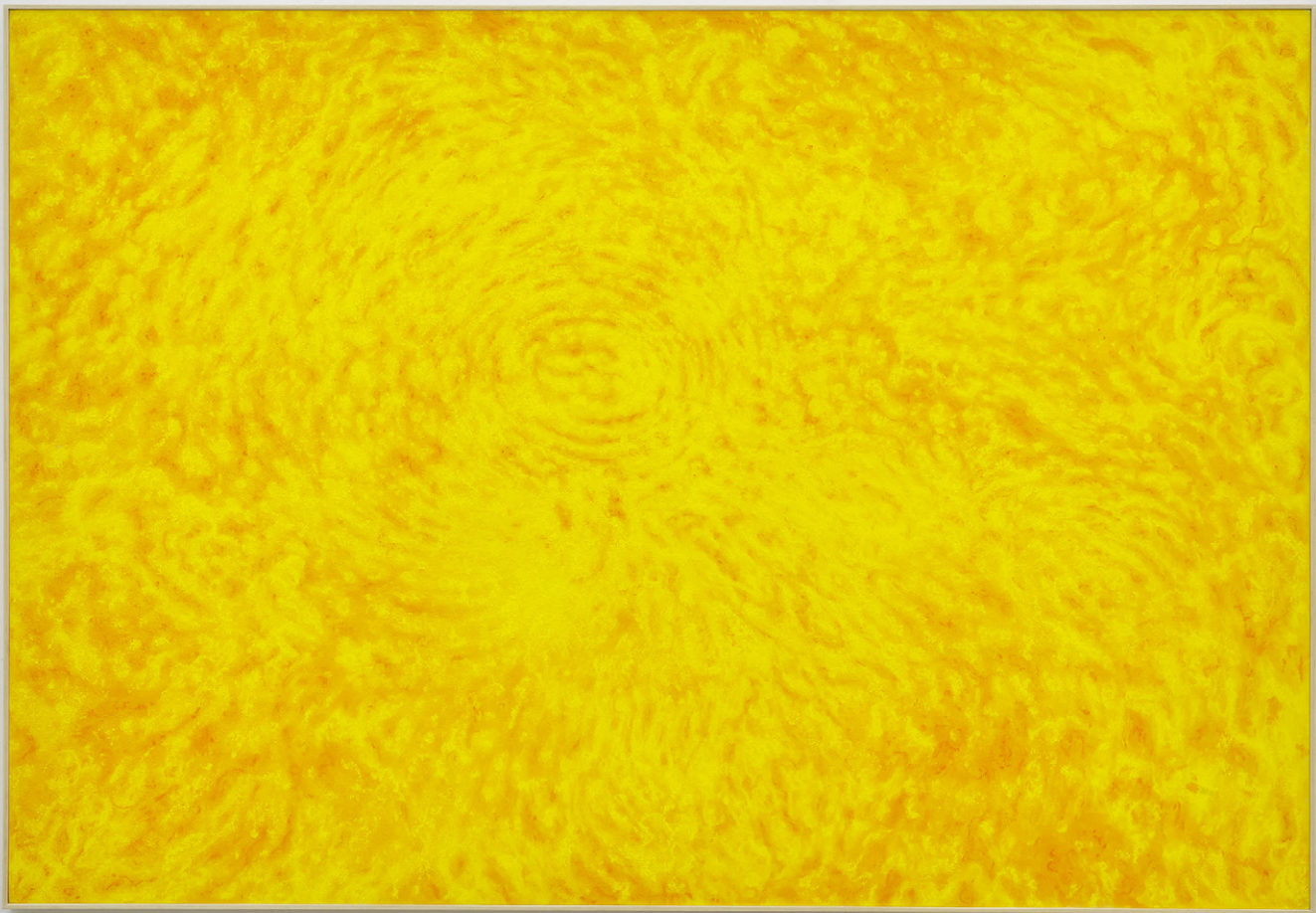
murky world, partially inaccessible, perhaps threatening. Whereas solar light previously suggested an almost positivist openness, it is now filtered, guiding us towards an uneasy yet necessary and complementary path. As Van Diepenbeeck reminds us, beyond the abyss of clouds lie infinite creative possibilities. 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, risiedel'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.

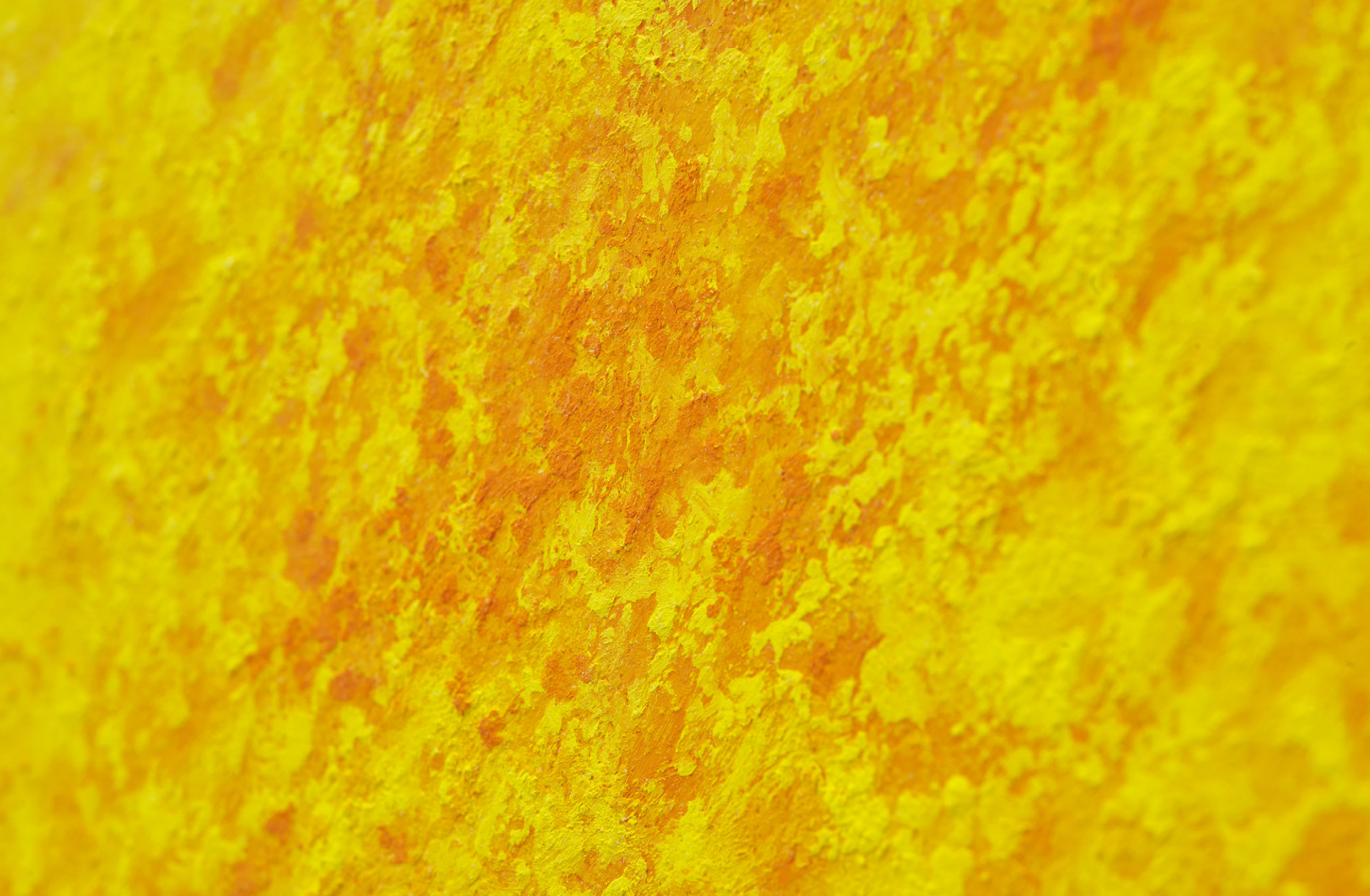
text by Zoë Dea Luca Legge



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







**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



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





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

*nineteenightyseven*  
solo exhibition at DES BAINS, London  
2025

What happens before anything happens.

*nineteenightyseven* 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.

*nineteenightyseven* 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







previously

**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**

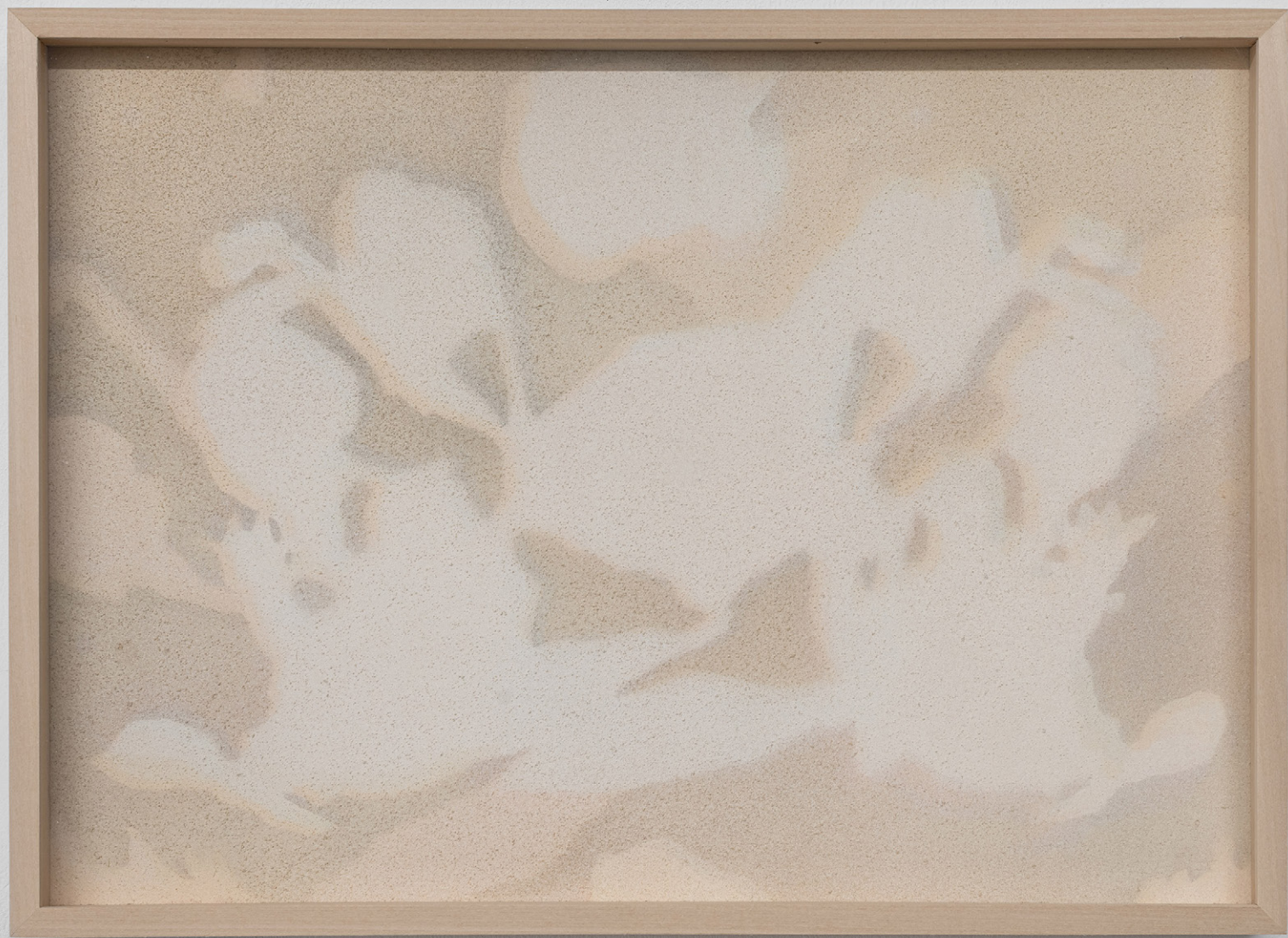
wood boxes, dried sphagnum moss, ceramics, LED light

75 x 30 x 8 cm

2025







previously

**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

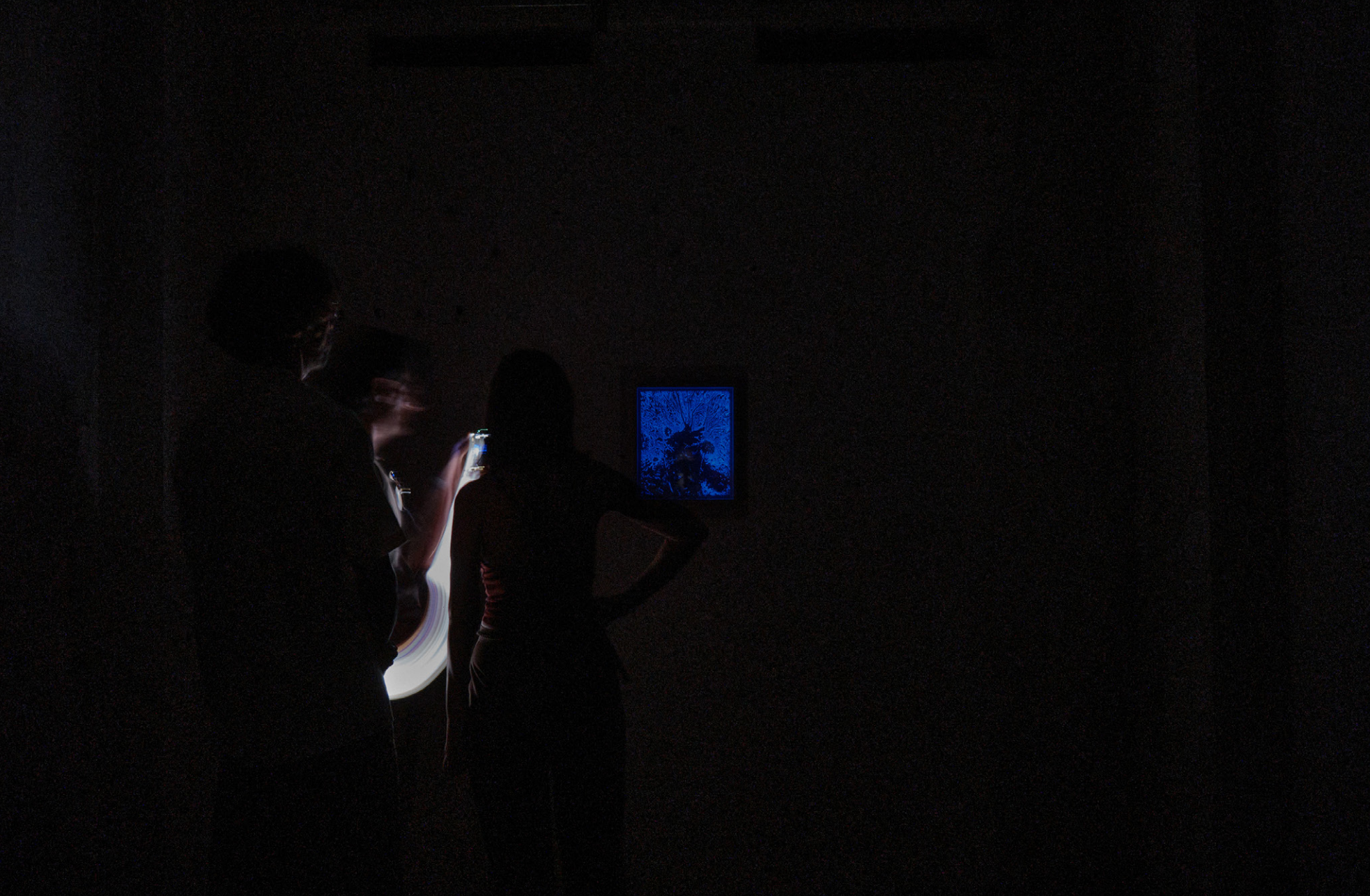
2025





**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

## *Dark Forest*

Two person exhibition with Estefania 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 Berdin and Jorge Van den Eynde

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 Estefania 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

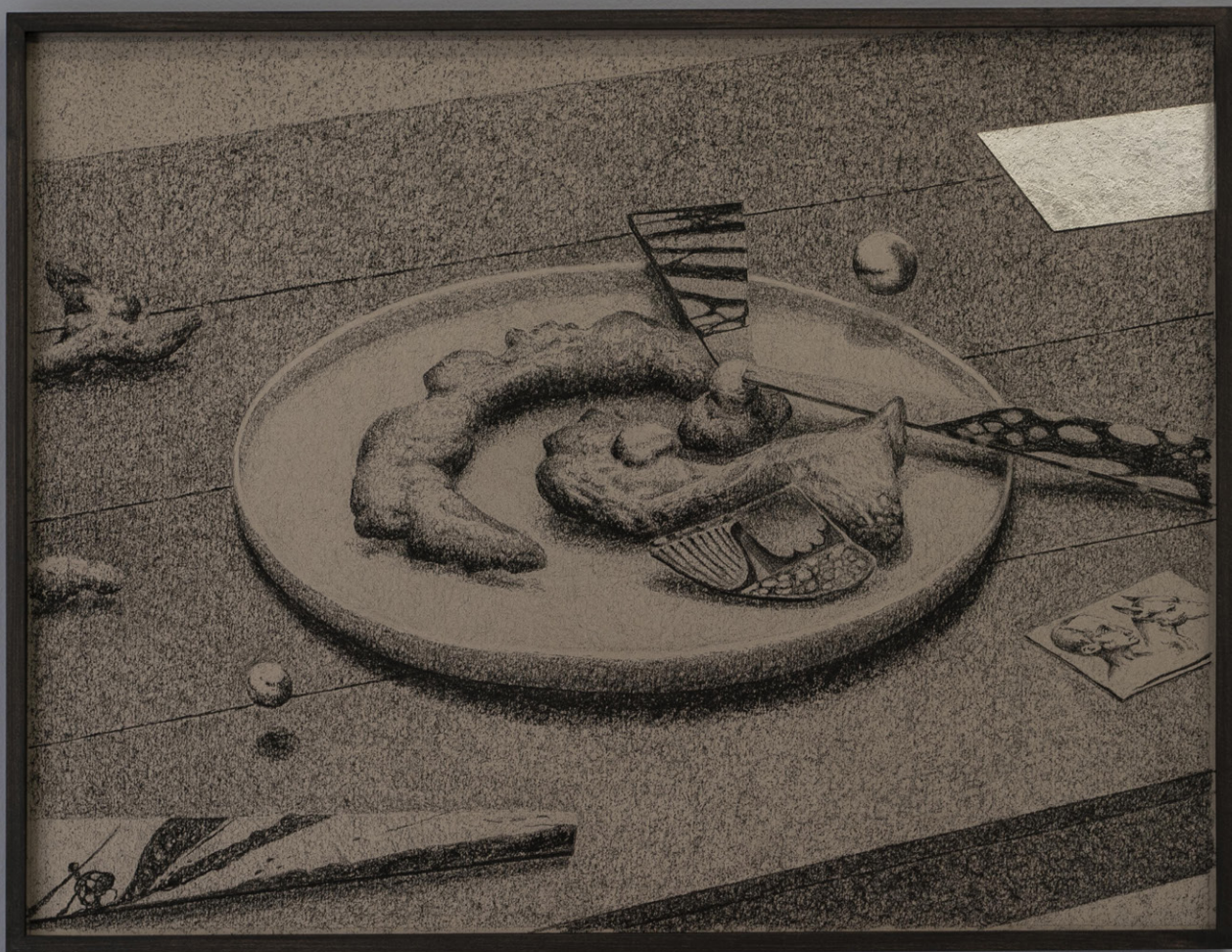
2024

next:

**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

next:

**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 an installation made of multiple small ceramic pieces, based on the concept of disappearance. Spread throughout the space as sporadic entities, their shapes and colors seamlessly blend with the architecture that houses them, as animals adapting to their environment to evade predators and conserve energy for survival. Each ceramic piece camouflages in proximity to other sculptures, mimicking the dark floor's color or the ceiling's texture. Organic, abstract, and ambiguous shapes seem to attempt an escape from the exhibition space, propelled by an invisible force that is simultaneously pulling them to the floor or ejecting them from the ground toward the sky, distorting their forms and making them invisible.



**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 that absorb sunlight throughout the day and 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 phosphorescence, 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





*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 *Utopias (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



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 (II)**

Bronze

23x11,5x12 cm

2023

*Some things need an impulse to move* is a bronze series made up of small wall sculptures that work on a principle of perfect symmetry/slight asymmetry, with reference to the biological construction of the natural world. However, the lack of explicit and direct figurative references shifts the focus onto the material itself. In fact, bronze represents the closest material to gold according to alchemical research, assuming a double value of both material and spiritual elevation for humanity linked to the research and exploration of the self and the world.



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



**Some things need an impulse to move (I)**

Bronze

23x11x12 cm

2023



**Some things need an impulse to move (I)**

Bronze

23x11x12 cm

2023





Flow of thought and search 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 are able to maintain 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 construction 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, wooden frame, anti-reflective glass  
94,5x71,5x3 cm  
2023

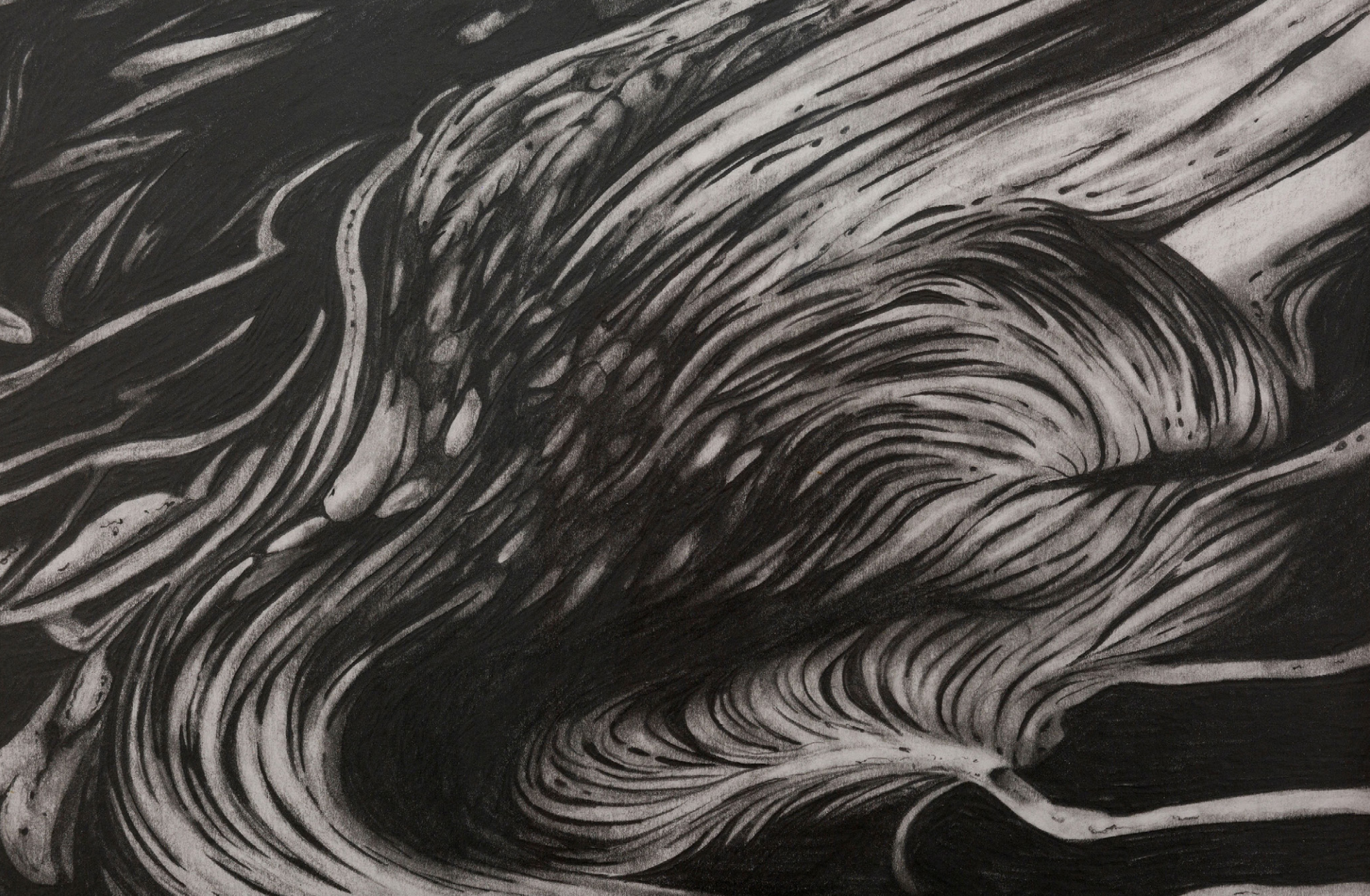


**There wasn't much wind on that day (IV)**

Graphite on paper, wooden frame, anti-reflective glass

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





*Echoes* is inspired by the mythical figure of the Ouroboros, the snake eating its own tail creating a closed circle. In opposition to a linear concept of time, circularity represents a condition of deep connection with the elements and dynamics of nature, in a constant looping state of contraction and expansion.

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

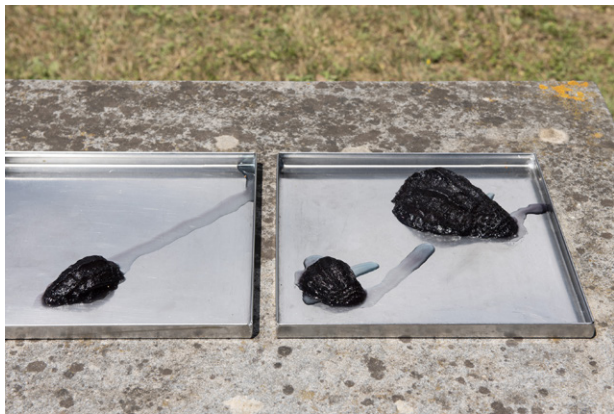


**There wasn't much wind on that day (I, II)**  
Graphite on paper, wooden frame, anti-reflective glass  
61x85x4 cm each  
2022





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 shaken. 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 gelatine melts and those small soft islands tragically 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 cyclicity. 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

**Termo servo aereo elettro-magneto elasticità**

Aluminium, clay, EPS, inox steel, epoxy resin, acylic resin, cosmetic pigments

61x72x160 cm

2022



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. *Terzo 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 material overlaps of an assembly that becomes camouflage, shifting towards the definition of an altered material dimension.







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 it is uncertain whether 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



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.







**Broboblod**  
Glazed ceramics  
24x25x18 cm  
2021

### *Holobiont Rapsody*

Two artists show 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 overlooked. 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 canvases 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





**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 in a bird feeder conceived to set a connection point between the human world and the animal one, through the ritualistic and aggregating act of eating.

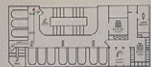
**Bridges (Il richiamo)**  
Glazed ceramics, bird feed  
71x37x10 cm  
2020





Installation view from *Notturmo*, 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.

**There is so much to lie about it that I don't know how to start**

Epoxy resin, cellulose, polyurethane resin, acrylics, pigments, taxydermy

Variable dimensions

2019



From *Tetsuo's body*, collective off-site exhibition held at Capsule hotel 9H Otemachi (Tokyo, Japan) / 2019



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 resin, polyurethane resin, polystyrene, cellulose, aluminium, wires, ceramics, acrylics, spray paint, flexible

Led light

Max dimensions 4x4x3 m (without wires)

2019



