

effe minelli

zaza'

L'OCCHIO DELLA PERNICE

open by appointment from 14/04 to 20/05

via Privata Leopoldo Gasparotto 4

Milano

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Presenting a new porcelain body of works from Vesuvius-based artist Effe Minelli. Their sculptural research spans from the arborescent forms of the Neapolitan baroque, to the experimental form-finding of material processes specific to porcelain making, subverted by the artist letting locally sourced materials such as hemp ropes and lava stones define the sculpture's form.

A conversation between the artist and curator/writer Rebecca Sharp

Rebecca Sharp: I really love the recent pieces. I feel like they make so much sense to me and what I know of the way you use, think about, practice embodiment. This fixation we've spoken so much about with romance and disgust, beauty "so much beauty!!" (your favourite refrain) and also the grotesque. I mean it's very baroque Naples, trash and ruin x Homeric coastlines, the rot and the sublime. But it's also - and knowing you as I do, having lived together - high aesthetics and blocked drains, (my) hair in the plug, the toilet won't flush, a leak in the ceiling with some fangled / sculptural bucket attached to the window while the sun streams in, the balcony garden is flourishing, caffè in the hammock (I broke) with a view of Capri. I can't separate your body, your studio, your house, your artwork, they are all one organism. Occhio di pernice is a perfect expression of all this, very gross and romantic - can you talk about it?

Effe Minelli: You got me. Occhio di pernice is all this, disgusting skin imperfections expressed by evoking an animal, a bird which suddenly becomes a mythological creature of some sort, an unknown entity embodying disgust and the abject. There's no such thing as a dogmatic Beauty, in fact Beauty can turn into something really ugly, there's an inner wish in something beautiful to change its nature. Beauty gets tired of being beauty and wants to reveal another face.

RS: Si, beauty gets bored. Your choice of material is significant obviously. I think everything being so delicate, and set in relation to such a fine balance, these codependent objects is a very poetic truth about the way you live in correspondence to your environment. You are someone who can maintain a balance between yourself and others, plants, animals, to form a kind of co-creative compassionate ecology. Every element in your sculptures, your home, the volcano where your home is set relies harmonically on the other.

EM: I think we all do, even if we don't mean it, there's a universal force which is shaping our community, even when we don't think our contribution is being heard. Sometimes it's hard to see how much we are giving to each other, and sometimes is hard to recognise how much we are getting, but most importantly we should never forget how much we are

more alike than we are unlike, as Maya Angelou reminded us. We live in constant fear of breaking down or being hurt by someone. Our emotions are fragile but I think there's nothing to fear, I've learnt not to fear fragility. Likewise, every time a porcelain piece breaks, I collect all the pieces and put them together again in a new piece. This is the nature I choose to live and believe in.

RS: Yes, lovely like Japanese kintsugi towards a social animism. I also think this frailty, and flirtation with disgust has to do with your own body, as seen from the inside after a violent accident in your youth. Ceramic and bones, and the way you work it into something wrought, sinuous and tendon-like. Somehow your work seems to hold all of that pain, beautiful escapism / disassociation and re-engagement through the world via art, morbidity and sexuality. And everything might fall to pieces. The delicate balance is something you're so devoted to.

EM: Let's say that I've simply learned on my skin how much the human body can absorb and expel. I think it's very human to find similarities in objects and materials of our surroundings, but with porcelain I do share my reality, also because I've learned the techniques throughout my friend Ingrid Jäger who was teaching at the Hfbk, it's always a special pleasure to be able to link your practice with the people beyond it.

RS: It's also about attention, and how you apply it, I have seen you repair chandeliers and arrange flowers like a saint. There's also a kind of metaphorical sympathy with ceramic as so porous, precarious and prone to shatter, and the psychology of living on a volcano. There's I think trust, and faith involved with both - please don't break, please don't ignite. And I think Naples is a very socially collaborative community for that reason, if that thing goes off we all die together. This belongs to the sensitivity of your sculptures, every part elegantly, riskily supporting the whole.

EM: I don't know how much people are helping each other to live in such a doomed environment, the way I see it is more with a certain awareness that we are going towards the end of the world, meaning the reality as we experience it can change at any time, I'm not optimistic in that sense I'm instead happy to enjoy nature every minute I can, as I know it won't last forever. Things are mutating and not always in a good way, but I'm also happy to recognise a certain power which is stronger than humanity. The volcano is a direct link to something humanity can't reach yet, a core of fire in which no one will actually make any sense, a place of nothingness where no human can reach happiness. I guess I'm totally with Giacomo Leopardi in believing humans do wish for something infinite, something beyond materialistic things. Perhaps something we forgot to look for, as we get distracted everyday by products which try to give us a sense and meaning. A volcano is the antithesis to all of this. About me I'm simply happy to have realised what I need and what I don't and I must have to thank my dogs for that and of course my mother...

RS: Apocalypse but thankful, I agree. Tell me about Amore and Psiche because they are your new muses, there are jaws and paws everywhere in your new pieces :)

EM: They absolutely are! Obviously you know, you were there for it, but it was a total and unexpected surprise. I found them inside a box some one had left near a mountain of trash on the side of the street, in Torre del Greco. I was with our friend Rosa Noviello driving to the beach and I noticed these small poppies [puppies <3] standing near the box. I stopped immediately and I went to Psiche, and it was only then that I saw another dog inside the box. I took them both home with me. It took me about two weeks I think to finally name them Amore and Psiche. Time is flying, there's no day I don't feel their presence in my life, they are constantly observing and studying me in every gesture or sound I do and word I say. I see them as two aliens helping me learning a different language.

RS: And now they're enormous beasts who are your twin guardian defenders. I love that they look so much like the sort of mongrel you'd see in a Pompeii mosaic; they are so of their place, as you are.

I wish we were having this conversation in the kitchen.

EM: We can continue in the summer, when we walk Sentiero degli Dei.

RS: Ok, though I think it will be pure gossip along the Amalfi Coast. The pups will love it.