

In conversation: Lupo Borgonovo and Tom Polo, 9 September, 2022

Tom Polo Hi Lupo

Lupo Borgonovo Ciao Tom...

TP

Well, thank you for speaking with me today ahead of your presentation later in the year at Reading Room in Melbourne...

LB

Thank you.

TP

I thought we might start by—because I know you are in Italy – in Milan – right now, and I’m here in Australia—I thought it would be nice for you to share a little bit about where you are and what surrounds you right now. Dove sei?

LB

...Now at this moment, I am in my studio. I think I’ve been here for 8 years, or something like that, that I have worked inside this space; that is a space very typical of an Italy that now doesn’t exist in a way anymore because this is a courtyard house. So it’s like a house with a court, with a square in the middle, this is the kind of house of people who used to work in the field, like farmers. And this is a very ancient house from 1900. So it’s still the same, the time is passed around these houses, because here we have new buildings, new streets, the cars, but this house is still the same, it’s like a memory. In present, the presence of a memory. This house, at the beginning of the 20th century, was where the Italians who moved to the U.S. used to do their medical visit and also the visa documents to move there. So it’s a place like a starting point for the migration movement, and so on, is a very peculiar place. This is the story of the place...it is a strange place, a little bit for Milan because here I have windows...if we open the windows, we see a little river just one meter outside this window. So it’s strange because people say Milan is a grey city, full of cars...and in front of me, I have a river with fish, and sometimes people will try fishing here. So it’s a place that is the presence of the memory but also connected to nature. It’s not so common.

TP

No, it’s not common, and it sounds like that creates quite an interesting juxtaposition of two things next to each other – two very different things. Historical and very kind of, natural as well... and funnily in a way, I’d say —and perhaps we’ll talk about this more as we go through —but both of those things feature very heavily in your work: both objects and history, but also the natural environment and how you create a space for those in a more permanent way through your art-making process.

LB

Yes, yes, of course.

TP

The studio is a very personal place; it is a place where for many artists, it feels like a home away from home; for many artists, that actually feels like first nature, our kind of safe space. I remember when I first got to visit your studio — and I’ve been to your studio a few times; I remember that for me, the space of your studio feels like a history of both who you are, but also your practice...because surrounding you on the shelving and on the walls and in the drawers, you would keep all the little elements of all the parts that make up who you are, and, I’m a true believer in the idea that we are the sum of all those things. You know, I believe that the work that you’re doing now is a result of the things that you’ve made before this.

LB

Yes, yes...

TP

Can you tell me a little about how you find your inspiration or what those things around you are?

LB

Yes, regarding nature, I was born and live in Milan. So, Milan is a city, a proper metropolis with buildings, streets and so on... In my work, there is, I think, more in the sculpture maybe than in drawing, there is reference, or my subject comes from nature. I take the subject from nature, transform it, and recreate an image of nature that, to me, is interesting or weird or curious or I don't know... but also, I think that this deals with my idea of living in a city. So, the nature that I look at is a nature I look at through the perspective of the city...is not the natural experience like in the mountains or in the sea or in the desert. I look at nature as something that is incredible for me to see in a city...is not the nature of the great forest or the great fields, and so on. Nature is always a possibility to look at shape and geometry, colours and also metaphors... to look at things in a way in which you can recognise things as other things. To create strange effects of understanding through the object. I'm really into this idea of trying to look at things in another way, in a different way. Not just look but work on a subject that already exists and try to transform them into something else. For example, use a branch as a bone, a mushroom as an ear, or a turtle shell as a geometry drawing. I think that one very important thing is the fact of looking at things. Nature is very interesting because, in nature, I see a lot of possibilities in shape, colours, figures of speech, metaphors and so on. Then there is another part (of my practice) about objects created by human beings that I usually use to develop my drawings. These objects could be from museum collections...I go in search of objects via museum websites or visiting museums or collections. The objects I search for also have to be, for me, more than one thing...have the effect of being more than one thing. So my research is for objects that have to show certain characteristics. I don't know exactly which characteristics, but I recognise them when I meet a particular object. Then I want to start to make an interpretation. From nature and objects from collections, objects made by unknown artisans or artists, I think my process is a process of translation.

TP

And bringing together those things...

LB

Yes, yes, I don't know, a translation...starting from something and going, I don't know where, but it's a process of interpretation. Translation.

TP

I think almost like a slight sense of alchemy, you know, of transforming materials. Going back to that idea... I've always thought that there existed this duality in your work between the natural elements and what you see as sort of like, maybe field research, in perhaps a conceptual sense of how you go out and find these elements in nature because I know you like to spend as much time as you can outdoors, looking, finding...

LB

Yes, yes...

TP

... if it is a branch, or if it is like a mushroom that is growing in a particular way that reminds you of something that is quite bodily. I think for me, I also always like the idea of bringing it back to the body and bringing it back to something that feels familiar to you...is very, very present in your work? Between nature and humans...

LB

Yes! Yes...

TP

...and then the next part is how that object is collected or has been collated, maybe over history, and how people have done that for centuries. Maybe that's where the idea of this museum research comes into play for your work. On top of that, I would say that you use curiosity; I think there is just this inherent, or, just a very natural sense for you, just a fascination with how things work, how things function, and how the world is. I think we kind of have this, you know, similarity about how things are made, how they're built, how they grow, how they change, and then how that changes us as well. I think I've noticed in your sculptural, but also in your drawing practice, you often feature through different materials, this idea of transformation and change...and perhaps that the artist's hand is, in a way, the opportunity to see that change and see that sort of almost magic, that we go from concept of idea to new object, right?

LB

Yes, yes, yes. Yes, of course. It's like that! It's this process of getting closer to the insight...I don't know... you activate your idea of doing something. I activate the idea of doing something when I meet something that switches on an insight... then I try to follow this insight to realise something practical. So I try to invent some rules for the process of creation in a way.

TP

Exactly, exactly. And I think through that process is a real sense of what we call trial and error, you know, looking at materials, seeing how they might function, how you might be able to transfer those and transform, both surfaces and stories, into something that feels familiar, but strange, right?

LB

Yes, yes, yes... that deals with you, but also not. So you start with an idea, then the process, usually my process, also for the sculpture and for the drawings, I need a lot of time because it is a slow process. So in this process, you can start with an idea at the beginning, but then the process is so long that the idea changes multiple times, a lot of times. It is like the final image is the work, and the process becomes the protagonist, the main protagonist, so you change a lot of things in this long process... is not like a direct movement from A to B, because A and B are very far away. So you have a lot of possibility of understanding, of transforming things, or adding new things...

TP

...experimentation is play as well. Like, it becomes almost fun to try and work out what the possibility is, right?

LB

Yes, of course... there is this idea of playing because also I have this idea in my way of looking at the works, of creating rules. So every work has a set of rules also...the sculptures that are mainly (a process of) casting, but casting in a certain way, later I will tell you about that. So there are a group of rules that I can improve on and also develop...and then also for the drawings, there is a way of moving that is like a method, but it also could be a game.

TP

Further to that, I'm thinking about our first time working together, which was in 2019, when we worked together on occupy and echo (a stage), which was a group exhibition at ReadingRoom...

LB

I remember very well, my first time in Australia...

TP

I'd seen your work in other contexts before, in Sydney, but it was the first time for me to get to see your work in a gallery, and you had the opportunity to show the various sides of your work. So we were talking before about mushrooms and ears, and actually, one of the most beautiful works in that group exhibition was this transformation of what was a natural element, a mushroom that had been found, into this beautiful bronze cast of an ear that was placed in between the two rooms of the gallery. I've always been interested in how there's a story behind your work...but I also know that research and a sense of openness are also very important in your work. I want to talk about how you begin before we talk specifically about this next project that is upcoming at ReadingRoom; how would you say that you start the process of a new body of work? Or a new idea? What is that? What is that starting point?

LB

The starting point is a process of, as I told maybe before, but I'll try to be more precise: it is a process of recognising. I recognise in something that already exists, something that could fit within the language of my practice... some sentences or some words that work for my alphabet, for my way of expressing things. So there is this, this kind of way of also recognising because if I think of the mushroom that I showed in Australia in the show you organised, now for the next show at ReadingRoom, I'm working on another shape of a mushroom. It's like the mushroom has become, in my practice, something that I know how to touch or that I want to touch...

TP

Something that becomes familiar and second nature...

LB

...yes, it becomes familiar, and it's something that I could relate to my language and makes me feel comfortable. I know that I can touch it in a way to create something that would be unexpected. So it's a process in which I recognise something, which I think deals a lot with the sensations and feelings or the visual sensibility, the visual alphabet or lexicon. So the process is, I see something, and I realise that there is something that I could transform, and so I start, this is my process... then I have developed a way of touching objects. Later I will tell you more, but my process of creating sculpture is very, not direct, but indirect because I touch things; I'm not creating shapes from zero, but I create shapes using an elaborate set of casting processes. So in a way, what you're looking at is a casting, so it's like a replica...and as with every replica, the replica could be similar to the original, but it's not...

TP

.. it's not the same...

LB

.. it's not. The first mushroom in our group show at ReadingRoom, was a process very clear, so it was the cast of a mushroom, but the mushroom in the space was installed in another direction that usually you can't see in nature...so it became another thing. In the new mushroom for the upcoming show, there is more this idea of a replica, something that is far away from the original because I will show you an elaborate part of the cast of the side of the mushroom. So I think that something starts for me when I see something, but after seeing it, I want to touch it. So there is this idea of seeing, which is also explored in the drawings, and then this idea of touch. When these two senses are on the same line, I feel a connection...then I start to work.

TP

...it starts to make sense. It starts to sort of develop into something that feels inherently familiar but also leaves a space for us to want to investigate and to want to know more. Do you think we can move into speaking about the specifics of this next project, Volare, which will be at Reading Room, and thinking about the starting point for this project?

LB

Yes, yes...and I would like to add just one thing if I can, something linked with the show, occupy and echo, a stage. Now I am more focused on creating cast and bronze and drawings. So I want to concentrate my practice on these two things and try to expand these two things and not jump through different materials. During occupy and echo, a stage, there was a set of works shown, the silicone cast of fruits, which represents very well what we have been discussing. With these works, I went outside and tried to find something I liked. To be brief, I just walked on the streets near my house, a very long street in Milan. I started to go to every fruit seller and, there are a lot, to look at the fruit, not as something that I want to buy because I want to eat, but something that I want to buy because of the shape, maybe there is a lemon that to me has something more interesting than the other lemons, and so on... So I searched, and I picked a lot of fruit, and I started to cast in silicone just to have the shapes, to collect the shapes, a kind of memory of the shapes that interested me. And I think that these represent, I think that these represent well, the ideas we have been discussing...

TP

...yes, and I think you say something very beautiful when you use the word, or the phrase, a memory of shape. This idea of memory, la memoria, something that we want to keep close to us, feels both sentimental, and I guess we come back to the word and this sense of curiosity. Because, as you say, I remember when we first spoke about that body of work, where you would go into the many fruit vendors, all kinds of fruit stores...searching to find something that appealed to you in a completely unfamiliar way. In a way, this is a type of research, isn't it? Because you want to get closer to something that is not part of your immediate, like, knowledge, right?

LB

...yes, yes...

TP

...you want to investigate something through touch and through smell and texture. And, it was sort of by replicating those objects that you had a sense of, of a newfound understanding of something that wasn't part of you before. From what I've seen from this next body of work for Volare, a series of both drawings and a sculpture, what I'm realising is that the process of making these works has been a real undertaking of research, both in terms of certain publications that you've looked into, or museum histories, or the histories of where you found the objects that have appeared in these works... can you first start by telling us, what this body of work is? And a little about the source of this research...

LB

Ok, the show will present a group of drawings; not sure how many we will install, but there are nine drawings made with coloured felt-tip pen. In these drawings, if you look from a distance, you recognise in a moment that they are rugs. From a certain distance, you can think that they are rugs because they are made in a certain way, creating a trompe-l'œil, an illusion. So you have this idea of illusion... and this is another thing that I think is present in my work, and for sure, it's something that interests me. The idea of illusion is something that... I'm looking at something; I think it is that... and then it is not. So this process of creating different paths. For Volare, there will be these drawings starting from a study, a visual study, a drawing study of ancient rugs from Armenia, and one sculpture. One sculpture that is a bronze casting that is an evolution of a mushroom, so a development of my practice on mushrooms that will be in the space. This sculpture will have some connection with the colours that are inside the drawings because I use for the patina, a certain kind of green-blue that you can also recognise in the drawings. So this will be the group of works.

TP

So a series of nine drawings that reference specific cultures or histories of rugs. So tell me.. what is it about these rugs that were interesting or drew you in?

LB

Before I started to develop the rug drawings, I did a series of drawings, black drawings that were made in the same way in which I made the rugs. Little circles, drawn... 1, 2, 3, 4—1000s of little circles, which recreated images of objects that I found in a collection of a museum. When I looked at these drawings that are also like a way to read, to recreate a shape, to recreate a story, to follow the line of history, the line of an object, the line of a culture, I think that these kinds of drawings had something that connected with textile. So I thought I could move this practice, these things I have found, into something that seems strongly connected. I think that sometimes also for you, it could be like this? You're working on a work, and the things that you discover help you to move into another work or another series. I saw this drawing, and I asked myself, how can I make this look like a textile? And then also, I think that were years and years that I wanted to work on rugs, because, the very simple reason I really like rugs, and the way in which you can look at a rug...

TP

...really? But I think the specific fascination though for you to want to, you know — and time is something that we'll talk about—but to dedicate so much of your life and your practice to looking at these rugs...

LB

Yes...

TP

...is it related to textiles more broadly? Or do you think you've been interested in the idea of a rug as an object?

LB

I was familiar with rugs because my father used to travel a lot for work in the Far East and sometimes had some rugs from his travels, so I had these objects at home. And these objects are full of colours, full of drawings, full of materials, and heavy also. So to have these around in my home is something that caught my attention, and also the beauty of following the line. Also, I remember, and this is just a note, it is not part of the work, when I was a child, I used to play in the living room, and there was a rug. I used the drawings of that rug as a schema as a playground to play with because there were all the lines, and all the colours. Also, the way in which we use rugs in our culture, in our houses, is not the original way in which they are made; they are made for a population that is nomadic. So they travel and have to be rolled and open when there is the need to rest...

TP

..of course, they're, historically storytelling devices as well. They tell stories, as well as being these ornate and aesthetic objects. Similar to the way we create artworks today...

LB

...of course, they are beautiful objects. There is also this mystery, maybe... a mystery because I'm in front of something that is like, that sometimes happens to me when I see beautiful things from the past or other cultures... it's like being in front of an alien, so you respect the alien because they know something about other places, other stories, that you don't know. You just have the possibility of concentrating on the surface and staying on the surface. So, I take the time to float on the surface of these images from other times and cultures.

TP

Great, ok. So I know from our conversations, both in the past and for this exhibition, that these drawings, more and more, as you were completing the series of works, it came to be about transforming surface and space—a transfer from the real—to the object of a drawing. But also, you mentioned something like you don't feel that you know, in a way, how it happens. The process of the artwork is part of that. Can you tell

me a little bit about that, about that translation?

LB

Of course, I started to research images of rugs as I always do in my work, using the web, the web is great because you can look at images from everywhere...we know this, of course. Then it happened that I had an encounter. I met a great gallerist and collector of ancient rugs, who helped me and gave me access to more detailed images. Before this meeting, I started just looking at rugs through the screen, so it is interesting because I didn't have an idea of the original; I had just the idea of the digital images, which is not, as we know, the reality. So there is also here a lack of something that is missed. So then, these rugs were transferred onto the paper through a drawing. And when I transferred this drawing of the rug onto paper, it changed again because I changed the proportions of the drawing because I wanted them to fit well onto a specific dimension of the paper. So it's like a movement from the original... also in my drawings, when the drawing is finished, you can recognise something that is connected with the original but is very, very far away; it is another thing. It is like a process of inspiration, of transformation. I use felt-tip pens and try to find colours that are similar to the images that I look at on the screen... but it is impossible because you know, also you know this as you use a lot of colours, there are a lot of colours in the world...but not all the colours, so I just try to go closest! And so... it's like a process in which I miss a lot of information from the original, but I've got a lot of new information about how to create an image in this way. It is a strange process because I intensely focus my attention and my time...to finish one of these drawings; I have hand and arm pain because it's a long work process, and every drawing is made of little circles, I made a count recently, and in every drawing, there are something like 30,000 circles. So I need time, training like a marathon, and I spend this time on these images. Also, I do not want to read a lot about these rugs, I have a lot of books about rugs now, but it's difficult to find a page in which it is explicitly described "this line or colour means this", for example... and I don't want to take this approach to making the work. I want to make my own experience of this work, and my own experience was to make these drawings and spend a lot of time on the surface of something that is unknown. It is a very good experience to find yourself in a place you don't recognise; when there are people you recognise, but not the language, for example, so you have this sensation that is like, I don't know... something that deals with the title "Volare". In a way, you feel the gravity, because you don't have the gravity in a way.

TP

This comes back to the feeling of an illusion that you spoke about before. You're talking about wanting to create a space or a sense of...I don't know, going back to that word "Volare", to fly...so what it means to be gravitating between worlds, in a way. Between them being real and on-screen, to something that you have slightly changed. And you've changed the context...and removed them from their history and brought them into this gallery context to show them.

LB

Yes, yes...I met this man, the owner of Galleria Moshe Tabibnia, here in Milan. I had this meeting, and he saw my drawings, and he said, I have never seen something like that. It was nice for me because I understood that for a person that knows rugs and knows this material, it's something that could be new and weird. I told him these images on this material, these stories, I don't know anything about them... I'm recreating a story, and I don't know where it will go. He said, I understand you, the artisans in Armenia that still create rugs today, they act like you... they don't know the exact stories that come from years and years ago, they just follow a retelling of a story and try to... it's like learning to speak. You start to make imitations, but you don't know very well, then maybe you arrive at the point. Then also I realised that there is a kind of connection between the way in which I make these drawings and the way in which people create rugs. A slowness in the process, also dealing with the idea of time, they made knots, and I made circles. So there is a kind of translation, of action, into something similar.

TP

So why do you think it's important that you, in a way, are inventing your own language? Why do you think, for you, it's important to create a new space for these rugs? What is important conceptually in bringing them to an audience?

LB

I think of nature as a master in creating shapes, and I collaborate with nature in a way, to create something. Also, with my drawings, it is like I try to reactivate...or to try to figure out if, in the history of the object, there is something that I think that I could deal with in my practice. I try to transform it, to use it as a material that I can translate. In my process of teaching, I ask students to go to visit exhibitions, and I ask them to not read the press release but to try to make their own interpretations. All the interpretations, not to be shy, just invent. This deals with the idea that what I'm looking at could help me to create ideas. For these drawings of rugs, I want to follow ideas; I just want to use the history of the rug as a starting possibility to develop my interpretation of the rug.

TP

I'd really like to talk a little bit about being as an Italian artist, working against or through certain histories... I'm interested in how something like Arte Povera has really influenced your process over a long time, particularly in this idea of the transformation of materials. I know that Luciano Fabro has been really important both to this body of work and also to your practice in general. Can you speak a little bit about your research pertaining to this body of work and the relationship there?

LB

In the library of my high school, I found a very famous book, the first written by Germano Celant, about Arte Povera. When I read it, I remember that my colleagues were in the classroom making classical paintings of the model, and I was in the library reading this book about Arte Povera. It was like... I think that at that moment, I was looking for an escape door, and Arte Povera was a good solution. So I chose to do a thesis on the Arte Povera movement, and I found phone numbers of many artists from Arte Povera. I had the opportunity to meet Gilberto Zorio and Piero Gilardi. I went to their studios, it was incredible, because they had studios, huge studios, and I was a student, I was 18 years old, I saw those studios with the pieces of art there that I've studied in the book of Arte Povera in the library, and so it was incredible. So I realised art exists, existed and exists now...it is not just history, but here now.

TP

... that's an amazing thing to happen now, as a practising artist, let alone as an 18-year-old student, you know...

LB

Yes, I did interviews with them also; it was funny with a tape recorder... I have to find the document...that was incredible. I remember those days in Turin, because both lived in Turin... and I thought, wow, I want to do something like that, I want to do that. I also called Luciano Fabro, that at that moment was busy, and he said to me, "yes, yes, do you know how to read?" And I said yes, he said, so you have to go to the library, find my books and read, everything is there. And it's true because I have a book of his that is called "Arte Torna arte: lezioni e conferenze, 1981-1997", which is impossible to find now, that has a selection of lessons he made in Accademia di Brera because he was a teacher, and the lessons are beautiful. So I started to read books with interviews of Arte Povera artists because to say Art Povera is to say a lot of artists, a lot of interesting artists, because, for example, Boetti is very different to Anselmo. Last summer, I had the chance to stay for a week at Anselmo's house in Stromboli... but this is another story. So I saw, I met his objects, his simplicity. But also Luciano Fabro is different to Mario Merz and so on... There are a lot of interesting arguments that connect them, things to say, attention to the materials, the potential of the images, and the research of archetypes like in the igloos or in other important works. Also, attention to eastern culture as in Boetti or the idea of classic approach in sculpture in Luciano Fabro, the glasses, the bronzes, the marbles, so it was incredible. It was like to be at Luna Park because, you know, these people that are using a lot of materials and they use them in a way that could be serious and playful, could be rich but also poor, you can find materials that have a long tradition and not... and I feel that, that something happened to me, a sensation to have found something that could be a guide, like a guide to make things.

TP

Do you feel like you are continuing, in a way, that tradition, that sort of history, of exposing materials and their potential with this exhibition?

LB

I think, yes... I'm looking for that. For me, it's a matter of materials but also the potential of images and the potential of objects. I think also my sculptures are becoming like a kind of memory of objects, or a memory of shape, a memory of shapes of objects. So, yes, I want to create a history of objects that I have found, that I have chosen, that I have made, and that I've transformed. Before, we were speaking about memory. I have thought that to keep something in memory, maybe it is something that you need and maybe that something identifies you... helps you to know who you are...

TP

Can you tell me a little bit about how experimentation or 'potential' will translate into the installation of the works in the gallery? How do you see them working in the space to create that story?

LB

I was speaking yesterday with a friend, thinking about the technique I'm using for drawing; there are a lot of possibilities that I need time to improve and discover. So I have done a lot of work in the studio without thinking of the show or the installation. For example, I realised, maybe, that something had to be remade, made more than three times or just one time, and then I started to add ideas, and then I started to find connections... Before I had the dates of the show, I was working on reproducing and recreating a lot of different textiles, different rugs from different periods, and different styles. Then I realised that I needed to concentrate my practice on just one type of rug that comes from Armenia, which has a specific shape that every rug has, but it is different. So I think that in developing the show, I focused more on creating a statement with my process. Before developing the show, I experimented a lot, and then after, I wanted to make the ideas very compact; also I developed the sculpture, which has this idea of a shape that could remind you of an ear. So there is an idea, is a presence in sculpture, that is listening to the space or listening to the sound of the little circles. When I choose the colour of the sculpture, that has to be close to the colour in the drawings. I try to create slow or soft connections between things. This is the approach...

TP

So I know you have exhibited the works, the rug drawings, flat on the ground in the past... but in this exhibition, they'll be on the wall?

LB

Yes, of course, on the wall. We have to make trials, to do some tests. I think that this is an interesting topic because also there are things that work very well in the mind, then when you make them and try them, they don't work. So, you understand it, and then you say, I could keep in mind this idea, but in reality, I'm going to do other things... because also, when you have a drawing like this, that is full of signs, is full of history, is full of colours, you can see in certain drawings that the felt-tip pen that is not full of colour, and you have circles... It's a history of felt-tip pens in a way if you want! If on the floor, these drawings, you have no possibility to look at them from a distance. And so it becomes, in the end, more interesting to have them on the wall, as you can move around. If you move far from the drawing, you can think that they are moving because the borders of these rugs are not straight, there is a movement, and so you can feel this idea, "Volare", something that is flying...

TP

...flying and moving...again, coming back to this idea of illusion and different perspectives that people in the space will offer...is there anything else you want to talk about for this body of work or for this show?

LB

I have taken images from a gallery of rugs here in Milan, and I transferred these images to a gallery in Australia, things that are really far away from each other, and at the beginning was far away for me too. So it's like beginning a story through objects, a story of possibilities, translation, illusion and meeting people. So I want to focus more on these aspects also for the future...

TP

...of transferring space and time and, you know, between the possibility of the magic of the hand and that transference between Milan, between Asian, Caucasian and Persian histories, and yes, there's lots to explore there into the future, I'm sure...

LB

I can tell you a little bit about the sculptural element... The sculpture started from a mushroom that I found not far from the studio, mushrooms that grow on a tree trunk. To start, I wanted to study the shape of this object or emphasise this shape through a series of longer processes, casting, in which I cast part of the object. I have the negative form, then I recreate the positive; after the positive, I recreate the negative just to make some changes, and then the positive again. So to make one small sculpture, I create a lot of casts. So it's like a long process of replicas and replicas and replicas. And at the end, I make this sculpture in which you find a kind of hole in the middle of the shape and the hole is the trace of the mushroom. And I already want... when I start to touch this mushroom, I know that I want to speak about an ear, and something that listens, something that is there. So I create a kind of... in the last cast, I make a sculpture with the front part that has the mushroom, and at the back, it is like an anatomical ear, the back part of an ear invented and transformed. I think this is a direction in my sculpture that will be important in the years ahead. Finding objects, creating a lot of casts and traces, and then recreating another part of this shape that has to remind me of something else. Creating a mould with two halves, that is a sculpture itself, you can have each part, and maybe you can close it. I'm going in this direction of letting part of the interpretation be more clear, but again, when you look at the object, there is a mystery, a strange effect, that things move in different directions...

TP

In terms of both of those works, both the drawings and then the sculpture, for me... what I'm also imagining is that both of them together, really speak about your interest in research, again, because one is about seeing, and one is about hearing in a way. And both of those are obviously integral to both looking back at history, but also looking forward and thinking about the future. I think it will create a collaboration between two ideas that seem and look very different but come from very much where we started from, which is this idea of research and of history and of mystery about interpretation. I'm looking forward to it...

LB

It's true. That's true, and also, to work on history, in the end, is like creating your own history and your own objects. Also, I think that the sculpture could be like a strange object from an unknown history or from another history; you can look at it as something that is difficult to put, in a moment, in a period. Yes, I'd agree with you Tom...

Lupo Borgonovo (b. 1985) lives and works in Milan. His artistic investigation is driven by a profound curiosity for archaic aesthetic models, which leads him to manipulate artificial and natural archetypes through the usage of a wide variety of creative languages.

Recent solo exhibitions include: *Aplomb*, Museo del Novecento, Milan (2020); *Zeester*, Museo Civico di Castelbuono, Castelbuono, Italy (2019); *Alexandra*, Galleria Monica De Cardenas, Milan, Italy (2018). Selected group exhibitions include: *Una Boccata d'Arte*, Civita (2021); *occupy and echo (a stage)*, curated by Tom Polo, ReadingRoom, Melbourne, Australia (2019); *The Relative Naive*, curated by Sarah Ancelle Schönfeld and Ashkan Sefhavand, Galerie Weisser Elefant, Berlin, Germany (2019); *#80 | #90*, curated by Pier Paolo Pancotto, Villa Medici, Rome, Italy (2019).

Volare is Borgonovo's first solo exhibition in Australia. He is represented by ReadingRoom, Naarm / Melbourne.

Tom Polo (b. 1985) works across painting and installation to explore how conversation, gesture and emotional exchange can be transformed into recordings of social interaction and the self. Polo's practice is characterised by his distinctive style of abstracted figuration, rendered in bold, expansive fields of colour. His paintings depict partially obscured and fragmented figures – a painted index of limbs, eyes and hands – through a conceptual and physical merging of observation and imagination, to encourage sustained moments of looking and being.

Polo was the winner of the Brett Whiteley Travelling Scholarship, presented by the Art Gallery of New South Wales (2015); the Redlands Konica Minolta Art Prize (2014), and the Art & Australia/ Credit Suisse Private Banking Contemporary Art Award (2011). Significant exhibitions include the 2022 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Free State, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (2022); The National: New Australian Art, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (2019); Primavera 2017: Young Australian Artists, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2017); and *Painting, More Painting*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne (2016). He has undertaken residencies at Palazzo Monti, Brescia; Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris; and ACME Studios, London. He lives and works in Sydney, and is represented by Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney and Station Gallery, Melbourne.