

Eric Nathaniel Mack

FELT

February 20 - April 29, 2023

Via Mottalciata 10/B, Torino

Galleria Franco Noero is pleased to announce Eric Nathaniel Mack's first solo exhibition at the Gallery in Torino, as well as his first in Italy.

The American artist, who lives and works in New York, arrives at a broader and different definition of the traditional categories of painting and collage through the assemblage of textiles whose colors and prints serve as a palette. By including space and volume as elements in his works he moves into the third dimension, breaking free from the boundary of the two-dimensional plane. He also makes use of photography in his work, as well as multiple different surfaces, from paper, to wooden boards and padded and quilted blankets used in removals, in a spectrum of tactile qualities that covers the full range between hard and soft.

Found objects and textiles are not only a vast and almost limitless source and resource for the artist, but also give him the opportunity to read the everyday and the familiarity that comes with it in a personal way, using the juxtaposition of elements as a way to reflect on narrative and abstraction and a vehicle to establish a metaphorical dialogue with the audience.

The exhibition in Torino is composed of specially conceived works that are juxtaposed with some from his solo show last year at Douglas Hyde Gallery in Dublin entitled "SCAMPOLO!", in homage to the Italian term and probably to the year-long period the artist spent as a fellow at the American Academy in Rome. In Italy and Ireland, the materials were locally sourced and reflect the best of both countries' textile traditions, wonderful Irish linens and a selection of silks, laces and fabrics sourced 'high and low' - from haute couture to flea markets - all democratically stitched together in a way that enhances and unexpectedly reveals their best features. Some works are placed on wooden or metal frames, only partially covered so as to expose their functional aspect but also to let the material they are made of become part of the composition. In the same way that Mack uses the wall, the opacity of its surface and its impenetrable materiality as a backdrop for his aerial installations, transparency and the use of light filtered through textiles become an expressive element: an ethereal, light and graceful occupation of space, as if it could be dressed.

Wearing clothes constitutes an elementary form of expression, and the fabrics also make immediate reference to the body, still and in motion, to its dynamism, characteristics that certainly interest the artist in the making of his works and establish an immediate connection with the viewer. These themes and concepts lead to a connection, a common thread in continuity with predecessors such as Hélio Oiticica and his "Parangolés" and performative acts involving the body, color, music and movement; Robert Rauschenberg and his kaleidoscopic talent in redefining American craft and folk tradition, while opening up to other fascinations of distant cultures such as Indian in the mid 1970s in an aesthetic reading of both social and cultural situations. These same intersections inform, in different ways, the work of two other artists who can be associated with Mack, namely Sam Gilliam in his attempt to expand abstraction and color into a soft occupation of space and David Hammons who reads paint and canvas as layering and overlaying materials borrowed from everyday use by expanding the thickness of paint and impasto into a third dimension.

An additional form of cultural and social expression that the artist draws on is fashion, as a form of style in all its declinations, from its design and styling, to its communication through photography in magazines and, more recently, through social media, ending up as an ever-changing thermometer of constant social evolution and rapid change, an incessant shuffling of the cards on the table stimulating new thinking. Mack has recently produced an artist's book, "BODICE," in which all of the above comes together, his work in dialogue with that of fashion designer friends Kiko Kostadinov, Deanna Fanning and Laura Fanning, his sister Gabrielle Mack, Omahyra Mota, Azealia Banks as models, Haley Wollens and Eric Mack himself as photographers, helping to create a complete crossover, fashion magazine vs. art object.

Even the title of the exhibition, "FELT," plays with a double meaning, a word for fabric that immediately brings back warmth and the body, as Joseph Beuys teaches, and a past participle that refers to something felt or experienced.

Eric Nathaniel Mack (b. 1987, Columbia, USA) lives and works in New York City, USA.

He received his BFA from The Cooper Union and his MFA from Yale University, USA. In 2021 he was the recipient of the Philip Guston Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, while in 2017 Mack received the inaugural BALTIC Artists' Award selected by artist Lorna Simpson; the Rauschenberg Residency at Captiva Island, USA; and an artist-in-residency at the Delfina Foundation in London, UK. The artist's solo exhibitions at Institutions include: "Scampolo!", The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, Ireland (2022), "Lemme walk across the room", Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, USA (2019); "In austerity, stripped from its support and worn as a sarong", The Power Station, Dallas, USA (2019); the BALTIC Artists' Award 2017, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK (2017); "Eric Mack: Vogue Fabrics", Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, USA (2017). Major group exhibitions include "Chronorama Redux", curated by Matthieu Humery, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, Italy (2023); Whitney Biennial 2019, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA (2019); Ungestalt, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, Switzerland (2017); "In the Abstract", Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, USA (2017); "Blue Black", Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis, USA (2017); "Making & Unmaking: An exhibition curated by Duro Olowu", Camden Arts Centre, London, UK (2016); "Greater New York 2015", MoMA PS1, Long Island City, New York, USA (2015). Mack's work is part of the permanent collections of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, USA, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, USA, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA.