

## Lui Shtini

### *Tree Spirits*

November 22nd 2025 – January 10th 2026

'Tree Spirits presents a selection of works that emerged from Shtini's deep engagement with the landscape, materials, and traditions of Sardinia, where the artist has spent significant time over the past decade. The exhibition features ten sculptures that occupy both floor and wall space. Mounted on steel structures, his mask-like compositions inhabit the gallery with a commanding presence.

The works are primarily made of cork, a material abundant in Sardinia and central to the island's culture and economy. Cork, which is the bark of the tree, is in a rough state when first extracted. Working closely with local harvesters Shtini sources irregular pieces that match his vision. Their outer surface is carefully cleaned and laid out for observation. At this stage the bark still holds the contours of the tree from which it was cut. For the artist, it is at this moment that the magical potential of new forms reveal themselves and the sculptures begin.

Shtini's sculptural approach mirrors his painting practice using improvisational methods and the use of traditional formats—portraiture, landscape, still life, and now the mask—as vessels to be filled with his vision. Each piece utilizes a process of intuitive subtraction and addition, with different sections cut, carved, sanded, and layered to create a unified object. The finished works reveal smooth and rough surfaces, inviting closer inspection of the assembled parts. Their backs feature semi-rough textures with irregular concave forms, emphasizing the material's organic origins.

Shtini has drawn significant inspiration from Sardinia's carnival tradition; a pagan celebration deeply rooted in the island's mythology and the interconnectedness of humans and animals with nature. Though not depicted overtly in the work, aspects of the distinct costuming and rituals of the region have had a strong impact on the way his sculptures were made.

This show extends the intimate by unifying the flow of imagination with material generation. Drawing on traditional Mediterranean practices still steeped in an animist connection between nature, form and place, Shtini has created a body of work that resists aesthetic categorization. Tree Spirits hovers between the familiar and the uncanny, the ancient and the contemporary.