

Hybrids

Leandro Erlich at the Negozio Olivetti

 **FAI**
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The exhibition forms part of a broader investigation through which Leandro Erlich has, since the beginning of his career, questioned what we tend to take for granted: the stability of things, the clarity of categories, and the distinction between what is natural and what is constructed. Erlich has consistently worked with objects, spaces, and images that initially appear familiar, yet upon closer observation reveal themselves to possess an unstable, almost living and mutable nature. His work is not simply about creating visual illusions, but about demonstrating how reality itself emerges through relationships: between bodies and architecture, memory and matter, the human and the non-human.

This becomes especially evident in his more recent works, where hybrid forms intertwine organic and artificial elements: corals, roots, clouds, and everyday objects transform into ambiguous presences that resist clear classification. These encounters are not solely based on harmony, but also on exchange, adaptation, and at times tension. The works do not propose a reassuring or idealized vision of fusion between different elements. On the contrary, they reveal how such relationships may be complex, ambiguous, and even unsettling. It is precisely within this “in-between” space that the works presented in *Hybrids at the Negozio Olivetti* are situated.

In this sense, the exhibition avoids two opposing yet equally reductive positions: on the one hand, nostalgia for a “pure” and uncontaminated nature; on the other, the notion of technology as a neutral promise of progress. Instead, the works emphasize how we already inhabit a profound entanglement of biological, technological, and cultural dimensions. What emerges is not a reassuring synthesis, but rather a coexistence shaped by irreversible and inevitable forms of contamination.

An important aspect of this research concerns the way in which we perceive the world. In his earlier works, the artist focused primarily on perception: what we see never entirely coincides with what is. In this exhibition, however, the discourse expands and takes a further step forward. It is no longer merely a question of appearance and perception: things themselves may truly be multiple. An object can simultaneously belong to several dimensions—natural and artificial, human and non-human. Hybridization is no longer only visual, but concerns the very nature of things.

The exhibition could only find its place within the Negozio Olivetti, whose origins and history are deeply

rooted in the dialogue and exchange between technology and humanism. The coexistence of technological research, formal design, and attention to the most intimate communal and personal dimensions of society was always central to the thought and industrial vision of Adriano Olivetti. The setting becomes even more significant within one of the masterpieces of Carlo Scarpa, the architect who masterfully reconciled the built environment with nature, combining design and construction with an almost humanistic sensibility. Scarpa built upon water not by resisting it, but by allowing it to enter into his architecture. In a sense, these very spaces prompt the same question posed by the exhibition itself: where does the boundary between natural and artificial lie? And perhaps more importantly, does it still make sense to seek such a boundary, or should we instead acknowledge the coexistence of all these dimensions, and our own intrinsically hybrid condition?

This perspective also connects to a broader reflection on the present, directly engaging the visitor. Increasingly, technologies are no longer simple tools; they actively participate in the ways we think, remember, and relate to one another. They are not external to us, but integral to our everyday experience, contributing to its construction and definition.



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GALLERIACONTINUA
SAN GIMIGNANO BELJING LES MOULINS HABANA ROMA SAO PAULO PARIS



Hybrids by Leandro Erlich at the *Negozio Olivetti* invites visitors into a universe where familiar categories—natural and artificial, organic and constructed, human and non-human—merge until they nearly disappear. In their place emerge new forms, at once recognizable and unexpected. The works create a constantly shifting landscape populated by presences that seem to originate from an alternative evolution, one in which clear boundaries no longer exist and are replaced by continuous interconnections.

The sculptures function as instruments that alter perception: recognizable elements are combined in unusual ways, generating unexpected visual and conceptual effects. Within this intermediate space, a butterfly may transform into an ear, a vegetal form may evoke architecture, while mineral and urban elements appear to speak the same language. Hybridization is not presented merely as juxtaposition, but as a true creative principle that challenges the very notion of fixed and stable identity.

The project acquires a particular significance within the setting that hosts it, where history, design, and cultural vision converge. The works suggest that every form—whether natural or artificial—emerges from complex and layered processes. Evolution appears neither linear nor definitive, but open, reversible, and in constant transformation. Architecture itself, often perceived as stable and permanent, is revealed here as dynamic and mutable. Likewise, the human body is no longer positioned as an absolute point of reference, but rather as one element within a broader system of relationships. In many of Erlich's previous exhibitions, the observer and the act of perception played a central role. Here, however, perception becomes part of a wider process that revolves around the very ontology of objects and living forms: it is no longer perception alone that shifts according to the viewer's experience and cultural framework, but essence itself that remains in continuous evolution, only momentarily captured in the here and now.

Through a language that combines formal rigor with playfulness, the exhibition invites viewers to reconsider the ways in which we perceive the world. The irony present in many of the works does not diminish the depth of the themes explored; rather, it renders them more accessible and encourages audience engagement. The viewer is not merely an observer, but is invited to reflect and to recognize within these hybrid forms an extension of personal experience.

In this context, art becomes a force capable of operating like natural processes themselves, continually reshaping reality. The works do not simply represent a possible world—they make it tangible, suggesting that every form of existence arises from a dynamic balance between differences. *Hybrids* thus becomes an invita-

tion to see reality as an open space, where identities and boundaries are perpetually in flux.

The exhibition—conceived by Mario Cristiani and produced by Associazione Arte Continua and FAI – Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano in collaboration with Galleria Continua—enters into dialogue with the *Negozio Olivetti* itself. Adriano Olivetti also believed in the transformative power of art within society. His enterprise brought together technology, aesthetics, culture, and ethical values. Olivetti products were conceived as complete objects, capable of offering not only functionality but also meaning. The Olivetti showrooms, such as the one in Venice, were hybrid spaces—closer to experiential environments than conventional retail stores, precursors to today's concept stores. This vision continues today through the work of the FAI, which preserves and enhances the site by welcoming artistic projects capable of engaging with its history and spirit.

Biographical Notes on Leandro Erlich

Leandro Erlich was born in Argentina in 1973 and lives and works between Paris, Buenos Aires, and Montevideo. Over the past two decades, his works have been exhibited internationally and have entered the permanent collections of major museums and private collections, including the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Tate Modern, London; the Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa; MACRO, Rome; and the Israel Museum, among other significant cultural institutions. Erlich has created major public works, including *La Democracia del Símbolo* at the Obelisk of Buenos Aires and at MALBA; *Maison Fond*, produced for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris; *Bâtiment for Nuit Blanche* in Paris; *Ball Game* for the Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires; *Port of Reflections*, exhibited at MMCA in Seoul; and *Palimpsest* for the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale in Japan. His monumental work *La Carte, À l'ombre de la ville* is now a permanent feature of the urban landscape of Bordeaux, France. In recent years, he has held solo exhibitions at major international institutions, including the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; Palazzo Reale, Milan; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg; CAFA Art Museum, Beijing; MALBA, Buenos Aires; CCBB in several Brazilian cities; and PAMM, Miami, often attracting record attendance. More recently, he has participated in group exhibitions at Centre Pompidou-Metz, the Forest Festival of the Arts in Okayama (Japan), Ennova Art Museum, and Nanhai Art Center in China.

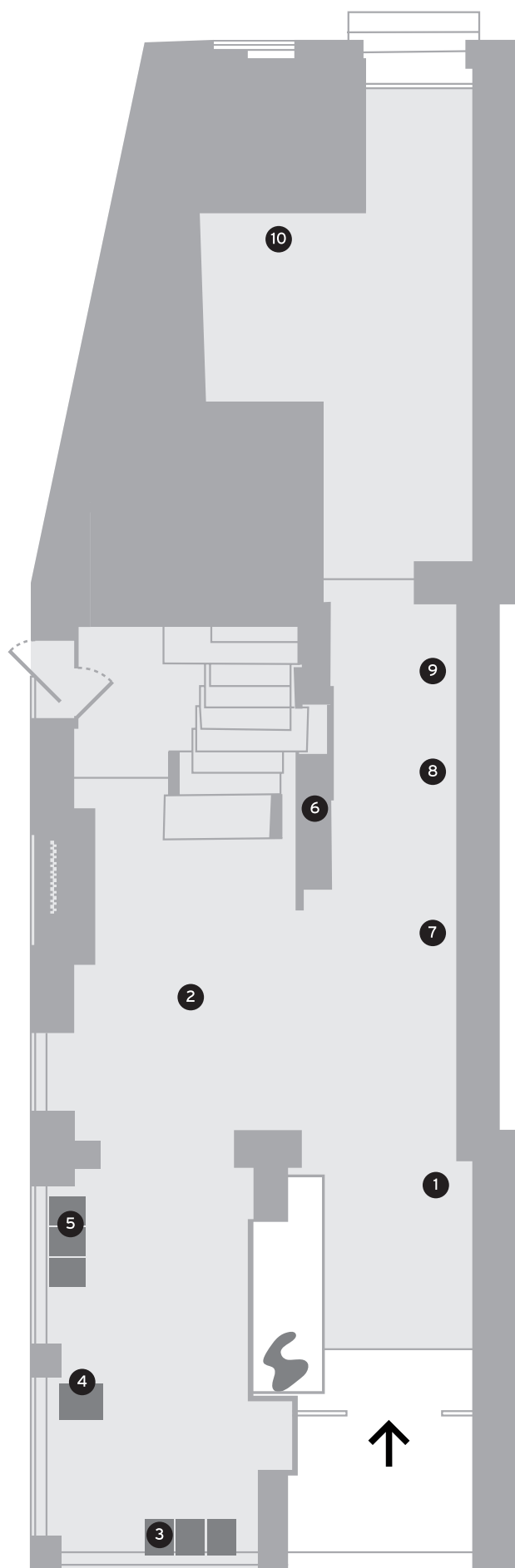
As a conceptual artist, his work challenges the foundations of our perception of reality and explores the capacity of art to raise questions through visual language. His creations seek to bridge the gap between museum or exhibition space and everyday experience, inviting viewers to actively participate in the construction of meaning.



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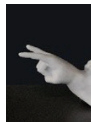
Ground Floor



- 1 **Quartz**, 2023
39 x 36 x 38 cm
Glass



- 2 **Pulled by the Roots**, 2015
62 x 33,5 x 33,5 cm
Cast resin, cast bronze and acrylic sheets



- 3 **Caracol-The Pace of Evolution**, 2021
11.8 x 33.8 x 13 cm
Bianco Carrara Marble



- 4 **Chou**, 2023
20 x 24 x 22 cm
Ceramic



- 5 **Serpent**, 2021
11 x 46.5 x 33.5 cm
Bronze



- 6 **Concrete Coral**, 2025
35 x 65 x 47 cm
Cast resin, Base



- 7 **Pixel Tree**, 2025
100 x 70 cm
Inkjet printing on Hahnemühle Textured William Turner paper



- 8 **Maison Fond**, 2015
100 x 70 cm
Inkjet printing on Hahnemühle Textured William Turner paper



- 9 **Order of Importanc**, 2019
100 x 70 cm
Inkjet printing on Hahnemühle Textured William Turner paper



- 10 **The Cloud - L'espoir**, 2024
175 x 91 x 50 cm
Digital ceramic ink printed on ultra-clear glass, wooden case, and LED lights

PRIMO PIANO →

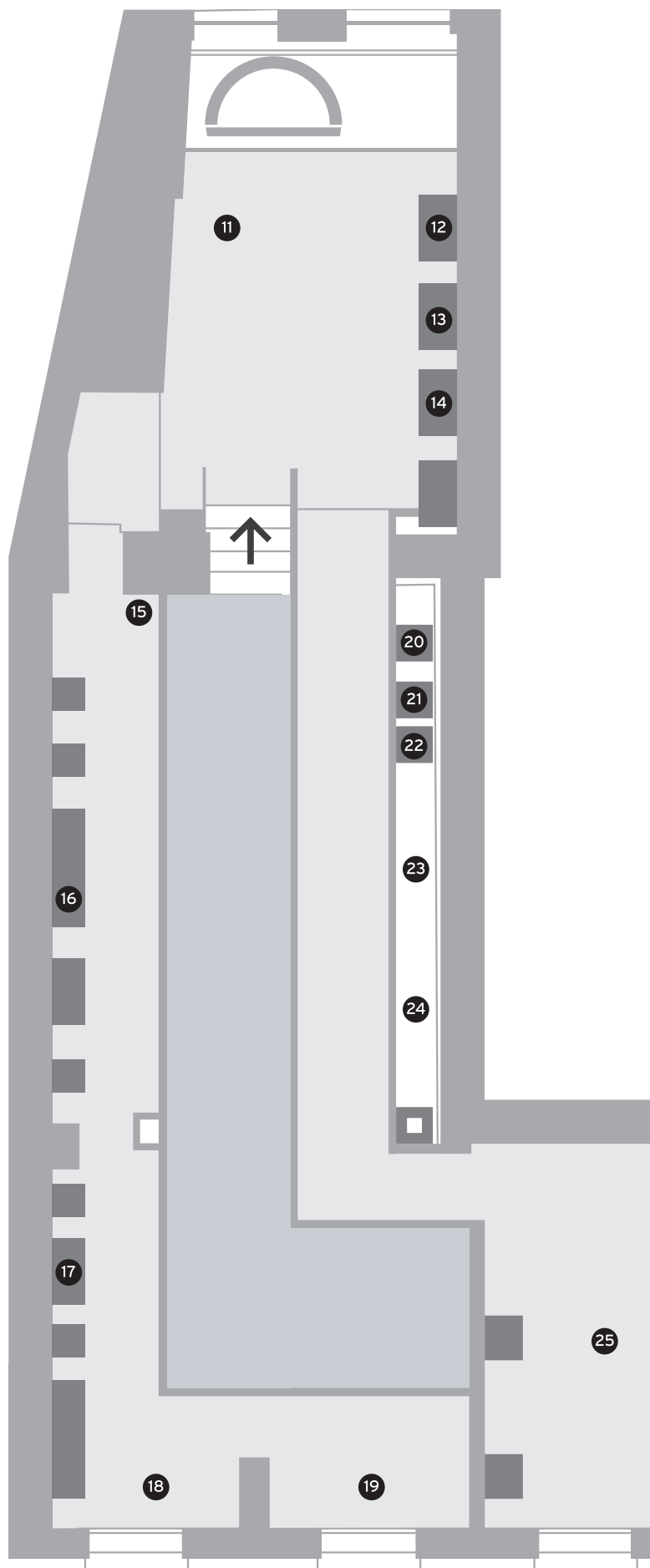


- 11 **Soprattutto**, 2020
200 x 300 cm
Wool



- 12 **Draft-Bozza / Studio**, 2026
21 x 40 x 47 cm
Resin, sand

First floor



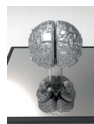
13 **Draft-Bozza / Studio**, 2026
24 x 39 x 44 cm
Resin, sand



14 **Draft-Bozza / Praxis**, 2026
12 x 37 x 43 cm
Resin, sand



15 **Maison Fond**, 2022
32 x 32 x 30 cm
Carrara Marble



16 **Arquitectura del pensamiento**, 2026
12 x 16 x 13,5 cm
Cast aluminum, mirror, acrylic



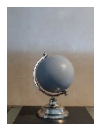
17 **Flan**, 2026
10,5 x 27 x 27 cm
Resin, porcelain plate



18 **Pies-Tronco**, 2021
15 x 35 x 29 cm
Cast Bronze



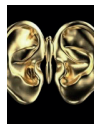
19 **La Carte**, 2026
16 x 60 x 41 cm
Steel, resin, light



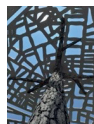
20 **Mappamondo**, 2026
15x20x10 cm
Plastic, metal



21 **Papillon I**, 2021
8 x 10 x 2.5 cm
Bronze



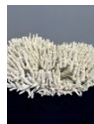
22 **Papillon III**, 2021
8 x 10 x 2.5 cm
Bronze



23 **La Carte**, 2022
100 x 70 cm
Inkjet printing on Hahnemühle Textured
William Turner paper



24 **Pulled by the Roots**, 2015
100 x 70 cm
Inkjet printing on Hahnemühle Textured
William Turner paper



25 **White Coral**, 2025
40 x 78 x 80 cm
Nylon, paint



“When everything is human, the human becomes a wholly other thing”

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro,
Cannibal Metaphysics

This exhibition begins from a refusal: the fiction of separation. The human is not a closed category standing apart from animals, plants, minerals, machines, and atmospheres. We have always been constituted through relation — breathing with forests, digesting with bacteria, thinking through tools, extending perception through code. What interests me here is precisely this unstable condition: the hybrids we are becoming. The exhibition proposes symbiosis not as metaphor but as fact — a field of entanglement in which the boundaries between human and non-human no longer hold.

Across works such as Concrete Coral, Serpent, Caracol, Pixel Tree, White Coral, and Pulled by the Roots, forms hover between organism and artifact, growth and fabrication, fossil and prototype. They do not present nature as something external, to be contemplated from a safe distance. Instead, they reveal how deeply our bodies, technologies, and imaginaries are already shaped by non-human logics. Coral becomes architecture, root becomes structure, shell becomes memory, cloud becomes interface. What emerges is a vocabulary of contamination and exchange — life never pure, identity never singular.

Symbiosis is the central argument. It names the mutual dependencies through which life persists, but also the frictions, grafts, parasitisms, and collaborations through which forms evolve. It resists the humanist fantasy of autonomy, reminding us that the self is porous, that agency is distributed, that what we call “the human” is always co-authored by other presences — animal, vegetal, microbial, mineral, technological. The non-human is not an outside against which we define ourselves. It is already within us, constitutive of us.

The spatial structure reinforces this claim. On the ground floor, the visitor encounters hybrid presences both intimate and strange. On the mezzanine, the exhibition shifts toward traces, samples, models, and mechanisms — exposing processes of observation, translation, and material construction. The movement is not only physical but conceptual: from encounter to recognition, from perceiving hybrid forms as “other” to understanding they mirror our own condition.

What the exhibition ultimately argues is that we can no longer think through stable divisions — nature versus culture, body versus machine, organic versus artificial. These binaries are collapsing, and with them the illusion of a self-contained subject. In their place emerges a more complex ecology of coexistence: mixed, mutable, interdependent. The works gathered here offer neither a nostalgic return to nature nor a celebration of technology as transcendence. They insist on the difficult, fertile space in between.

This is why the exhibition is not simply about hybrid forms but about hybrid subjectivities. It asks us to recognize that we are composite beings, assembled through contact with forces that exceed and sustain us. To acknowledge that condition is not to diminish the human but to relocate it within a wider field of life, matter, and intelligence. The challenge is not to defend the border between human and non-human, but to understand what kinds of symbiosis are already shaping us — and what futures those entanglements might still allow.

Marcello Dantas
Curator

**“Nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organizing.
... Sympoiesis is a word for worlding-with, in company”**

Donna Haraway,
Staying with the Trouble, 2016



At first glance, they appear to be creatures born from the wildest of nightmares. A butterfly has ears instead of wings. The trunk of a tree ends in human feet, still wearing shoes. A cabbage grows an architectural structure at its top, as though its flower had become a house. A coral stump seems to have developed bodies that resemble skyscrapers.

The paradoxical combinations that shape these chimeras seem to conjure an atmosphere of profound surrealism. Yet a closer look disperses that initial impression, revealing something else entirely: these sculptures are a rigorous exercise in speculative realism—perhaps in a sense never before explored through this expression. They are an attempt to describe, with as much fidelity as possible, what truly stands before our eyes.

What is a butterfly whose wings are our ears, if not the most accurate definition of a radio or of a telephone? And isn't a brain that has become a snail performing acts of exorcism precisely what we call evolution? And isn't white coral the perfect geological definition of a metropolis? And isn't a cabbage whose flower is a house the very Platonic form of what we call agriculture?

The common belief that things possess an evident, ordinary, and transparent nature must be abandoned. This is not the case because there is something we call art and design, which never cease to transform, to mix, and to recompose the essence of things to generate new ones. It is, in fact, the same process that governs sex.

As has been pointed out many times, sex has reinvented itself countless times in the history of life on this planet. It has not always coincided with reproduction. In its most immediate expressions, sex does not generate a third being, nor does it multiply life; rather, it transforms the individuals who participate in it. One of the first examples described is that of *Paramecium aurelia*, a ciliate protist. A paramecium approaches another of its kind and begins to exchange genes. We might say, metaphorically, that it is as if, upon approaching someone at a party, we could take their hair, give them our nose, take their voice, and offer them our eyes in return. This is sex: the ability to take on the characteristics of the other and to live by blending our identity with that of another.

Art performs a similar operation upon the essence of things: it mingles identities in order to radically transform the world. It allows

everything to inhabit everything else, turning the world into a vast, curious orgy in which all things mix with one another.

That is why it would be incorrect to interpret these sculptures according to the theme of *trompe-l'œil*, which has often been used to describe this artist's work. They do not aim to produce illusion. Nor do they function as in Magritte's paradoxical play on the nature of the image. Here, the concern is not representation, but rather the reconfiguration of reality itself the transformation of the very nature of things, beginning with ourselves.

Leandro Erlich's sculptures seem, instead, to attempt the visualization of an intimate, spiritual transformation the hidden physiology that accompanies every true act of artistic creation. Art and design together represent an attempt to redesign the world though not by surgical means.

It is no coincidence that the exhibition takes place in the Olivetti showroom designed by Carlo Scarpa, one of the foremost figures of twentieth-century architecture and design. But while Scarpa's work is built upon the joint the tectonic articulation of elements that remain juxtaposed, revealing both their tension and harmony here the elements do not simply connect; they merge into one another, producing hybrids that are both organic and mental.

Design, then, is not a simple operation of re-composition or rearrangement of the world and its materials. It is a true act of metamorphosis something closer to alchemy than to what we ordinarily call contemporary art. These sculptures suggest that art functions on the same level as the evolution of living beings or rather, the geochemical processes of transformation that have shaped the planet itself.

We must rediscover these chthonic depths. Art is not decoration, not an embellishment of the world, but an extension of the very processes that have allowed the Earth to become what it is.

Emanuele Coccia

