

ILARIA CUCCAGNA

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Como
Italy

Ilaria Cuccagna was born in Cesena in 1981. She lives and works between Como and Lugano. She studied sculpture and photography at the Academy of Fine Arts of Urbino and at the Facultad de Bellas Artes de San Carlos, Universidad Politécnica of Valencia. After completing her studies she continued to refine her technical skills, working in art foundries both in Italy and abroad. These experiences were of fundamental importance for her research and for developing sensitivity towards her materials. Over the years she has worked as a university lecturer at the Department of Art History at the University of Malta, conducting workshops on sculptural techniques. She is currently a teacher of sculptural disciplines.

Her research is divided between sculpture and site-specific works concerning events that have taken place, processes initiated, alterations of matter that only reach their final state after being subjected to stress. In this sense the artist considers sculpture a performative practice. References to nature and archeology are important aspects of her research: entering into greater detail in the study of iconography, in particular with regard to classical models of sculpture, she has begun to consider the archaeological object a synthesis of nature and culture; a cultural product that nature has reclaimed, transforming it over time. Excavation and discovery, like the use made of the 'remains', are thus part of her practice. Plaster, silicone rubbers, bronze and expanded polyurethane are the materials she prefers to work with.

WORKS

Allegoria della Scoltura

This installation presents the results of a research project that began in the summer of 2024 at the Library of the Franciscan Convent of Monte Mesma and continued remotely thanks to the digital archiving of *Nova Iconologia* by Cesare Ripa Perugino - a 17th century work- presented as an "encyclopedia" for every artist, in which personifications of all kinds of concepts are described: from the most classical, such as death and virtue, to the more particular, like the regions of Italy and civil war. Each text is accompanied by a refined woodcut by Giovanni Guerra.

During the residency I've searched within the book for the image of the Allegory of Sculpture.

To my surprise, I discovered that although the book includes a rather detailed description of how Sculpture should be represented by "Orators, Preachers, Poets, Painters, Sculptors, Designers, and all Scholars," as Ripa himself states, there is no illustration that reflects this description within the book. Hence, the focus of my research shifted toward the intention of first creating an image and then a physical presence of this allegory. All the graphic representations on display are my interpretation of the text concerning the Allegory of Sculpture, created with the graphic style of Guerra in mind. In the sculptural dimension, the allegory splits: the figure that creates and the sculpture created. Each could exist without the other, but only together do they fully express the allegorical meaning.

2025

Site-specific for Neoclassical Pavilion, Neo-Gothic Park, Ameno (NO)
Foam, wooden crates and drawing on natural parchment



"...The hand still upon the statue shows that although sculpture is primarily an object of sight, it can likewise be one of touch, for the very nature of that art can equally be perceived by both sight and touch. Indeed, we know that Michelangelo Buonarroti, the light of this art, due to his constant studies, in old age almost completely lost his sight, and for this reason, he used to palpate statues—both ancient and modern—in order to judge their price and value through touch." In this partial translation of the text on pages 463–464 concerning the description of Scoltura, I found confirmation of a concept I have always reflected on and felt deeply in my work with matter: that the essence of sculpture—and of the one who shapes material—lies equally in visual and tactile awareness. When sculpting, it is the hands that see. My allegory is a representation of the precise awareness in which creator and creation coincide.

the contemporary branch of the Mastronauta Association, with the support of the Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, the contribution of Fondazione CRT, and in collaboration with the Municipality of Ameno and the Sacri Monti Management Authority.



Allegoria della Scoltura
details



Sisifo / Icaro

A buoy, torn from its element, lies on the ground. It does not float, but holds. The rope stretching upward from it seems to reverse its destiny: what should mark the surface becomes the support for what escapes gravity. The suspended sculpture oscillates in a silent tension, as if every moment were the result of an endless effort. In this gesture, two myths intertwine: the ceaseless labor of Sisifo, pushing toward a balance that is never final, and the fragile ascent of Icaro, suspended between desire and fall. Here, weight does not drop and flight does not free itself. Everything remains in suspension, entrusted to a force that cannot be seen, yet persists.

2025

Site-specific for the Ex Tintostamperia Val Mulini, Como
foam, buoy from the lake and rope



Expanded series

About the series: "The playful, tragic and precarious component are the basis of this group of sculptures that I started to realize during the pandemic period, since 2021. In the constraint of staying in the studio, I explored the possibilities of a new, easy to find material, polyurethane foam. The idea was to put in contact the countless amount of silicone rubber casts that I had accumulated over time with this new material. The autonomy and stubbornness of the foam intrigued me right away. Material in search of freedom and constant air, ready to rise unexpectedly. These contacts have given rise to sculptures that are sometimes grotesque and sometimes light, on the contrary, tragic and reflective. Every sculptural work attempts to create a connection between the past and the present through traces of ancient sculptures that are intertwined with fragments of nature-minerals from which the original sculptures were or still are made. To me, ancient statuary—Greek above all—holds the same gravity as the thud of a stone monolith, the same mystery as molten bronze flowing through casting channels, the same beauty as pure emotion. I wish to play with these sensations and with the forms of this personal memory in order to awaken a collective memory, which to my eyes seems increasingly faint and distant".

2026-2022 painting on polyurethane foam and different stones



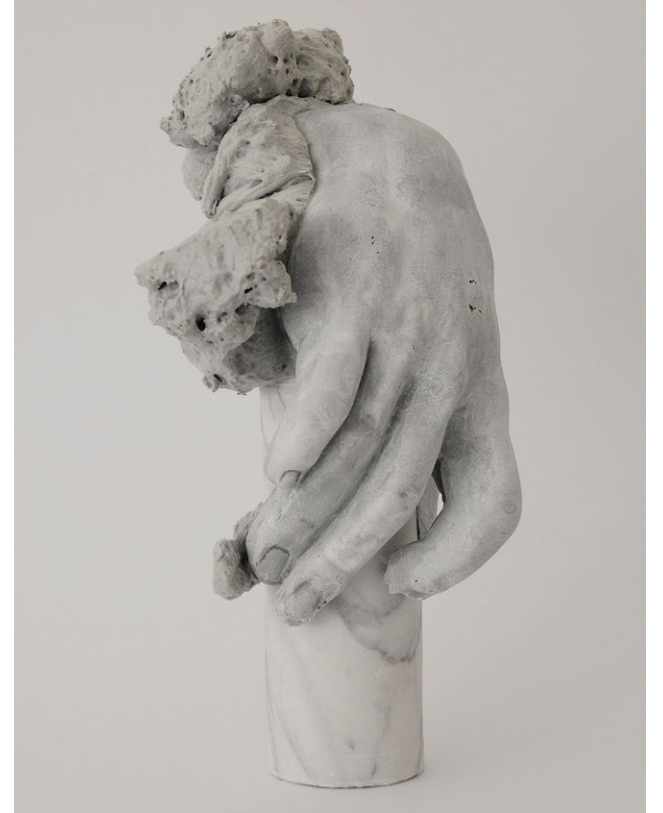
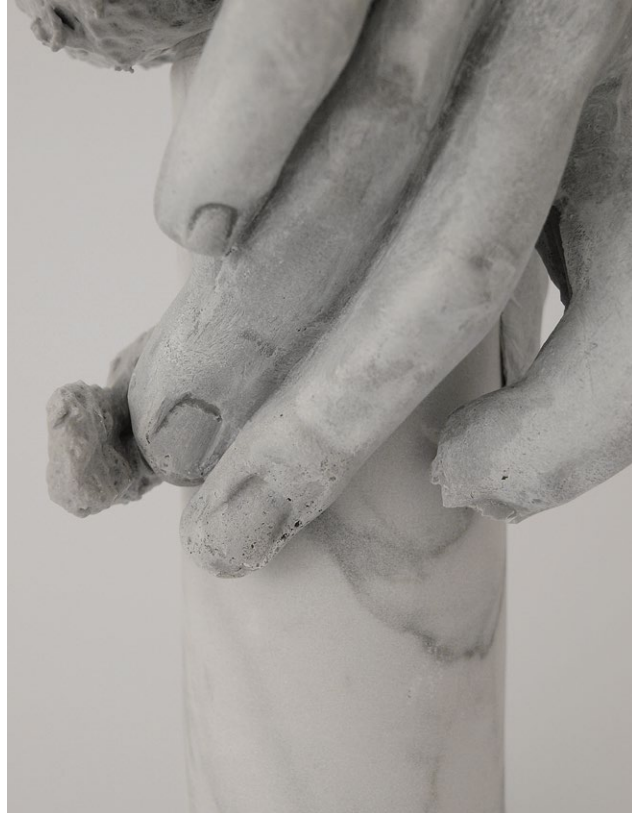
Lava touch

2026

poliurethane foam, porphyry from Monte Mesma,
acrylic and oil painting

h. 27 cm





I wish I was a marble 2025, poliurethane foam, stone, acrylic, h.40 cm



Expanded #13_Volcano

2024

poliurethane foam, Stromboli lava stone, acrylic
h.28 cm





Expanded #9_Grey 2024, foam, Ceppo di Gré stone, acrylic, h.50 cm





Sleeping Beauty, installation view c/o Careof, fabbrica del Vapore, Milan. Ph. Diego Mayon

Sleeping Beauty

2024

poliurethane foam, stone wood

89x60x4

"Sleeping Beauty" lies on the ground, divided. The torso, unmistakably male, retains a stable, almost classical presence; the head, detached, betrays this unity, its features deformed in ways that evade precise definition. It could be male or female, or both at once, suspended in an ambiguous zone. The fracture between the two elements is not only physical, but opens a reflection on identity as an unstable construction. Here, hybridity is not a harmonious fusion, but an unresolved tension: a gender that cracks, blends, and resists fixation. In its abandonment, the sculpture seems to hold a moment of suspension, like a sleep that does not soothe but transforms. "Sleeping Beauty" does not await awakening, but inhabits an in-between state, where body and face no longer coincide, and identity remains open, mutable.





Expanded #14 2024, poliurethane foam, plaster, h. 100 cm; **Expanded #11_Grey** 2024, foam and Ceppo di Gré stone, h. 50 cm. Installation view c/o Galleria Ramo, Como



Skin series

About the series: "Since 2016 I have started making silicone rubber casts on walls or floors of ruined architecture (walls of ancient churches, abandoned houses and floors corroded by bad weather). The practice of treading on reality, as if it were a 3D photograph, has always accompanied me. I have always made negatives to create positive sculptures. In this series of works, on the other hand, the work resides in the mold that becomes the guardian skin of the traces that have marked and define these architectures. In the deterioration lies the expression and their beauty."

2024-2016
silicone rubber, nails



Skin_Roman walls

2023

silicon rubber, nails

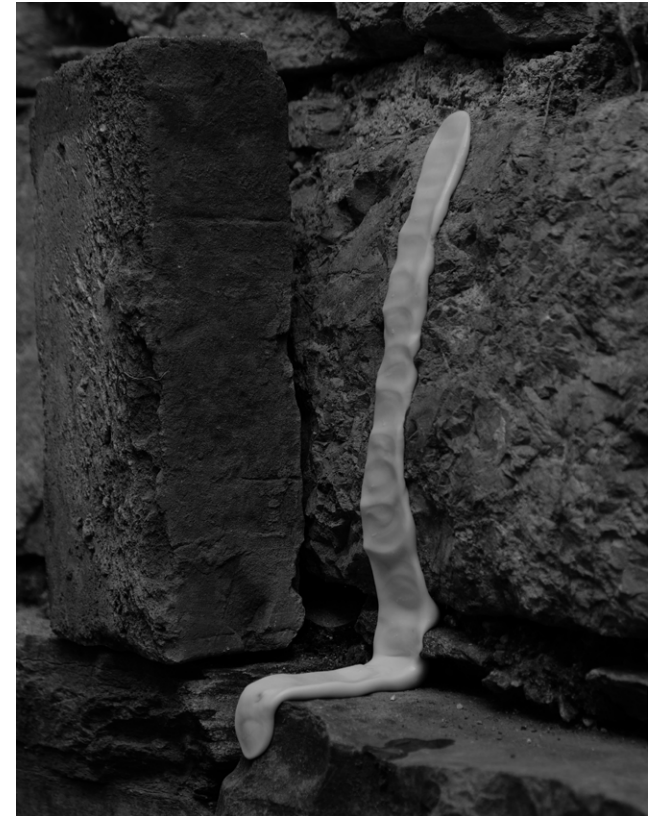
250 x 150 cm

Skin_Roman walls: the working process documentary:
<https://www.ilariacuccagna.com/news>

Como, the city where I have lived for about 15 years, is founded on Roman walls built by Gaius Julius Caesar in 59 BC. Parts of the ancient walls that defined the city of Novum Comum still exist today, often not visible to the public, inside private gardens and homes. Part of them are the foundations of a building founded in 1773 and still home the Alessandro Volta classical High School. The president of the Accademia Pliniana in 2023, the year in which the city of Como celebrates the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of its most illustrious Roman citizen Pliny the Elder, invited me to create a work that reflects on the origins of the city while opening a dialogue between the present it is gone. My idea was to focus attention on the subject of the walls kept inside the courtyard of the Volta High School. By creating a skin of silicone rubber, I sealed the texture of those ancient walls forever. Not only. The work recounts the passage of time thanks to the dirt that has clung to the rubber. The transferred traces bring with them the signs, like scars and the shades of color, like the stains of an old lady, tired but proud. The solidity of these precious walls that have spanned the centuries still stand there today, waiting for them to be made worthy of our contemporary gaze.



Skin_Roman walls, installation view c/o Pinacoteca civica of Como. Italy



Como (Italy), the Caesarian walls, realization of the work.

Skin_Pelle V

2023

silicone rubber, wall residues, nails

h. 30 cm

It is the trace of an abandoned architecture.
Inside like flesh, outside like skin\the house is a body that
no longer taken care of, it yields, deteriorates,
ceases to live.

"I have observed this house in a place in the Romagna
countryside for a long time. Years.

In 2023, shortly before the flood that hit Emilia
Romagna, I decided to tread a detail, a dangerous
corner of this forgotten house. Today that detail no
longer exists, except in the space of my memory and in
the trace of this work."





House's ruin in Emilia Romagna (Italy). (44,25095° N, 12,19281° E). Processing steps



Ruined building in Como (Italy). **Skin_Pelle I** h.30 cm

Migratio
Mdina-Valletta

2016
silicone rubber, wall rasidues, nails
150x250 cm

During the period of residence on the island of Malta, I learned of the strong tensions existing between Mdina and Valletta, respectively the ancient and today's capital. These contrasts, which for various reasons have continued until today, date back to 1530 when the Order of the Knights of St. John arrived in Malta to settle there permanently. The aristocracy of Mdina immediately opposed the Knights by forbidding them access to the city. This was one of the reasons that contributed to the Order's construction of Valletta. The official story instead tells that the aristocracy of Mdina welcomed the Order well. Of this version there is a propaganda painting created in about 1750 by Antoine De Favray commissioned precisely to manipulate the reality of the facts and therefore alter the historical memory of that event. Reflecting on this false historical and on the persistence through the centuries of tensions between the inhabitants of the two capitals, I wanted to create a metaphorical bridge of union by moving a symbolic element of the city of Mdina within the walls of Valletta. Part of the oldest city walls belonging to the church of San Pietro in Vincoli were trodden and transported to Valletta as an invitation to the reconciliation of the two cities.





**Expanded series:
Grey / Black / Self**

The choice of materials and the executive techniques are never casual even if in the creation itself I look for a playful interaction with the elements to which I sometimes entrust the task of self-determination.

2023-2021
polyurethane foam, Ceppo di Gré, acrylic, silicone rubber



Expanded #4_Grey 2023 foam, metal, h.38 cm; **Expanded #8_Grey** 2023, foam, ceppo di Gré, acrylic, h. 21

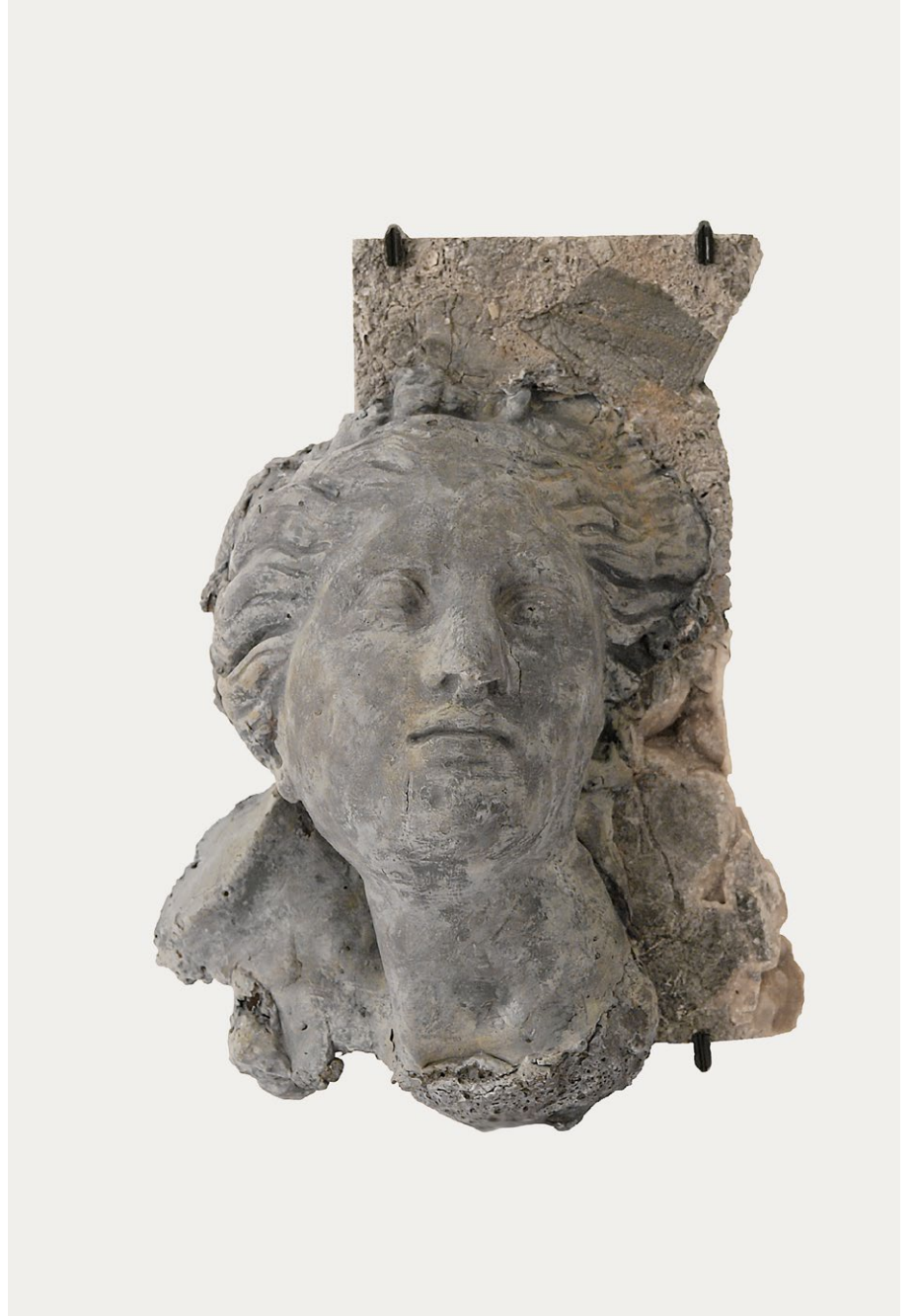




Expanded #1_Grey, 2022, foam, ceppo di Gré, acrylic, h.58 cm; **#3_Grey**, 2022, foam, ceppo di Gré, h.56 cm; **#10_Grey**, 2022, foam, ceppo di Gré, acrylic, h.42 cm

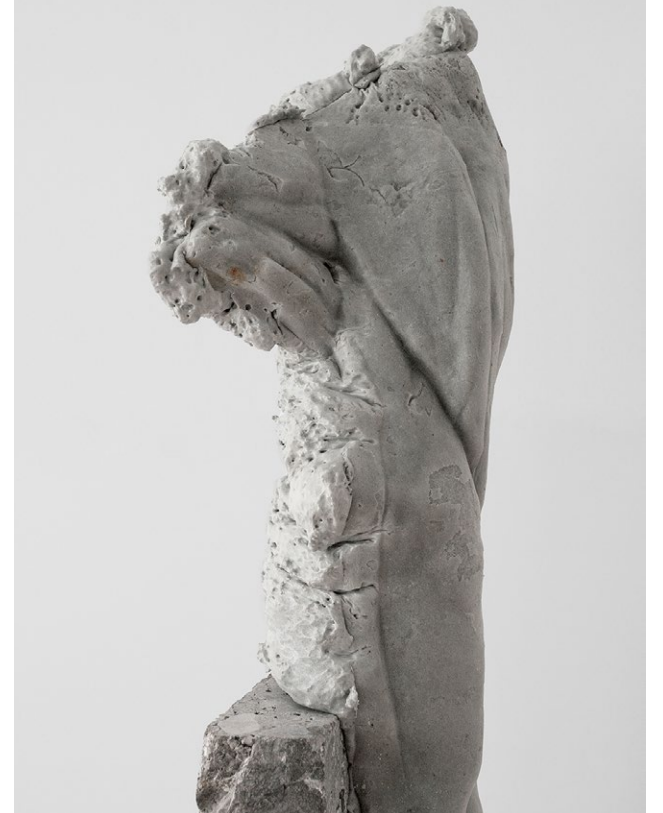


Expanded #6_Grey, 2023, foam, ceppo di Gré, acrylic, h.25 cm; **Grey #7** 2023, foam, ceppo di Gré, h.32 cm; **Grey #5** 2022, foam, ceppo di Gré, acrylic, h.82 cm

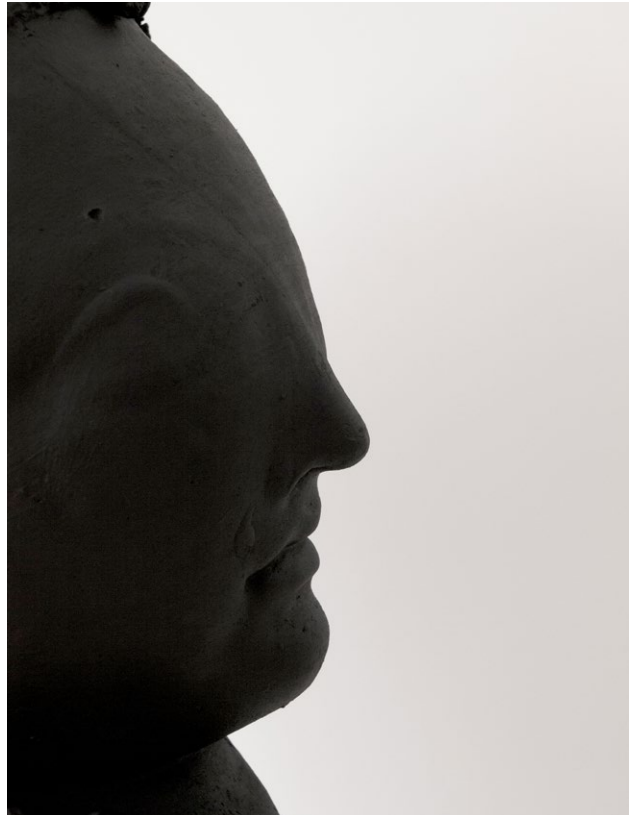


Expanded #6_Grey, 2023, foam, ceppo di Gré, acrylic, h.25 cm; **Grey #7** 2023, foam, ceppo di Gré, acrylic, h.32 cm





Grey #5 2022, foam, ceppo di Gré, acrylic, h.82 cm



Expanded **#1_Black**, 2022, foam, ceppo di Gré, acrylic, h.49 cm; **#2_Black**, 2022, foam, ceppo di Gré, acrylic, h.43 cm.



Installation view c/o Ex Tintostamperia Val Mulini, Como, Italy

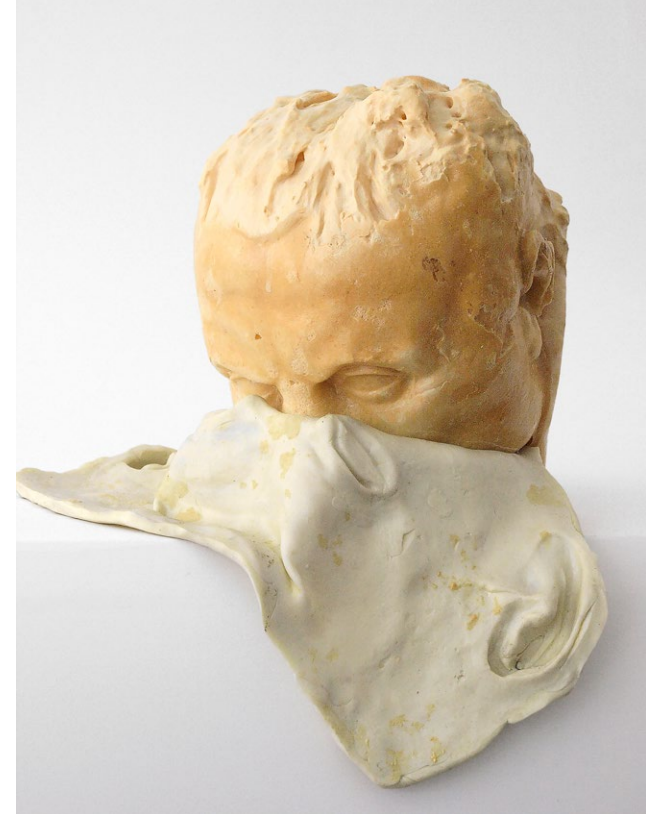
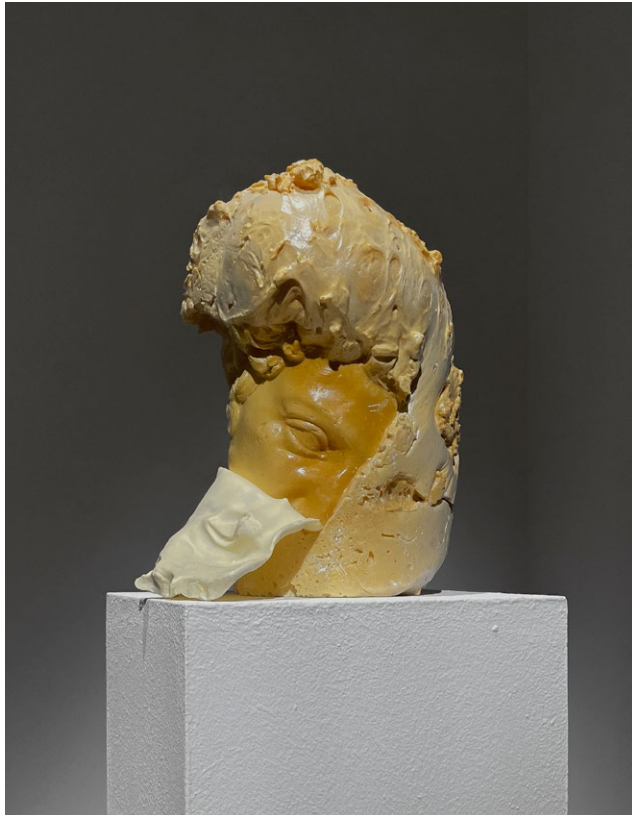
Expanded VI_Self

2021

foam, silicon rubber, acrylic
h.28 cm

"My interests have led me to intensely observe photos of works of painting and sculpture printed on paper. The history of art studied together with the analysis of the three-dimensionality and shapes of Greek, Roman and Renaissance sculptures in particular remained in my eyes. I think these forms are now part of the visual and cultural heritage of our civilization. They are forms that themselves become basic material, foundations for a new contemporary dimension."





Expanded III_Self, 2021, foam, rubber, h.35 cm; **VI_Self**, 2021, foam, rubber, acrylic h.28 cm; **II_Self**, 2021, foam, rubber, h.32 cm

Archaeological series

About the series: "I learned to see nature and culture in the same element, the archaeological one. The archaeological fragment in its partiality contains culture and also contains nature which sometimes preserves it, sometimes deteriorates it. The archaeological fragment has the power to refer to a completeness even if it does not belong to it. And this is what fascinates me that I can't resist. The challenge is to try to create something new that is steeped in the ancient. The title to which these works belong refers to the technique of making them. In some cases, the opening of the mold reveals the shapes that, as in an archaeological find, give light to objects that are often incomplete and deformed. Following this logic, the sculptures are placed on the borderline between being created and rediscovered objects. In other cases, by arbitrarily sculpting sculptures that have already been made, I rediscover their pulsating core, their essence. To fuel the distance from my authorship and the sense of self-generative randomness, the sculptures undergo an oxidation process only partially under my control. This physical reaction allows, in fact, the emergence of salt on the surface, which creates corrosion and blooms, as well as color changes."

2022-2020

bronze, plaster, silicone rubber, iron, iron oxide, sea salt, time



Archaeological_It's not yet / It's not longer 2022, bronze, silicone rubber, plaster. Variable dimension

Alba Fucens

2018

bronze, bones and black marquina marble

50x60x24 cm

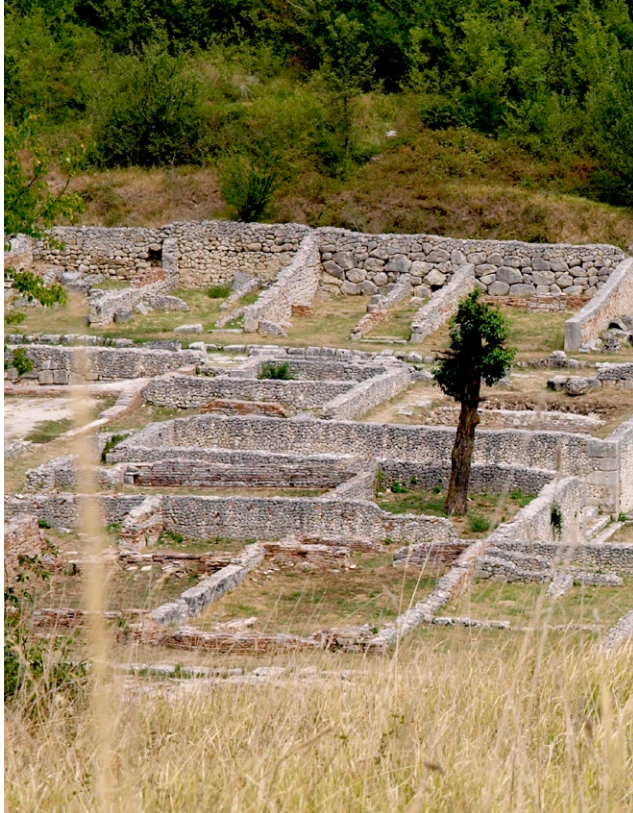
Alba Fucens is an archaeological site, a Roman colony located in the province of Aquila, in Italy. I visited this site in 2016 and was impressed by the total immersion in the surrounding mountainous landscape. The impression that time in that place had stopped for centuries was real; around there were no references to the contemporary era. Not far from the site, on the same day I found bony remains belonging to animals that had once grazed in those fields. The similarity between those bony remains and the capitals of the columns seen within Alba Fucens were extraordinary. I therefore decided to make bronze columns whose bases and capitals were the two animal finds found near the site.





Alba Fucens

2018
bronze, bones, Travertine
20x60x15 cm



The archaeological site of Alba Fucens in Italy



Sali minerali

2017

white onyx / sea salt
bardiglio marble / Breton salt
brown antique granite / cyprus salt
pink quartzite / himalayan salt
variable dimensions

(text by Angela Madesani)

The reflection in this work is on the relationship between salts and minerals of different origins. Various types that originate abstract compositions in space. It seems to be, in this way, in front of delicate still life of Morandian reference. Cuccagna further explains: «At the same time the visual relationship between a salt and its mineral tells two stories: the destruction of a volume which crumbles into dust, or the construction of a volume that is generated from its own rubble». We are faced with a construction and a deconstruction of the whole, a fundamental reflection of his research.



Ossimori

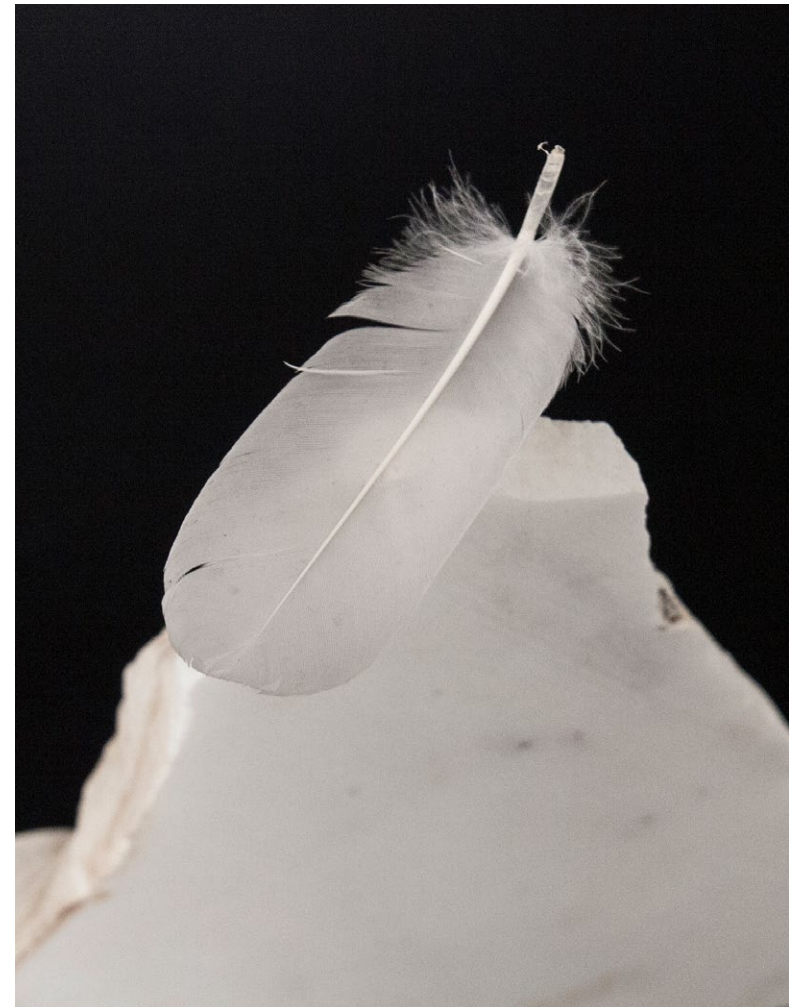
Ossimori is a project in progress, an endless archive that relates heterogeneous and natural elements. On the one hand there is the eternal part, on the other the ephemeral part, the plants. The elements are exhibited by the end of their lifecycle; stones come from stones production scraps, plants have undergone a dehydration process up to become permanent. Observation and research work aims to fuse the two elements getting new visual balances which get over the opposite characteristics of the vegetal, or animal, and mineral kingdoms

2017-2016
natural stones, plants and animal elements



(on the wall) **Ossimori_#3**
2017
white onix/ annual honesty
h. 56 cm

Ossimoro_Cima
2017
carrara marble / feather
25x27x10 cm



Ossimori_#2, 2017, brown granite/magnolia grandiflora, h 28 cm



Ossimori_#4, 2017, black marquina marble/ bjerkandera adusta, 39 cm; Ossimori_#5, 2017, grey onyx/grimmia pulvinata, 37 cm



Ossimori

2016
variable dimensions

red marble / acer palmatum
red travertine / arbutus unedo

portugal pink marble / phytolacca americana
juparana classic granite / trametes versicolor

travertino romano / hydrangea aspera
yellow travertine / trametes versicolor

marmo carrara / lavandula angustifolia
calacatta marble / hydrangea cinerea

black marquina marble / phytolacca americana
black marble / grimmia pulvinata

verde marinace / asplenium trichomanes
serpentino green marble / nelumbo nucifera

portugal pink marble/cornus kousa
pink onyx / ganoderma applanatum

black marquina marble / phytolacca americana + black marble / grimmia pulvinata



portugal pink marble/cornus kousa, h. 20 cm + pink onyx / ganoderma applanatum



Vivrà finché ne avrai cura

2016

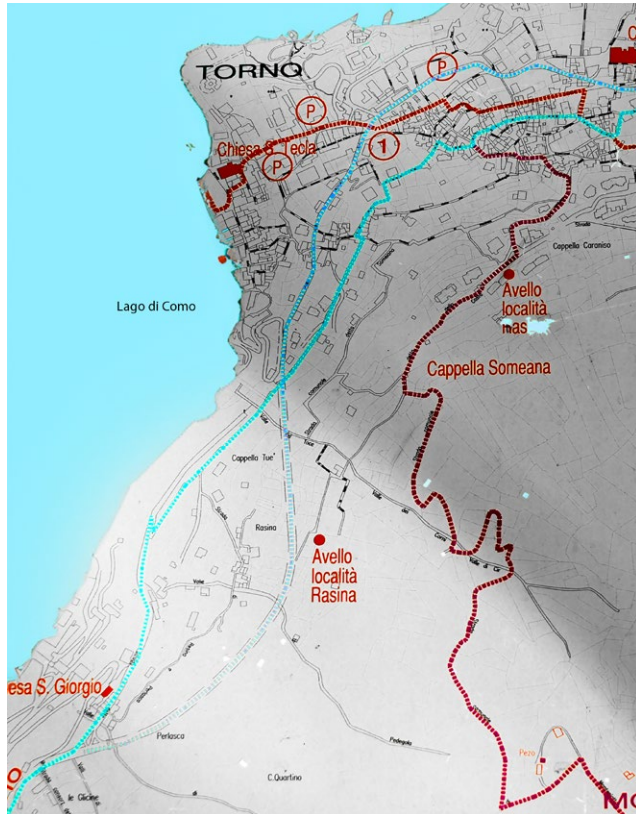
Serizzo stone, moss and bronze

12x22x13 cm

20x22x13 cm

The two sculptures are born from experimentation of encounters between different materials. Inside the wood of Torno, on Lake Como, I've selected some stones partly covered by moss. The second element is the bronze, product of an artificial process. By identifying the humidity like the common denominator between the natural and artificial element the whole idea behind this project is to create a single alive sculpture. In fact the natural bronze oxidation process is being emphasized by the presence of moss humidity. In this context the owner of the artwork plays an essential role for the work destiny. In fact the sculpture can keep its metamorphosis only with the maintenance of humidity conditions. Otherwise the process of change will stop.





The forest of Torno. Como Lake, Italy

Modellare l'informe

2016

dust, postal waste and hair

7x7x7 cm each

The word "shapeless" describes everything that is formless and without a specific shape. It's usually related to the wastes. I wanted to confer dignity upon the dust, my hair cut off and postal waste, realizing defined cubes of 7 centimetres on each side (the size of the palm of my hand).

In the difficulty of achieving my goal, trying to model these different materials, I've created three infinitely perfectible solids.





Sculptura

2014 - 2004
bronze, red Travertine
10x27x10 each



This small composition represents my idea of the history of sculpture. When I was student I made a small Venus of Milo, in which I provocatively had cut off the head, to set it on one knee. Being one of my first bronze castings, the sculpture came out full of imperfections and shortcomings. For me, that little newborn sculpture and so strongly already lived, represented a work of recovered archeology; the archeology of the sense of sculpture itself. 10 years later, observing this old work and continuing to reflect on the idea of time, sculpture and materials, I took a new step. I juxtaposed to the small bronze a stone parallelepiped, with the same size as the sculpture. The stone volume is immediately became a sculpture, this time contemporary and minimal. Stone and bronze are the materials of sculpture, it can easily be said that these two materials constituted the history of sculpture from its origins until today.

Ilaria Cuccagna, Cesena 1981.
Lives and works between Como and Lugano.

Education

2000-2005
Bachelor of Fine Art in Sculpture. Accademia di Belle Arti di Urbino, Italy.
2003-2004
LLP Erasmus. UPV, Facultad de Bellas Artes San Carlos, Valencia. Spain

Solo exhibition

2026
Solo show by Refusés, booth 3 Mega art fair, Milan. Italy

2025
Allegoria della Scoltvra, c/o CARTOGRAFIA SENSIBILE exhibition curated by Lorenza Boisi. Neoclassical Pavilion, Neo-Gothic Park, Ameno, Novara. Italy

2024
Ilaria Cuccagna, Skin_Roman walls, in collaboration with Associazione Accademia Pliniana, Centro Studi Casnati and Galleria Ramo. Pinacoteca civica of Como. Italy
Who are anyway? Galleria Ramo, Como. Italy

2022
Pelle Cruda, curated by Diego Stephani, in collaboration with Annika Pettini, Fondazione Mecrì, Minusio. Switzerland
Un Tempo Lungo, bipersonal with Giulia Marchi, text by Annika Pettini and Nicolò Fano, Galleria Ramo, Como. Italy

2021
Traslati, curated by Andrea Barda and Riccardo Lisi, Pigeons in love, Como. Italy

2019
Vestigia del Presente, curated by Simon David, Galleria Ramo, Como. Italy

2017

Memorie di contatto, curated by Monica Carrera and Francesca Damiano, Case Sparse, Tra l'Etère e la Terra, Malonno, Brescia. Italy
Ossimori, curated by Francesca Pagliuca, Galleria Riccardo Crespi, Milano. Italy

2016

Ilaria Cuccagna, Open Studio, Centre Cultural la Mercè, Girona. Spain
Migratio, Mdina -Valletta, curated by Valletta 2018 foundation and Strada stretta Concept, Spazio Splendid, Valletta. Malta

Selected group exhibitions

2026

A place to stay, curated by Refusés. Grand Hotel Miramare. Santa Margherita Ligure (Ge). Italy

2025

Il corpo grida quello che la bocca tace, curated by Yari Miele. Ex Tintostamperia Val Mulini. Como. Italy
This is not a Curated Exhibition V, Galleria Ramo. Como, Italy

2024

Brigantia, curated by Annika Pettini, c/o careof, Fabbrica del Vapore, Milan. Italy
This is not a Curated Exhibition IV, Galleria Ramo. Como, Italy

2023

Per chi bene sa danzare. Curated by Luca Gennati. Milan. Italy
In the flesh: intimate perspectives on the collective. Text by E. Durante. Galleria Ramo, Como. Italy

2021

This is not a Curated Exhibition II, Galleria Ramo. Como, Italy
Kairos, curated by Isorropia Homegallery, Basilica di San Celso. Milan, Italy

2020

Da ieri a oggi. Linee del contemporaneo in Ticino - La collezione, Museo d'Arte Mendrisio, Mendrisio. Switzerland

2019

Secret Cabinet, curated by Dimora Artica and Galleria Ramo, Dimora Artica, Milan. Italy

Selvatico[14] 2019, Atlante dei margini, delle superfici e dei frammenti, curated by Massimiliano Fabbri, Museo Civico Luigi Varoli, Cotignola-Ravenna. Italy

Sinestesia nel mondo dell'arte, curated by Gianna Macconi, Chasper Pult, Nicoletta Ossanna Cavadini, Spazio Officina M.A.X. Museo, Chiasso. Switzerland

2018

Brain-tooling, curated by Gianluca d'Incà Levis, Riccardo Caldura, Petra Cason, Dolomiti Contemporanee, Forte di Montericco.

Pieve di Cadore, Italy

Spatium, curated by Angela Madesani, Castello Visconteo, Pagazzano-Bergamo. Italy

2015

Malta Biennale, curated by Irene Biolchini, Nikky Petroni and Giuseppe Schembri Bonaci, Mdina. Malta

2012

Officine dell'Arte, workshop by Stefano Arienti and Italo Zuffi, curated by Chiara Agnello and Milovan Farronato, Careof-Fabbrica del Vapore, Milano. Italy

Workshops and residencies

2024

C.A.R.S. Residency. CARTOGRAFIA SENSIBILE - i documenti, a project promoted by Mastronauta in collaboration with M.A.R.S Milan, Omegna and historical library of the convent of Mesma, Lake Orta. Italy

2018

Brain-tooling Residency, curated by Dolomiti Contemporanee, Pieve di Cadore. Italy

2017

Case Sparse, Tra l'Etère e la Terra, residency for a site-specific work, Malonno-Brescia. Italy

2016

Bòlit, Centre d'Art Contemporani, residences exchange project Rad'Art-Bòlit, Girona. Spain

Stage as a social platform project, curated by Simone Frangi and Tommaso Sacchi. Workshop for the production of Continuum, a Luigi Coppola's performance, Viafarini, Milano. Italy

2015

Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennale, Residency, Mdina. Malta

2014

Workshop with Marcos Morau, curated by Associazione culturale Mirada and associazione Cantieri, Ravenna. Italy

2012

FDV Residency Program, Fabbrica del Vapore, curated by Careof, Visiting professor Italo Zuffi, Milano. Italy

Awards

2020: Finalist 2020 OTTN Project Award

2019: First prize Giovani Artisti 2019. Spazio Officina M.A.X. Museo, Chiasso. Switzerland.

Jury: Marco Francioli, Barbara Paltenghi Malacrida, Chasper Pult, Simone Soldini and Nicoletta Ossanna Cavadini

2011: First prize, category installation, RAM 2011 Abecedario della storia sotto il tappeto, Ravenna, Italy

Selected publications

-Annika Pettini, 2024, Brigantia. Project edited by Boîte Editions

-Diego Stephani, Annika Pettini and Moira Morinini Pe, 2022, Pelle Cruda I Ilaria Cuccagna. Catalogue

-Isorropia Homegallery, 2022. KAIROS Busato, Cuccagna, Migliazza, Senoner. Exhibition catalogue

-Antonio D'Amico, 2020. La stanza in cui mi piace stare solo. Exhibition catalogue

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