

Press releaseSeptember 3rd
October 8th, 2022Opening
Saturday, September 3rd
from 11am to 8pm

We Have Always Been Here Salvatore Arancio

During his residency in the Salento region in the heel of Italy, at Cutrofiano (Lecce), a town with a long tradition of ceramic production, Salvatore Arancio spent time with local ceramicists in a personal and technical exchange that led to the creation of six biomorphic sculptures.

As is often the case in Arancio's research, these entities straddling the frontier between the human and natural realms, are a composite of existing forms originating from different spheres of the surrounding sensory world, and which find themselves in co-existence. Thus, shapes that resemble large rocks take on anthropomorphic and plant-like features: polished ears sprout here and there from the rough surfaces, and branches and flowers of imprecise classification spring to life on these boulder-like organisms. Indeed, they owe their 'a-temporal' and 'a-scientific' existence precisely to the impossibility of interpreting, reading or classifying these forms. They are organisms that flit between reality and fantasy, between science and fiction and together they form a landscape that does not invite the viewer to seek an alternative vision of the way we codify and interpret the world around us, but rather to reshape, fragment and amplify what already exists. Arancio proceeds through endless attempts to decompose and recompose reality, as if the forms he creates were themselves unailing proof of the human instinct to transcend science and history as the only sure and certain parameters for interpreting the ecosystem within which we exist.

It is precisely for this reason that the artist has chosen to practice ceramics, making use of clay, a readily available material that comes from the earth and that, at any moment, can overturn the representational ideas for forms we had foreseen, as though they were the unforeseeable result of the interaction between what is controllable through the sculptor's human hand and the unpredictability of the clay itself.

The five hybrid forms that have resulted from this process are far removed from any familiar landscape and impossible to relate to any given geographical reality. It is as if the apocalyptic landscapes that the artist passed through and observed during his residency in Salento, with stretches of withered and diseased olive trees alternating with dried out and burnt stubble, became hallucinatory images of a present that exists without a past or future.

Their chromatic palette, an encounter between the iridescent enamel of the rocks, the opaque black of the plant-like forms and the patinated bronze of the ears nullifies any attempt at scientific, historical or geographical classification resulting in a series of paradoxes between the inanimate state of the boulder and the vitality of its iridescent tones, between the organic botanical element and the immutability of its blackness, between the humanness of the ear and the robotic nature of the metal.

Arancio invites the spectator not to simply classify according to predetermined categories but rather lose him or herself in the contemplation of forms and colors, while ignoring all accrued knowledge to focus on instinctive perception and open up worlds and landscapes that are only seemingly unknown.

In *We Have Always Been Here* (2022) the rough surface of the rocks is formed

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by the imprint on the clay of the sponge-like structure of carparo stone (a form of limestone from the Salento region) symbolically transforming the sculptures into material memories of the Cutrofiano landscape. Arancio takes his inspiration from reality, from nature, from the human world, from what can be specifically localized both geographically and historically, then leads us away from all of this towards landscapes that only our minds, brought back to degree zero in terms of acquired knowledge, can experience.

Francesco Scasciamacchia