

The background of the cover is a painting. It features a checkered floor in the foreground, with squares in shades of black, dark brown, and light tan. The floor recedes into a dark, shadowy landscape. Above the horizon, the sky is a warm, golden-yellow color with some faint, wispy textures. The overall style is reminiscent of a classical or modernist painting.

VANITAS

TRACES OF BEAUTY

John Paul Azzopardi | Enrica Borghi | Carlotta Brunetti | Paolo Minioni | Franco Rasma

VANITAS: Traces of Beauty

John Paul Azzopardi

Enrica Borghi

Carlotta Brunetti

Paolo Minioni

Franco Rasma

07/09 - 14/10/2018

Curated and text by Giovanna Nicoletti

No 20 Arts

20 Cross Street

London N1 2BG

Special thanks to Micky Johnson, Jorge Lorenzo-Santana, Adriana Barbieri
and Matthew Watts

Cover front and back:

Franco Rasma

Mehr Licht (2006), Oil on panel, 48 x 34 cm.

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The term *vanitas*, as understood in contemporary visual culture, has its origins in the 17thC European tradition of representing the reality and shortness of life through *memento mori* - artworks designed to remind the viewer of their mortality and of the fragility of human life.

Vanitas encourages the viewer to reflect on the inevitable passing of time. Items such as vases of flowers, bowls of fruit, water clocks, musical instruments, skulls, jewels and books have all been used by artists as symbols of the destiny of life i.e. death, but also, at the same time, to celebrate the ephemeral beauty of the everyday.

Like in the ancient forms of *vanitas*, also in the works of John Paul Azzopardi, Enrica Borghi, Carlotta Brunetti, Paolo Minioni and Franco Rasma the theme of beauty and its brevity highlights a subtle constant that establishes a dialogue between the past and the present.



John Paul Azzopardi
Untitled Nr. 7 (2016), Bones, 15 x 16.5 x 18 cm.

The sculptures of **John Paul Azzopardi** feature the classical *vanitas* elements of skulls and musical instruments. Made of animal bones interwoven and folded, they possess the lightness of the ephemeral and the complexity of an ancient weave. Bones are on their own a representation of death, but the image that they reconstruct in Azzopardi's sculptures is a living one; the very emblem of a *memento mori*. In his sculpture, the skull shows all its fragility and strength at the same time: made up of fills and voids, yet solid in its almost architectural construction, it is charged with tensions between presence and empty space. Likewise, the ancient and rare musical instrument evokes an imperceptible melody reminiscent of ancient histories that we may imagine taking shape through the game of lights and shades.



John Paul Azzopardi
Untitled Nr. 7 (2016), Bones, 15 x 16.5 x 18 cm.

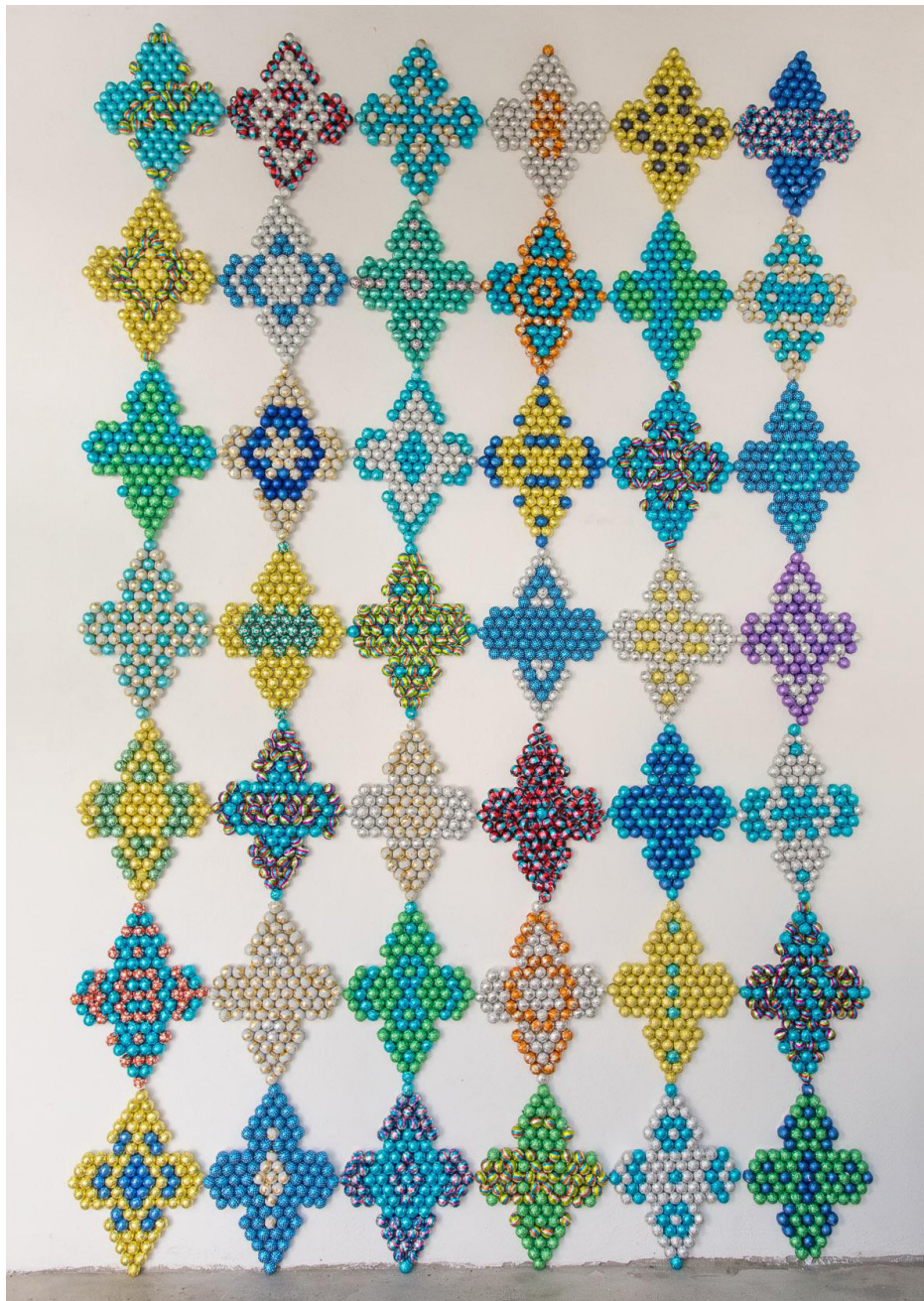


John Paul Azzopardi
Study of a late 19th Century French Harpo-Lyre (2016), Bones, 78 x 43 x 12 cm.



Enrica Borghi. Photograph by Giorgio Caione.
Venere con Mela (2013), Plastic nails, cloth and plastic, 120 x 30 x 30 cm.

The ephemeral aspect of beauty is clear in **Enrica Borghi's** use of artificial materials. Wasted elements are presented in a new guise, reinventing their appearance and regaining their lost beauty. The Piedmontese artist has always worked with sculpture, knowingly and provocatively transforming the pre-existent. She gathers waste materials and puts them together to form sculptural shapes that occupy the space. Plastic bottles, like the ones that can often be seen floating in the sea, descend from the ceiling like jellyfish; metallic wrappers from sweets become precious jewels or mosaic tiles; objects of consumption that try to capture temporary beauty: fake painted nails, sequins and metal thimbles or dishcloths become garments and decorative accessories for busts or full-length figures of Venus.



Enrica Borghi. Photograph by Francesco Lillo.
Muro (2005), Polysterene and alluminium foil, Installation.



Enrica Borghi. Photograph by Giorgio Caione.
Busto (2017), Plastic nails, metal and plastic, 60 x 40 x 30 cm.



Carlotta Brunetti. Photograph by Robert Haas.
Foam (2017), Tulle, feathers and glue, 380 x 100 cm.

A garment of feathers descends from the ceiling. Feathers which appear to have come down from above becoming part of the weave. They become jewels of light and metal, like flakes, slightly overlapping. Other sculptural elements also appear like symbols of the ephemeral. The garment and the small sculptures in plaster and iron are produced by **Carlotta Brunetti**, an artist who works using such materials as her means of expression. She prefers simple geometrical forms and natural elements: soil, water, wind, fire, salt and pigments. Her work examines the natural form of the landscape and how it has been tamed by mankind. Brunetti explores physical places and the spaces of the mind, seeking out archetypes and presenting them to the viewer.



Carlotta Brunetti
Little Man (2018), Plaster, iron and nails, 12 x 18 cm.



Carlotta Brunetti
Evaporate (2018), Wood, lead and iron, 37 x 17 x 7.5 cm.



Paolo Minioni
Still Life. *Zantedeschia aethiopica* (2005), Photograph, 50 x 40 cm.

The photographs of **Paolo Minioni** are accurate descriptions of abandoned objects which still possess a vibrant aura. They have stories to tell, things to recount, if our eyes observe and grasp the subtext in the empty space and the little fissures that fracture the surface of the objects; what remains of a little plant that does not want to die, or the terracotta of empty vases that still brim with life. The objects seem to belong to distant times. The photographs are made up of shadows, shadows that mark out piles of earth and that dictate the contours of the landscape. Shadows that might suggest a scarce inner resilience of things but that actually represent their strength.



Paolo Minioni
From the series **CUMULI** (2001), Photograph, 40 x 50 cm.

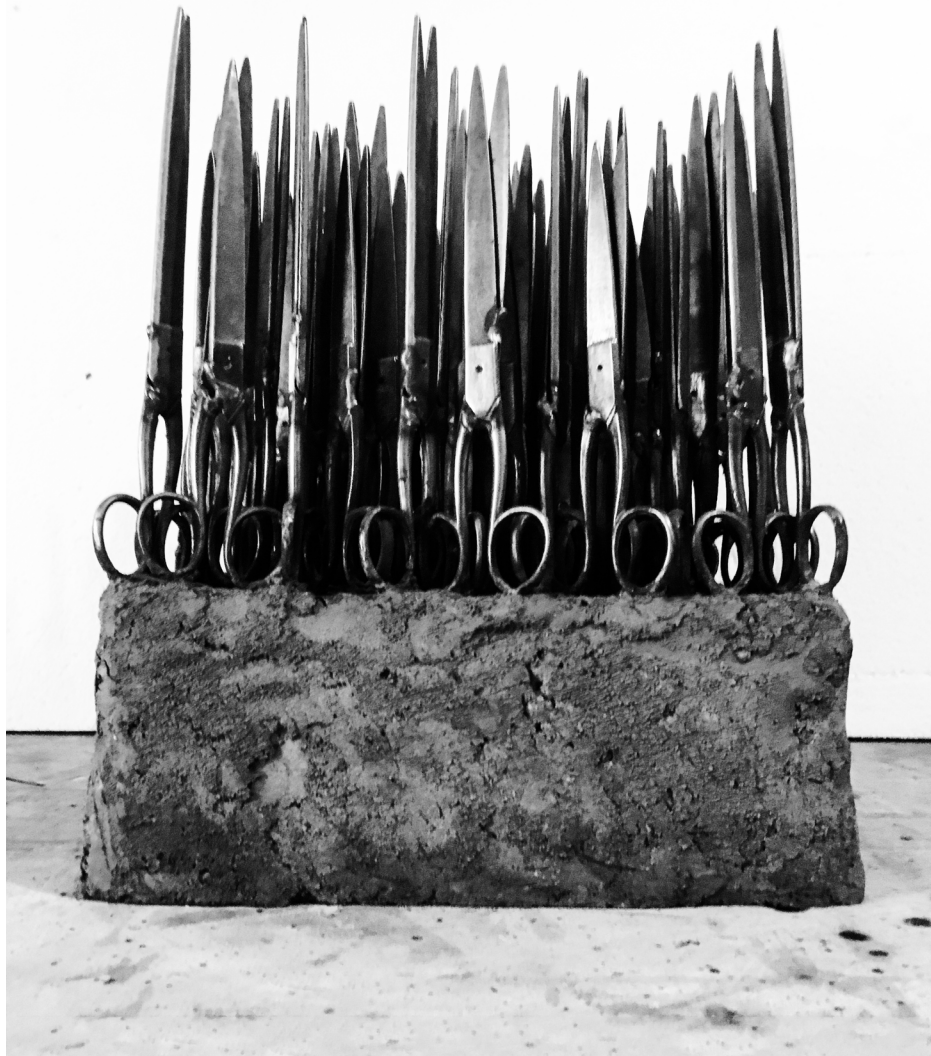


Paolo Minioni
From the series **CUMULI** (2001), Photograph, 40 x 50 cm.



Franco Rasma
Detail of **Studio Installation**

Franco Rasma's works are defined by his sketchy and textural style, an expression of his concern for the immaterial and non-visible rather than the clearly defined. His subject matter is often immobile and set within empty planes, creating an eerie atmosphere filled with highly contrasted and elongated shadows. The connotations of Rasma's characteristic style serve to elevate everyday objects and scenarios, functioning as an exploration of elements both real and imagined. The timeless quality of these observations gives a dream-like state to the works, reinforced by the somewhat threatening atmosphere of the elongated shadows. Rasma's mysterious works question the ordinary as well as the notions of time and space.



Franco Rasma
Untitled (2010), Cement and bronze, 46 x 47 x 22 cm.



Franco Rasma
Mehr Licht (2006), Oil on panel, 27 x 36 cm.

John Paul Azzopardi, Enrica Borghi, Carlotta Brunetti, Paolo Minioni and Franco Rasma provide us with contemporary takes on *vanitas*; traces of a beauty that triumphs as long as sculpture, painting, photography and installation are able to keep memory alive, resisting the moment of its disappearance.



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