

ESH GALLERY
presents

Surface Tensions

November 14 - December 22, 2023
Opening on Tuesday, November 14: 6-9 PM

In a culture marked by the virtual and the rapid succession of new media, what place do we give to the surface, the very expression of physical substance? This is the question posed by Giuliana Bruno, author of 'Surfaces. Regarding aesthetics, materiality, and media'.

Surface Tensions, the new exhibition at ESH Gallery, seeks to provide a personal answer through a selection of works that, with different techniques, **explores the artistic possibilities of rendering surfaces**. The surface is the outermost layer of matter, the one we can see and touch, the one that first almost unconsciously communicates to the observer, transmitting a multitude of sensations and expressive messages, from the most tactile and material to the most conceptual. Hence the idea of tension in the title, the same tension that develops between the artwork and the observer, in that dynamic, never banal interplay between contemplation and the invitation to touch.

Among the various materials featured in the exhibition, ceramics may be the one that offers more possibilities in this sense.

For example, the Japanese artist **Ichiyo Sawada**, in shaping her works, exercises skilful control over the surface texture, attributing a **serene dynamism** to the masses. The grooves that traverse the forms and spread across the surface, retracing the structural tension of the mass, evoke undeniable suggestions that connect the great Zen tradition to the most current languages of art and design.

On the other hand, the surface of **Leonardo Bartolini's** works is rough, irregular, enriched with granules, metallic inserts, and textures obtained with **Jomon**. This ancient Japanese technique involves weaving on the surface and the use of *terra sigillata*, a type of slip already known to the Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans.

Simone Negri, through high-temperature single firings, achieves surfaces marked by fascinating shades and crackles of blue pigment that prompt reflection on the **transformation induced by the passage of time**.

The "skin" of **Marta Palmieri's** sculptures is expertly modelled with a spatula and enriched with **sedimentations of metallic oxides** to resemble ancient artifacts emerged from the earth.

Glass is the chosen material for the Korean artist **Kyou Hong Lee** and the Japanese artist **Ōki Izumi** to give life to works with **ethereal surfaces, suspended between the material and the immaterial**, where light becomes the true protagonist.

From the frosted glass sheets of Lee, dynamically irregular crystal elements emerge, appearing to float in the stillness of matter.

The observer's gaze, on the other hand, penetrates and traverses the surfaces of Ōki Izumi's sculptures in greenish-blue glass, which, depending on the changing light, evoke different impressions and emotional states.

The construction of the surface, as the definitive element of the work itself, can be found in the bamboo sculptures of **Shingo Muramoto**: the **lacquer surface** - nothing more than an accumulation of layers - **self-shapes** among the branches during the drying process, giving rise to the sinuosity and extreme dynamism that characterize his works.

The desire to investigate the surface from a perspective antithetical to that of matter is observable in the work of **Giovanna Strada and Manuel Bonfanti**. Strada invites us to **imagine a surface where there is none**. Her wall installations, strictly regulated by the role of mathematical proportions, challenge the observer to define the very concept of a wall-mounted work.

Bonfanti, on the other hand, staying in the apparent groove of traditional painting, treats monochromatic surfaces with more or less dense applications of colour with a **strongly material**, almost tactile effect.

Presenting Artists: **Ichiyo Sawada, Leonardo Bartolini, Simone Negri, Marta Palmieri, Clara Holt (ceramics); Kyou Hong Lee, Ōki Izumi (glass); Shingo Muramoto (lacquer); Giovanna Strada, Manuel Bonfanti (painting); Aki Rusu (metal)**

Surface Tensions

November 15th - December 22nd 2023

Opening: Tuesday November 14th: h 6-9 pm

November 15th - December 22nd: by appointment only

ESH Gallery

Via Forcella 7

20144 - Milan

+39 0256568164 / www.eshgallery.com / enquiries@eshgallery.com

IG: @eshgallery