

COMBAT ArtReview

Apr 15

Bekhbaatar Enkhtur in dialogue with the Himalayan Collection of the MAO

Starting Tuesday, April 14, 2026, a site-specific work by Mongolian artist Bekhbaatar Enkhtur (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 1994) will be on view in the South and Southeast Asia and Himalayan Region galleries of the MAO, conceived in dialogue with works from the museum's permanent collection.



Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, *Untitled*, 2026 – ph Giorgio Perottino

Inspired by depictions of guardian lions—symbolic protective figures traditionally placed at the entrances of temples and codified during the Ming and Qing dynasties, later disseminated across Inner Asia, including Mongolia under Qing rule—Bekhbaatar Enkhtur's sculpture offers a contemporary reinterpretation of the idea of religious offering.

In *Untitled* (2026), made of hand-moulded beeswax, the organic element—unstable and fragile—carries strong symbolic value. By calling into question the nature of sculpture as a “representation of matter,” the work evokes concepts such as impermanence, imperfection, transience, and the perpetual mutability of life in all its forms and developments, notions deeply rooted in Buddhist philosophy and religion.

Conceived specifically for the MAO, the sculptural intervention takes traditional iconographic language as its point of departure, reworking it to offer a new interpretation.

Whereas in tradition the male lion embodies sovereignty and control over the material realm, and the lioness with her cub represents continuity and the transmission of lineage—within a symbolic system that also intertwines with the figure of the Tibetan Snow Lion, an emblem of fearless strength and of the so-called “lion's roar,” a metaphor for the authoritative proclamation of Buddhist teaching—in Bekhbaatar Enkhtur's work the cub is isolated and deprived of the adult lion. In this way, the structure of authority and protection is suspended, allowing the fragile and vulnerable sign of continuity to emerge.

The work will become part of the MAO's collections.

NEWS PRINCIPALE

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Bekhbaatar Enkhtur: Hearsay

Enkhtur's ephemeral sculptures, carved from his signature beeswax and aluminium, subvert the visual references they portray, riffing on the randomness of meaning and toying with our sense of reality



Installation view, Bekhbaatar Enkhtur: Hearsay, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 31 October 2024 – 5 January 2025. Photo: Giorgio Perottino.

Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin
31 October 2024 – 5 January 2025

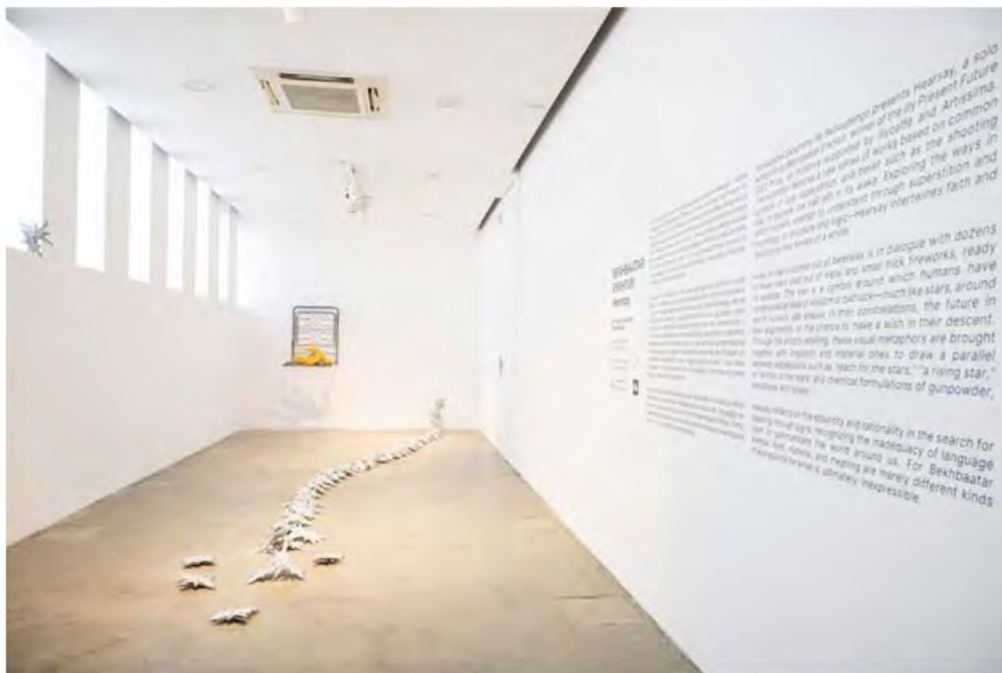
by TOM DENMAN

Chance, contingency and the random, often allied with the ephemeral and the fleeting – as in a shooting star, for instance – have as much to do with our experience of art as do the considered intentionality of its making and the illusion of its permanence. The day before I went to see Bekhbaatar Enkhtur's solo exhibition at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin, my laptop's screen began to malfunction and I needed to have it repaired. As a stopgap, I am using a slow, clunky old thing I had not opened for several years. When I did open it, I found myself suddenly moved by the background display, a reproduction of a painting I had long forgotten downloading. The image – serendipitously a baroque

Bekhbaatar Enkhtur: Hersey
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allegorisation of the passing of time – catapulted me back to the memory of seeing the real thing on the first New Year's Eve after the pandemic, and this involuntary recollection triggered in me a deep sense of loss that resonated with the temporal theme of the work.

I was still reeling from this mediated, post-digital encounter when I saw Enkhtur's *Hearsay*, an exhibition the Mongolian-born, Turin-based artist was awarded as part of the Illy Present Future Prize, which he won in 2023. It is this win, or what he sees as his good luck, that he has chosen as the show's theme, channelling it through his signature sculptures of beeswax and aluminium. A key quality of Enkhtur's works to date has been ephemerality, interwoven with symbolic and metaphorical allusions to the randomness of meaning. Oddly, his materials are less visually haptic than you might imagine: the beeswax is almost too alive-looking to invite touch (I feel more inclined to sniff it), the aluminium not quite matt, not quite glossy – it is as if the sculptures existed at the threshold two realities, part formed in physical space, part formed in the mind. When art is so often and all too heavily beset with meanings it never asked for, and when the structures of art – including its prizes – are artificially presented as following a linear, careerist logic, Enkhtur's playful insinuation that none of this has to matter is refreshing.



Installation view, Bekhbaatar Enkhtur: Hearsay, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 31 October 2024 – 5 January 2025. Photo: Giorgio Perottino.

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For his 2023 show at Matèria Gallery in Rome, he remodelled in beeswax a statue of the Buddhist sage Migjid Janraisig in Ulaanbaatar, first built in 1913 to celebrate Mongolian independence from China, then destroyed by the Soviets in 1938, and rebuilt in 1996. Though this history may be seen to reflect the resilience of Mongolia's spiritual identity against political oppression, Enkhtur has presented an emaciated figure flat on his face, as if exhausted by his very obligation to mean something. The work hinted at an interdependence between the monument and what it stood for, implying that, in the grand scheme of things, both are as transitory as each other. In Matèria's booth at last year's Artissima art fair (for which he won the Illy prize), Enkhtur placed a beeswax lotus flower on the floor against a backdrop of aluminium takeaway food containers on which were engraved moments from myth and fable. The disposability of these surfaces curtailed the entrenchment of solid mythological meaning, mirroring the fleetingness imperfectly symbolised by the flower – symbolism which, too, was imperfect, with brittle beeswax recalcitrantly at odds with the supple transience of petals.



Installation view, Bekhbaatar Enkhtur: Hearsay, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 31 October 2024 – 5 January 2025. Photo: Giorgio Perottino.

In his Turin show, luck, chance and happenstance are rooted in the symbol of the star – mythically looked at, in cultures worldwide, to illustrate that which is beyond

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empirical explanation – and the overall setup has the poised asymmetry of a constellation. As I enter the room, on the wall to my left, a small, squarish image whispers; in a scene delineated out of yellowish beeswax on white paper, which has been folded over a frame to give the artwork a sculptural presence, someone resembling the artist lies in a bathtub surrounded by dumped clothes. Understood biographically, the man's supine pose could allude to the Enkhtur's self-effacing view that his winning the prize was a matter of chance, and thus partly beyond his control, while his upturned gaze – idiomatically if not literally – could be directed at the heavens.



Installation view, Bekhbaatar Enkhtur: Hearsay, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 31 October 2024 – 5 January 2025. Photo: Giorgio Perottino.

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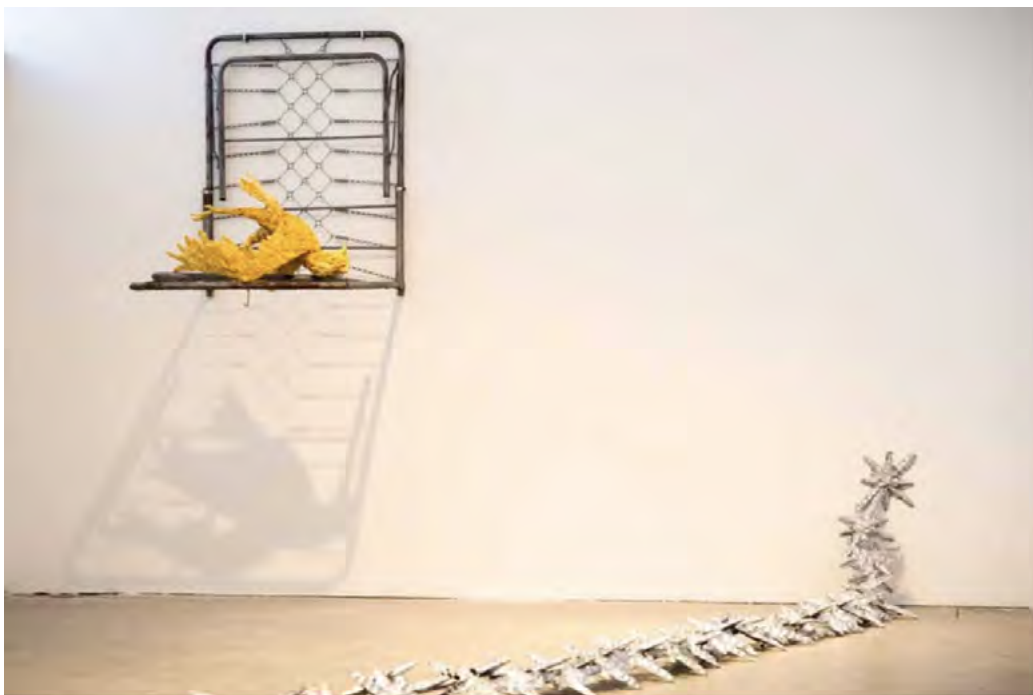
Running diagonally along the floor is a vertebrae-like line of aluminium stars resembling an excavated marine beast. High in one of the windows, two stars are locked in what could be a loving embrace or some kind of combat – like an eloping couple, or a pair of disgruntled so-and-sos who have decided to take a matter outside. One lone star appears to have lodged itself in another window frame, like shrapnel or a shuriken, a violent association prompted by the knowledge, imparted by the wall text, that these stars contain tiny firecrackers – in fact, when a group of students visited the show the day before the opening, one of them accidentally trod on a star causing it to pop. While the aluminium component's explosive potential might not be much of a risk to visitors, it hints at how a minor accident – a misplaced foot – could bring an end to the artwork's material existence, thereby mirroring the role that accident might have played in its coming into being.



Installation view, Bekhbaatar Enkhtur: Hearsay, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 31 October 2024 – 5 January 2025. Photo: Giorgio Perottino.

On the far wall is a small, metal bed, folded at a right angle with one side protruding like a shelf, on which lies a bird sculpted out of beeswax, collapsed on its front, feet in the air, cartoonishly beaten (one can visualise the twirling stars); the bird's shadow is projected through the bed on to the wall beneath it, suggesting mirrored worlds and creating a feathery, dark abstraction that mimetically inverts humanity's ancient tendency to project representational form on to constellations in the night

sky: whereas stars shine in darkness, the shadow is darkness cast by the lights on the ceiling. The face-down bird – which the wall text tells us is an owl – inverts the bathing stargazer at the opposite end of the room. Another instance of circularity is in the use of beeswax: fragile and cumbersome as a material for making sculptures, and yet in essence very durable, making an excellent varnish for oil paintings and antique furniture. Nothing is, nothing means, any one thing.



Installation view, Bekhbaatar Enkhtur: Hearsay, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 31 October 2024 – 5 January 2025. Photo: Giorgio Perottino.

“I quit,” the owl could be saying, refusing to enact its archetypal role of sage or seer, in whom sight and wisdom merge to become clairvoyance – at least according to the creature’s Ancient Greek symbology, which is the frame of reference I have been culturally conditioned to bring to it. In Mongolian folklore, owls are considered not only wise but also harbingers of good fortune, as they are in Japan, while elsewhere – in parts of India and China, for instance – the owl is a bad omen and among many Native Americans it symbolises death. Enkhtur’s owl has had enough, and so it hands the reins of interpretation over to the viewer, if the viewer is that way inclined. In this show, the owl might embody Enkhtur’s self-effacement, which rhymes with the shy fragility of his sculptures, so present and yet so ephemeral, bespeaking an inevitable disappearance of what is.

Artissima, a Bekhbaatar Enkhtur il Premio Illy Present Future

Il Giornale dell'Arte, November 3, 2023

Anna Maria Farinato

IL GIORNALE DELL'ARTE



TORINO ART WEEK 2023

Artissima, a Bekhbaatar Enkhtur il Premio illy Present Future

L'artista mongolo avrà nel 2024 una personale alla
Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo

Anna Maria Farinato | 03 novembre 2023 | 3' min di lettura

ARTE CONTEMPORANEA | FONDAZIONI | ARTISSIMA

Anna Maria Farinato

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Un particolare dell'installazione di Bekhbaatar Enkhtur. Foto cortesia di galleria Matèria

Il Premio illy Present Future, realizzato in collaborazione con illycaffè, che da ventitré anni premia un artista della sezione curata Present Future di Artissima, è stato assegnato a Bekhbaatar Enkhtur (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 1994), rappresentato dalla galleria Matèria di Roma. La giuria internazionale del premio, destinato a nuovi talenti presentati nella sezione Present Future della fiera torinese, era composta da **Tom Engels**, direttore artistico del Grazer Kunstverein, di Graz, **Robert Leckie**, direttore di Spike Island, Bristol, **Kasia Redzisz**, direttrice artistica di KANAL Centre Pompidou, Bruxelles e da **Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo**, presidente della Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo di Torino.

«La manipolazione di materiali effimeri e quotidiani da parte di Enkhtur costruisce una narrazione mitologica unica, si legge nella motivazione del premio, evocando visioni di una vita passata come se fosse estratta dalle profondità della memoria collettiva. Il lavoro di Enkhtur non solo dimostra finezza scultorea, ma invita gli spettatori a entrare in un universo intimo, in cui la storia e l'eredità culturale vengono reimmaginate».

L'artista avrà l'opportunità di presentare il proprio lavoro durante l'edizione 2024 di Artissima negli spazi della **Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo**, dove è attualmente allestita «**Vestiges**», la personale di **Peng Zuqiang**, vincitore dell'**illy Present Future 2022 Prize**.

Nello stand della galleria Matèria, fondata nel 2017 a Roma da Niccolò Fano e diretta da Rossana Esposito, Enkhtur presenta un lavoro inedito e site specific in cera d'api e alluminio. «La pratica di Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, spiegano dalla galleria, si concentra sulle varie declinazioni del medium della scultura e, più in generale, sui processi di messa in forma della materia e sulla sua interazione con spazio e spettatore.

Bekhbaatar conduce la sua ricerca artistica attorno all'idea di cambiamento, come dato intrinseco di tutte le cose, mirando a fare emergere le qualità essenziali dei materiali utilizzati, organici e inorganici, donando loro una parvenza di vita. In una danza aggraziata tra il mondo della realtà e quello dell'immaginazione, gli spettatori hanno l'opportunità di assistere alla continua esplorazione di Enkhtur dell'intersezione tra tradizione e innovazione, attraverso un approccio che sfida i confini della rappresentazione artistica e che trascende la mera osservazione».

Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, che vive e lavora a Torino, ha studiato scultura all'Accademia di Belle Arti di Bologna ed è stato artista in residenza, tra gli altri, al MAMbo -Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, alla Manifattura Tabacchi di Firenze e a Dolomiti Contemporanee (Borca di Cadore, BI).

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Un particolare dell'installazione di Bekhbaatar Enkhtur. Foto cortesia di galleria Matèria



Premio illy Present Future: Saim Demircan, curatore sezione Present Future; Luigi Fassi, direttore Artissima; Tom Engels, direttore artistico, Grazer Kunstverein, Graz; Robert Leckie, direttore, Spike Island, Bristol; Kasia Redzisz, direttrice artistica, KANAL Centre Pompidou, Bruxelles; l'artista vincitore, Bekhbaatar Enkhtur; Carlo Bach, direttore artistico Illycaffè; Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, presidente della Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo di Torino; Rossana Esposito, Galleria Matèria. Foto © Perottino-Piva-Peirone / Artissima 2023

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Bekhbaatar Enkhtur Resurrects the Past

Frieze, March 15, 2023

Ana Vukadin

FRIEZE

Bekhbaatar Enkhtur Resurrects the Past

At Matèria, Rome, the artist's beeswax sculpture of a key figure in Buddhism reflects a significant moment in Mongolian history

A BY ANA VUKADIN IN EU REVIEWS, EXHIBITION REVIEWS | 15 MAR 23



A delicate whiff of honey hits visitors as they step inside Matèria, leading them past several pencil drawings towards the exhibition's main piece: a larger than life, prone sculpture of Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of infinite compassion and mercy – a key figure in Buddhism (*Untitled*, 2023). Measuring more than four metres in length, its head resting gently on a pillow, the sculpture is covered in beeswax and, as with the rest of the works in 'Imagining for Real', was made entirely in situ by Turin-based Mongolian artist Bekhbaatar Enkhtur over the course of five intense days leading up to the show's opening.



Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, 'Imagining for Real', 2023, exhibition view, Matèria, Roma. Courtesy: the artist and Matèria, Roma; Photo: Roberto Apa



Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, *Untitled* (detail), 2023, straw, rope, beeswax, variable dimensions. Courtesy: the artist and Matèria, Roma; Photo: Roberto Apa

Manually kneaded, the figure's body appears at once divine and grotesque, as though ravaged by time: its jutting ribs, eerily thin limbs and peeling frame contrast with its exquisite diadem featuring delicately sculpted lotus flowers and lions, resting atop stylized rows of matted curls tied into a top knot. The core of the sculpture is made of straw bound together with rope, on top of which beeswax has been applied in copious quantities and moulded. Enkhtur's process is reminiscent of the ancient Central Asian sculpture method whereby the artists would build up forms with crude wooden armatures, covering them with layers of clay and leaving them to dry in the arid climate before adding colour. Despite the fragility of the pieces it produced, this technique was widely used for centuries and was practiced as far as Northern China and Japan.

Fragility and transience are key themes in Enkhtur's practice. His frequent use of organic materials like clay and beeswax – easy to shape but also mutable if left raw – questions the nature of sculpture, understood here, according to the exhibition literature, as the 'representation of matter'. What remains once the artist's works deteriorate, exposed to air, light and time? Is there an essence, a soul even, that endures when the piece eventually disappears, or is everything destined to be forgotten?

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Bekhbaatar Enkhtur Resurrects the Past

Frieze, March 15, 2023

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Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, *Untitled (detail)*, 2023, straw, rope, beeswax, variable dimensions. Courtesy: the artist and Matèria, Rome. Photo: Roberto Apa



Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, *Imagining for Real*, 2023, exhibition view, Matèria, Rome. Courtesy: the artist and Matèria, Rome. Photo: Roberto Apa

Untitled references a specific event in Mongolian history, when a 26-metre statue of Avalokiteśvara (known as Migjid Janraisig) – which had originally been erected in 1913 to commemorate the country's political independence from China – was dismantled by Soviet troops in 1938 as part of broader, Stalinist purges of all things Buddhist. In 1996, the statue was rebuilt and the Gandantegchinlen Monastery complex housing it revitalized, rendering it a popular tourist destination in Ulaanbaatar. As with virtually every war or changing of the guard, the past is seemingly erased, only to be resurrected again once the tide shifts – perhaps in a different syncretic form but there, nonetheless.

The artist's interest in temporality extends beyond *Untitled* to the exhibition's curation, with each remaining piece purposely installed atop traces of the gallery's previous show. The contours of a removed temporary wall, for instance, are placed along one of the arches and highlighted in beeswax (*Untitled*, 2023), creating a delicately scented entryway. Elsewhere, several wall drawings (*Sisma #1–9*, 2023) –depicting rapidly sketched, playful scenes of a popular Mongolian childhood game similar to Red Light, Green Light – are positioned over unsealed nail holes.

Enkhtur's investigations into transience, his search for an energy which may no longer be self-evident, deftly woven into a historical and cultural context, strongly resonate with my own experience as a first-generation immigrant in Italy. I was reminded of a recent episode of the FT Weekend podcast, in which Daniel Kwan, co-director of the Oscar-winning *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022), compared the immigrant experience to living in a multiverse comprised of the country we moved to, the one we left behind and the hybrid world occupied by our second-generation children. While change may be inevitable, we can but hope some essential traces of where we've been and what we've lived through will remain.

Bekhbaatar Enkhtur's **'Imagining for Real'** is on view at Matèria, Rome, until 22 April.

Main image: Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, *Untitled* (detail), 2023, straw, rope, beeswax, variable dimensions. Courtesy: the artist and Matèria, Rome; Photo: Roberto Apa



Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, *Sisma #1 (detail)*, 2023, wall pencil drawing, beeswax, 35 x 25 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Matèria, Rome. Photo: Roberto Apa

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An Ocean Standing at LC Queisser
Art Viewer, January 25, 2023
Marina Caron

Art Viewer

An Ocean Standing at LC Queisser

January 25, 2023



Artists: Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili, Kenneth Bergfeld,

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Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, Nina Kinsturashvili, Anna Zemánková

Exhibition title: An Ocean Standing

Venue: LC Queisser, Tbilisi, Georgia

Date: December 10, 2022 – February 18, 2023

Photography: all images copyright and courtesy of the artists and LC Queisser

‘An Ocean Standing’

“If Lispector is capable of lingering with the imperceptibly opening flowers, this is because, for her, the instant, every single one of them, is vegetal. ‘And from the instants, I extract the juice of their fruits. I must deprive myself to reach the core and seed of life. The instant is living seed.’ The instant is, at once, fruit and seed, the end and a new beginning.”

Michael Marder, “Lispector’s Seeds”

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LC Queisser is pleased to present ‘An Ocean Standing’, an exhibition featuring works from Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili, Kenneth Bergfeld, Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, Nina Kinsturashvili and Anna Zemánková.

In his essay on Clarice Lispector’s work, philosopher Michael Marder writes, “the implicit mediator between [Lispector] and this world is time: the time of the world and of one’s own life expressed through parts of plants and through the milestones of germination, maturation, or decay.” Lispector’s lingering attention to the elusive instant is described as synchronous with the slow and cyclical intervals of vegetal time. The works presented in An Ocean Standing investigate this seemingly paradoxical timescale that is both slowed down and intensified, prolonged and charged, organic and synthetic. In histories of performance, strategies of slowing down or stalling activity have been used to call attention to the time of the performance itself. While the artists featured here work with sculpture, painting, drawing and photography, they each address their chosen medium’s relationship to time through similar methods, bringing process and the timescale of making artwork into the room along the way.

—

Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili’s series Quarantine Flowers emerged from the artist’s photographic ritual during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. As she writes in her statement on the work; “Very cleverly, or maybe romantically, Germany listed florists as essential to life and so they stayed open. Flowers acquired tremendous allure and symbolism in that anxious time. The sheer stubbornness of their beauty in the face of despair hinted at restorative qualities of nature and so gave one hope.”

In Alexi-Meskhishvili’s photographs, the cut flowers become both symbols of hope through the “stubborn beauty” of their form, as well as ambassadors from the outside world during a period of interior isolation.

Kenneth Bergfeld’s paintings depict various figures from the shoulders up, situated in front of ambiguous, vibrant backgrounds. The figures and their settings bear traces of a digital composite logic, as if certain details were cut, pasted and smoothed into place algorithmically. The artist’s perpetual return to these enigmatic avatars suggests an imaginary space, dense with endless combinatory revisions of an unstable yet commanding self.

Made from combinations of organic materials, such as straw and clay, and manufactured materials like wire, coins, and pencils, Berkhbaatar Enkhtur’s sculptures often take the form of animals. The wolves shown here aren’t based on observation of real wolves but rather are brought together through remembered, half-dissolved fragments of the animal. These memories are rooted in the artist’s childhood in Mongolia, where the symbolic meaning of specific animals is heavily shaped through Shamanism. Enkhtur leaves traces of his handwork on the surfaces of his materials, keeping his artistic labor visible in the final sculpture.

Nina Kinsturashvili’s paintings begin from her ongoing research into heritage sites and colonial history in Georgia. She travels to archaeological locations, cave monasteries and Soviet archives, collecting images that she then brings to the studio to study and sit with. The collected ancient architectural forms, marked from centuries of historical encounter, are abstracted and layered in her paintings—the specific references left behind, giving way to undulating, lively shape and color.

Anna Zemánková (Czech, 1908-1986) was a prolific, self-taught painter whose practice was almost exclusively focused on flowers and ornamentation. Having grown up in Moravia’s Haná region, Zemánková was heavily influenced by the folk clothing that was common there. Many of her paintings and drawings of flowers contain sections of ornate patterns reminiscent of these embroidered costumes. At times, the artist would even take a needle and thread to her artworks, overlaying her pastel and watercolor surfaces with embroidery. Zemánková’s works have a strange beauty—the combination of decorative pattern and floral form creates an otherworldliness that feels both lively and artificial, animated and still.

— Marina Caron

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An Ocean Standing, 2022, exhibition view, LC Queisser, Tbilisi

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Bekhbaatar Enkhtur
 BOLOGNA

Though it is often said works of art are meant to outlive us, for Bologna-based Mongolian artist Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, every material has an inevitable impermanence

that ought to be encouraged. In his words: "Everything in the universe is simultaneously temporary and eternal; their form continuously changes, but their essence remains." Heavily informed by Tibetan Buddhism, which proliferated in Mongolian society beginning in the 16th century, and the nomadic ethos, his site-specific and ephemeral productions in raw clay, aluminum, pewter, and wax invite reflections on transience and mortality.

Based on a Mongolian folktale about a lost foal longing to return home, Enkhtur's outdoor installation *Cavalli* (2020) comprises approximately 60 raw clay sculptures of horses that he dispersed across three villages in the northern Italian province of Belluno. The artist began working with raw clay in 2017 and soon found that the material "naturally sculpts and shapes itself," gradually becoming independent from him with a life of its own.



Detailed installation view of BEKHBAAATAR ENKHTUR's *Cavalli*, 2020, clay sculptures, 60 x 80 x 35 cm each, at "Una Boccata d'Arte 2020," Borgo Valbelluna, Veneto, 2020. Photo by Camilla Glorioso. Courtesy the artist, Fondazione Elpis, Milan; and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Havana/Rome/Sao Paulo/Paris

Unfired and exposed to the elements, the sculptures gracefully undergo an uninterrupted process of decay. "Eventually, the works are discarded, but in reality, their essence resides in the spaces where they were created," the artist explained.

That we are not our bodies but our essence—consciousness, spirit, soul—is an integral component of Buddhist philosophy and Enkhtur's practice. In *Vulture* (2021), Enkhtur references the funerary custom of sky burials, where a deceased body is placed on a mountain to decompose or be dispersed by scavenging birds, reflecting Buddhist teachings on reincarnation. A delicate, barely visible linework engraving of flying vultures on two wax panels, another ephemeral material, *Vulture* recalls the intimacy of witnessing a being's passage to another form.

While on a residency at Kora Contemporary Arts Center in Lecce, Italy, Enkhtur was conceiving a new work about the Silver Tree of Karakorum, an infamously ostentatious drinking fountain embellished with silver lions and gilded serpents that gushed wine, mead, and milk in the Mongol Empire's 13th-century capital. His still gestating ideas reveal how nothing earthly is permanent, suggesting that it is, after all, better to be surrounded by formless souls than soulless forms.

NICOLE M. NEPOMUCENO

Nicole Coson
 LONDON/MANILA

To create her two-meter-tall *Exoskeleton* (2020–) canvases, Manila-born Nicole Coson covers sets of venetian blinds in monochromatic paint and rolls them through an etching press, indexing the entire object. The jagged slats in the resulting images caught my attention, and, getting closer, I found a captivating translucency to the individual bands. But beyond the printed



NICOLE COSON, *Untitled*, 2020, oil on canvas, 200 x 130 cm. Courtesy the artist and Silverlens Gallery, Manila

layer—nothing. *Exoskeleton* conjures windows that are generous in proportions but not so revealing in view, interplaying visibility and invisibility as tactics of control, evasion, and protection. These ideas had informed Coson's *Camouflage* (2017) series. Composed of overlaid, abstract forms, the earlier monographs explore the history of the titular pattern in the Philippines, where, in the late 19th century, American soldiers exchanged their navy uniforms for khaki gear, turning the land into insidious cover for their invasion.

The abstract shapes in *Camouflage* reappear in parts of the *Exeunt* (2019–20) collages that Coson presented at her graduation exhibition for her master's degree in painting at London's Royal College of Art. The series begins with a photo of the lush greenery in Coson's childhood garden in the Philippines; in the lower corner is a murky space distorted by digital noise, referencing the pond that Coson fell into before her late father rescued her. Coson cut duplicates of the photo into amorphous patches and reassembled them in increasingly abstract compositions. "Each completed collage becomes a part of a library, a personal catalogue of the same moment accessed differently," she explains in her artist statement. The garbled scenes reflect a time out of reach.

In *Bilao* (2020), Coson simultaneously looks to the past and future. Imprinted in black are the *bilao*, or shallow baskets, that the artist wove together from the slats initially utilized in *Exoskeleton*. The *bilao* has been used to serve food to large groups since the Philippines' precolonial era, and, for Coson, is a symbol of the country's cultural resilience and shared belief in the value of community. Upcycling a domestic device for privacy, the blind, into one for gathering, she peers through the connections severed during the pandemic, and underscores the relevance of togetherness long into the future.

CHLOE CHU

GENERAZIONE CRITICA

Teorie e pratiche
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CAMBIO DELLA GUARDIA | BEKHBAATAR ENKHTUR

Cambio della guardia (Changing of the guard) is an impermanent intervention that lived in the garden of Villa Giulia, a private residence in Bologna, in 2021. The artist Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, works with sculpture privileging the use of materials that can highlight their own fragility and transience, in search of an approach that guides the viewer's attention on a spiritual level of art.

With *Cambio della guardia*, the artist places a series of sculptures depicting lions in the garden of Villa Giulia, made by mixing uncooked clay with the material used for domestic animal bedding. The choice of this material and the title ironically winks at the role that is often entrusted to sculptures in villas and palaces. These small sculptures scattered in the garden of the private villa seem to make fun of the classic garden sculptures, replacing their strength and rigidity with the fragility of their essence. This uncooked clay, placed outdoors, without protections, is destined for progressive deterioration right from the initial stage of construction. The loss of the form given by the artist and the consequent disintegration on the ground coincides with a process of returning to the origins of the material itself and the fading of forms. This daily and no-noble material, ironically, takes away both form and function from the sacredness of art and its figures.

These new lions make possible this contemporary 'change of guard' of the classical sculptures: Bekhbaatar Enkhtur chooses these ephemeral forms in an attempt to replace the intrinsic historical memory in the monuments. A new memory is conceived in its becoming, which can be made by creating or destroying itself. History in the artist's work is no longer made through its stabilization, rather by seeking a dialogue between matter and forms, between human and natural.

The days pass and the lions lose their traits and connotations, abstracting themselves as if they shake off the illusion of the representation of reality: Enkhtur, showing the relativity of historical memory and its different images, elects the abstract and the mobile matter as a possible solution to create a spiritual link with the past of a place. The rigid commemorative sculptures can go to rest to make room for these shapeless mountains of clay, symbols of new representative canons.

Bekhbaatar Enkhtur

Leone, 2021, clumping litter (clay), six sculptures, dimensions about 80x40x40 cm each, installation views *Cambio della guardia*, curated by Gabriele Tosi e Filippo Tappi, Giardino storico di Villino Giulia, Bologna, © Courtesy the artist, photography by Gabriele Tosi

Culture Bologna

News

from 7 to May 9, 2021

@ LOCALEDUE - Historic garden of Villino Giulia

BEKHBAATAR ENKHTUR. CHANGE OF THE GUARD

installation | galleries and other exhibition spaces ART CITY Bologna 2021

In the confidentiality of the historic garden of the **Villino Giulia in Porta Saragozza**, **Localedue** presents **Change of the guard** of **Bekhbaatar Enkhtur**. On May 7 and 8, the artist's impermanent intervention showcases the fragile complexity of a monument, the relativity of the historical memory that sculpture preserves. The project is accompanied by a writing by **Fabrizio Lollini**.

Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, a **Mongolian**-born artist, already protagonist in the city at the **New Bread Oven** at the **MAMbo**, is a sculptor of ephemeral shapes. His creations, full of references to nomadic culture, demonstrate a careful look at the transience of the phenomena. They give life to a spiritual universe, where mystical animals merge with everyday elements and objects easing the artistic object from the typically Western weight of history.

Starting from this reading, Localedue invited Enkhtur to intervene around the **Genius of the Bonifica**, a statue of classical conception, "*male and strong figure of a worker with his head adorned with ears*". The artifact, made of concrete, is the work of the artist **Pasquale Rizzoli** (Bologna, April 9, 1871 - Bologna, 1953), best known for the **Monument to the Fallen** of Piazza VIII Agosto and for several achievements at the monumental historical cemetery of the **Certosa**. Other copies of the **Genius**, conceived around 1920, "vigorous and eventful", are found in Latina and in the courtyard adjacent to the **Medieval Civic Museum**, where Rizzoli had the studio. The monument of Rizzoli has been resting for over half a century in the garden of the Villino Giulia, resting on a leaning base for the yielding of the ground: an ironic condition that has ignited the interest of Enkhtur.

The nature of Enkhtur's intervention, which engages considerable amounts of clay, but leaving the earth fresh and therefore destined to be lost, does not allow the work a duration in time. The use of the project is therefore exceptional, limited to the days of ART CITY Bologna, reserving access to the public **only by reservation**, in compliance with the rules for the containment of the pandemic.

The event is also an opportunity to see the historic garden of the Villino Giulia up close. The architecture, built in 1888, is now a private residence. It presents an architectural style typical of the period, which from eclecticism looks at the impulses of Liberty by solving the forms in a synthesis devoted to naturalness. With its historic, contemporary garden, the villa is also a testimony to the urban works that at the end of the 1800s affected the whole area, giving Porta Saragozza its current appearance.

Cambio della guardia is a project entirely curated and produced by Localedue with the participation of the artist. It includes, in addition to the intervention, a cycle of drawings, a limited edition and a writing by Fabrizio Lollini (art historian, Professor of Medieval Art History at the University of Bologna). The will of the project, which is also to gather in the field and in the art community the diversity that history gives us, expands into a further collaboration.

On the same days and the following month, in fact, Enkhtur is also the protagonist at Marktstudio with the **Tsam**' staff accompanied by a text by Enrico Camprini. Marktstudio is a project and exhibition space that comes to life in a frame workshop in Via Don Minzoni, in front of the MAMbo.

Installation promoted and curated by Localedue



ARTCITY2021_Bekhbaatar_Enkhtur

Bekhbaatar Enkhtur, Change of the Guard. Courtesy Localedue