



Giorgio Distefano

*An exploration of matter,
visual memory and
systems of form*

by Matteo Chincarini

Giorgio Distefano's artistic production is part of a complex reflection on the relationships between iconographic tradition, the processual nature of the sign and the relationship between man and landscape. Originally from Sicily and now a long-time resident of Florence, the artist has developed a practice that draws on both of these territorial identities: on the one hand, the harsh and luminous Mediterranean dimension, and on the other, the historical and cultural context of the Tuscan capital, a symbolic place of constant dialogue between art and technical knowledge.

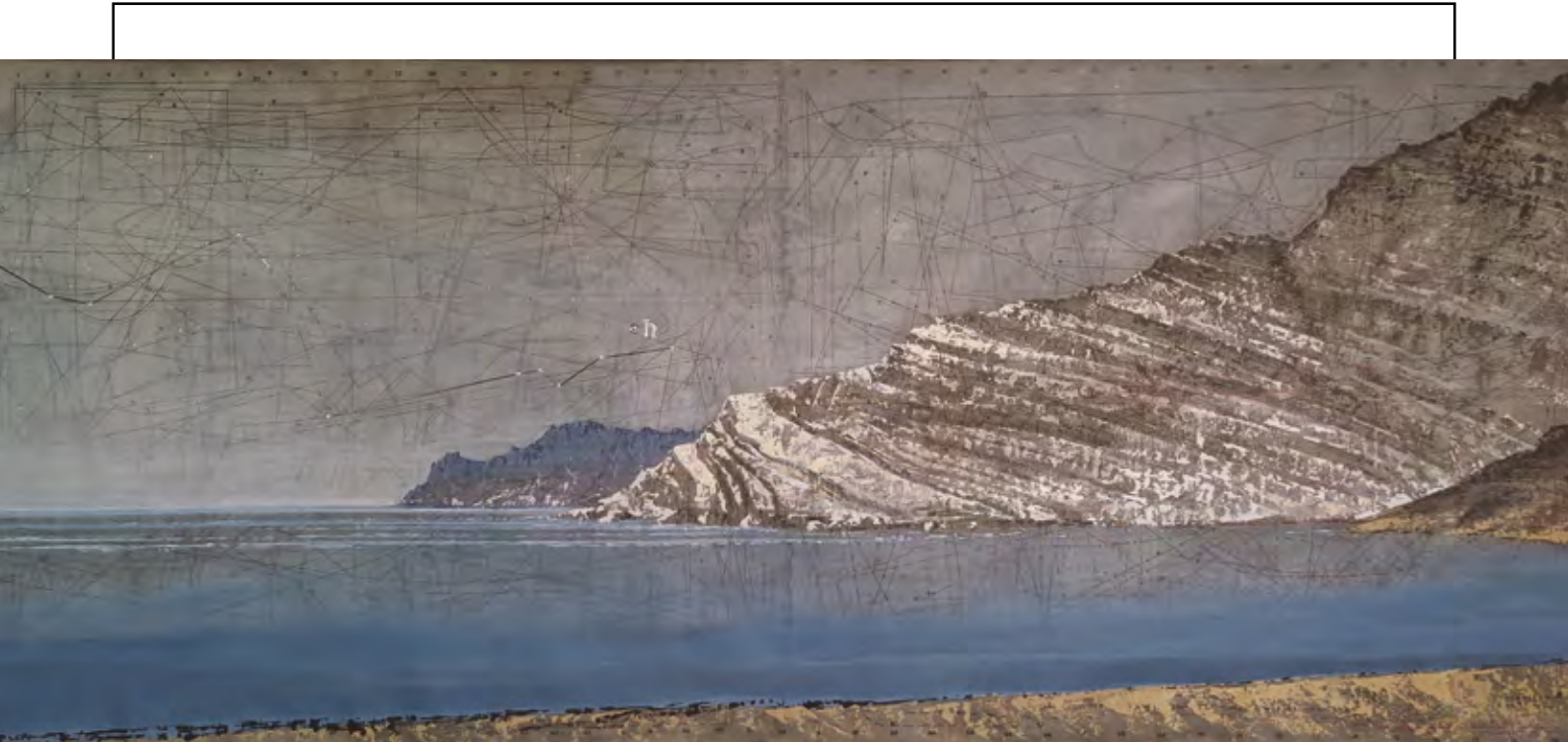
One of the most recognizable features of his research is the use of tailoring patterns as a pictorial support.

The choice of this material, which already carries a system of measurements and tracings, introduces a pre-existing level of structure that the artist takes as a conceptual starting point. The paper pattern, in fact, refers to manual skills, design and a tradition of work in which the body is imagined, constructed

and clothed through a functional design. Distefano enhances its nature as an "already connoted object", not as waste but as an element with its own memory, precious for its technical and emotional character. The result is an encounter between artistic form and design form, in which the lines of the paper pattern guide and at the same time interfere with the pictorial gesture, producing a continuous play of adherence and deviation from the original outline.



Agata, 2022, mixed media on pattern paper, gold, silver and copper leaf, 56 x 42 cm.
Courtesy of Galleria Spazionoto, Noto (SR)



Astrocartography of Libra with Saturn at the Scala dei Turchi in July 2024, mixed media on pattern paper, 82 x 182 cm. Courtesy of Galleria Sacca, Modica (RG)



Giorgio 2022, mixed media on mounted pattern paper, 56 x 42 cm. Courtesy of Galleria Sacca, Modica (RG)



Aurelio 2024, mixed media on mounted pattern paper, silver leaf, 95 x 75 cm. Courtesy of the artist



Head of Canicarao 2025, semi-refractory chamotte, 36 x 28 x 27 cm. Courtesy of Galleria Spazionoto, Noto (SR)



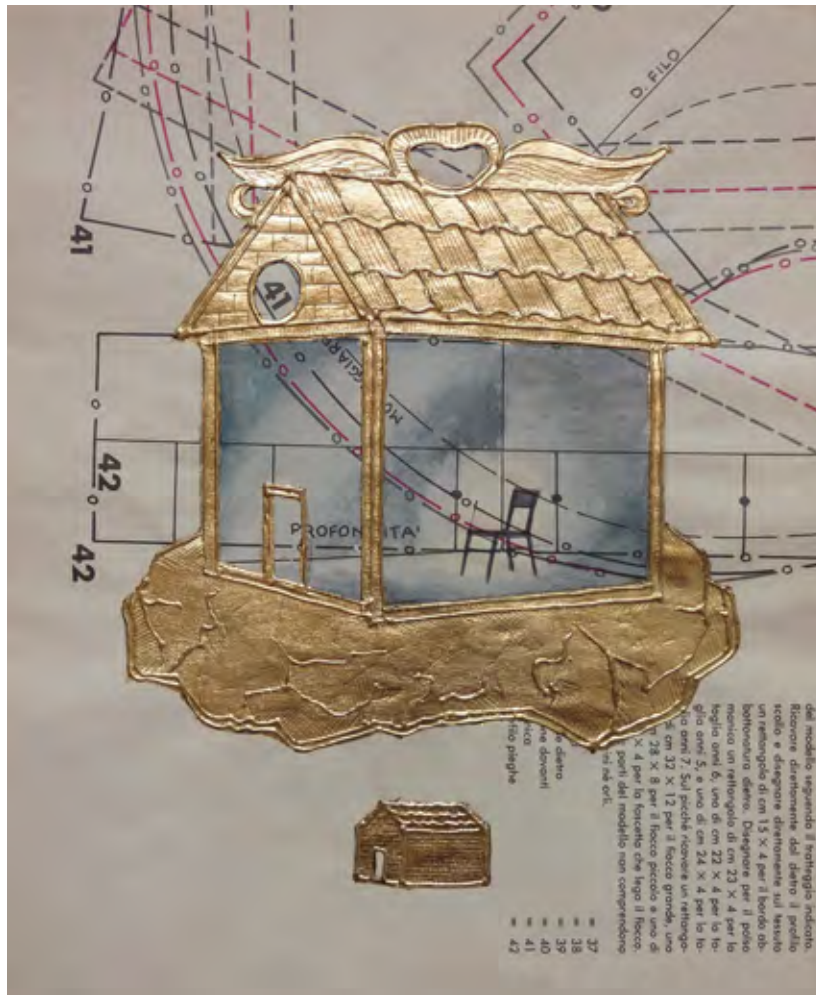
Head of Canicarao 2025, semi-refractory chamotte, 36 x 23 x 26 cm. Courtesy of Galleria Spazionoto, Noto (SR)

Within this medium, the artist places figures drawn from the sacred iconographic tradition and the repertoire of ancient portraiture: saints, emperors, mythical or historical figures. His is not an operation of devotional or celebratory recovery. Rather, it is a reflection on the persistence of figurative models in the collective memory. The figures are not defined in detail; they remain outlines, essential profiles, empty backgrounds that do not seek an illusion of presence but an evocative function. This visual strategy generates a particular kind of distance: the image appears recognizable but undefined, close but incomplete.

The result is a form of secular iconoclasm that is not programmatic but emerging, questioning the relationship between image and meaning and the threshold within which a subject can be identified or merely remembered.

In parallel with this research on the figure, Distefano develops an equally significant body of work on landscape, particularly on the quarries and rocks of his native land. In his paintings dedicated to these scenarios, the artist observes the territory as a place of stratification, extraction and transformation. The quarries are not represented as uncontaminated natural spaces, but as territories shaped by human intervention: clean cuts, rough surfaces and geometries created by machines constitute the visual texture of a deeply anthropised landscape. However, the intense light and the material quality of the stones, white, shiny and dry, also make these places fields of investigation into primary form, into what remains when the landscape is reduced to its essential elements.

For Distefano, matter is not only a subject but also a metaphor for a process of research. Stones, rocks



Ex Voto - House, 2016
 mixed media on paper,
 25 x 19 cm.
 Courtesy of Galleria
 Cartavetra, Florence (FI)

and excavations refer to a need to “go deep”, to confront what is original. In this sense, his landscape work stands as a meditation on the dialectic between nature and technical intervention; a relationship of necessity and conflict that is not interpreted in a moralistic key but analysed in its structural complexity. Man modifies matter to obtain what he needs, but at the same time becomes part of it, since the landscape shaped by his actions becomes an extension of his identity.

This reflection is further developed in his three-dimensional works, particularly in the heads that emerge from natural matter. In these sculptures, Distefano revisits a typically Renaissance

iconographic and workshop tradition: the human figure gradually freeing itself from the block of stone. The artist does not offer a nostalgic reinterpretation, but uses this reference as a tool to investigate the relationship between form and support.

The heads appear as presences in the process of formation, entities seeking space and identification. They are not complete figures, but elements in transition, revealing the tension between what the material potentially contains and what the artist’s gesture brings to the surface.

This relationship between anthropomorphic nature and the sculptural process allows Di Stefano to work



Ex Voto - Heart of Canicrao, 2023 mixed media on pattern paper, silver leaf, 25 x 19 cm. Courtesy of the artist



Canicarao Acropolis, 2023
 monotype and acrylic
 tempera on lined Korean
 paper, 28 x 28 cm.
 Courtesy of Galleria
 Cartavetra, Florence (FI)



Study of Mother Quarry, 2018
 mixed media on glue-primed
 linen canvas, 90 x 90 cm.
 Courtesy of Galleria
 Cartavetra, Florence (FI)



Motionless Transit, 2022, mixed media on glue-primed linen canvas, 100 x 120 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

on a duality that runs through his entire production: on the one hand, matter as an original and resistant terrain, on the other, the figure as an attempt at definition and emergence. The reference to Renaissance models is therefore not stylistic, but methodological: the idea of form as a progressive conquest, as the result of a dynamic confrontation with the material.

In short, Giorgio Di Stefano's artistic philosophy can be read as a reflection on form in a broad sense: form as iconographic tradition, as design, as a given structure, as a transformed landscape, as a figure in potential. His practice connects seemingly

distant visual fields, paper patterns, iconographic sacredness, landscape geology, and sculpture in progress, through a coherent approach based on the connection between memory, matter, and process.

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