

Sculptures with Wind

"Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks!"

King Lear (Act 3, Scene 2), William Shakespeare

Let's take the gust of wind as a pretext. In contrast to the traditional legacy of sculpture—historically tied to monumental verticality—the pieces we see here are toppled or tilted, defying the structural logic of their genre, whose stability has typically relied on bases and pedestals, along with gravity anchoring the sculptural body to the ground. In Erika Verzutti's trajectory, a certain precarious stability had already been explored in works that challenge their own balance, especially in those where paintbrushes, soda cans, and high heels serve as unlikely supports. The play with gravity also appeared in the reliefs that ambiguously support eggs, stones, and other elements in vertical suspension.

Now, by presenting unstable versions of pieces belonging to continuously evolving series, Verzutti seems to ironize the effects of turbulent forces acting upon her own work. It is as if, by toppling them, she is also saying that there is nothing edifying to be seen—aligned with the unpretentious perspective of a practice that rejects moral conclusions, pomp, and grandiloquent discourse, even while still showing a certain appreciation for erudition through varied references. Despite her de-dramatizing approach, generally attuned to the filters of humor, Verzutti also engages in a dialogue with the sublime—a strand concerned with storms that exceed the limits of reason and form, heading toward the boundless, the safe terror of contemplation from afar, and that which fascinates and frightens at once.

But nothing is truly at risk. Perhaps these are more like sculptures in italics—a typographic device used to highlight the titles of works, thoughts, foreign words, anything that breaks away from the body of the text in search of singularity, much like the hand that leaves its imprint on clay. If at the beginning of her trajectory the artist sought to raise forms ("I was always trying to make a swan or a dinosaur; shapes that represented the essential vertical movement of clay upward"), now the Brancusian columns, whose forms evoke ostrich eggs, seem to long for collapse. What emerges is a curious ambiguity: on one hand, the organic element, used as a mold, is elevated to the condition of a permanent thing, bronzed. On the other hand, the piece does not encounter lofty nobility, but the threat to its permanence through a kind of conceptual wind, as if some measure of rebellion must be ensured.

In a way, the exhibition's theme also connects to a present-day cultural dimension, as toppled sculptures have begun to permeate both our imagination and our reality—fueled by debates surrounding the permanence or removal of public monuments dedicated to celebrating figures of power. This is a time preoccupied with bringing things down; with producing gusts strong enough to unseat the monumental body.

Turbulence, then, also carries social contours and expresses itself beyond the formal device of tilting. In recent years—especially since the Bolsonaro administration and the pandemic—the presence of newspaper in the artist's work has shifted from being merely mass and material ("I like knowing I can make practically anything in a day using just shredded newspaper and glue," she would say) to becoming subject matter or a direct element.¹ In *News with Rust* (2025), the newspaper appears as a direct allusion to the Cubists—masters at turning these bearers of bad news into a source of

¹ Here's lies curious nod to the beginning of her work, when in the 2000s the artist made vases out of paper collected at the gallery where she worked, displaying receipts, bills, and other transactions from her environment.s

ambiguous experimentation, oscillating between factuality and abstraction. In *Cocoa Tower with News* (2025), newspapers are literally stacked, forming a base that supports nothing (what purpose do printed newspapers still serve, after all?).

On the papier-mâché surface of *Idealistic Peacock* (2025), a strikingly uninhibited piece, we see collages with fragments of The Beatles and Pink Floyd, as if the pulp structuring the work had regurgitated remnants of a printed pop culture—forming the visual diary of a teenager who listens to rock, wears makeup, and prefers pink and lilac. At its top, the presence of spatulas and brushes—recurrent in other works—reinforces a taste for vectors, fan-shaped arrangements, and plumages that reference the studio vocabulary, turning the peacock into a hybrid of artwork, artist, and laboratory—three conditions of a mutual engendering.

The incompleteness and provisionality expressed here—which further enhance the work's tactile dimension—are characteristic of an oeuvre that insists on preserving a non-specialist stance. This is marked by the reach of its technical experimentation, the continual exploration of different styles and genres of sculpture (especially in dialogue with painting), and the occasional interest in forming partnerships with other artists. "Sometimes I like to play with styles, to make something that looks like someone else's work, to try to understand what that language is like. If style didn't exist, how would we work?" she said in an interview.

For Verzutti, the interest in form must be connected to the extracts of cultural life; figuration, when it appears, occupies a place of critical and unpretentious self-reflexivity, often staging itself in a playful exchange between different cultural hierarchies. Her discursivity is therefore robust, built into the very surface of the materials, without shying away from revealing its method—the way it becomes what it is—moving back and forth in forming and unforming visible shapes.

Running counter to the negative stance that believes in some kind of outside to the world, the artist's work is unafraid to draw everything in—the ancestral time of clay (and the assured, indexical presence of the hand), the arrogance and permanence of bronze, the casualness and freedom of papier-mâché, the rawness of concrete—all of which often lend their properties to one another², in a gesture of defiance toward any supposed material truth. In this process, the work becomes a vehicle for crossing not only distinct material attributes but also symbolic realms and classes—from art to nature to social life.

Therefore, we do not mean a taste for formless fantasy or even delirious imagination, but an ability to be, above all, worldly—connecting jackfruit and makeup, Brancusi and swan, Ramones and cucumber, Venus and rice, and viral internet images. If the reliefs presented here took specific paintings as their starting point—storms by Turner, Constable, Antônio Parreiras, among others—their final forms owe nothing to their sources.

Such elasticity and irreverence find an organizing logic in what Verzutti calls "families"—groupings of works based on shared imagery and materiality. Moreover, within the realm of language, differences are accommodated through analogy—the capacity to combine codes so that parts of one thing coexist with parts of another, provoking and suggesting, intentionally or not, the interconnectedness of their structures. In doing so, Verzutti asserts an ambiguity that resists any singular interpretation, stripping the work of its status as a mere message-bearer.

² By way of example, in the bronze reliefs, the casting of the clay forms, along with the patina and paint applied afterward, give rise to unimaginable effects for the metal alloy.

What results is not denunciation, moral superiority, conflict resolution, or any celebratory tone. What endures is an enigmatic disturbance, born of a whole that does not coincide with its parts. And if something does speak from within this absurd disarray, her sculptures also serve as a reminder that tactility is non-negotiable—intrinsic to things felt and groped for in the fog.

Pollyana Quintella