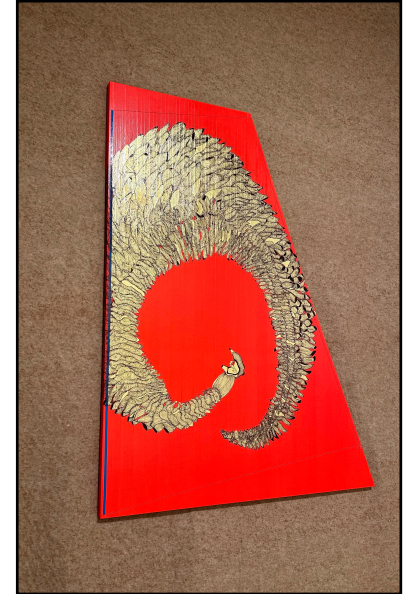


**Richard Saltoun Atelier dell'Errore: *Die Werkstatt***  
**18 January-2 March 2024**

Walking down Via Margutta, passing a large storefront with dying pomegranates in the window, suitcases being dragged down the uneven cobblestone, cars squeezing by, men carrying large canvas' wrapped in newsprint, and chain smoking. To enter Richard Saltoun, I must pass through this street before a set of large glass doors transport me into the glaring white gallery from the ancient street outside, sealing off all natural noise and elements. Once inside, I am hurtled into the future. Greeted by overhead light, shimmering from the wall draws me right in like a moth. The space is silent—I hear everyone fidget around me, amplifying my already attuned senses.

This is the first exhibition in Rome for the collective Atelier dell'Errore (AdE), *Die Werkstatt*. A visual arts and performance collective, born in 2002 and functioning publicly as a unit of ten people since 2015. Each artist of AdE specializes in one area of each collaborative project; no decision or movement is made without the consent of the group. They began working together as children, and as they developed into adults, decided they wanted this project to blossom.

These pieces were birthed from a 22-meter gold leaf frieze *Die Goldkammer*, produced by AdE on a wall of Palazzo Torlonia, after the north side of the Palazzo was destroyed by fire in 1991. A quiet question burns inside me as I begin, starting with *Alberiaide Anellante Orato*, the large gold figure at the entrance, encased by an artificial red background: who survives the apocalypse?



Alberiaide Anellante Orato, 2020. Metal leaf, black marker and blue tape on AdE-TEX mounted on wooden frame and LuxePad backdrop. 180 x 135 cm (with LuxPad in variable sizes). Photograph by Victoria Froberg



Guardiano Dell'Ade: Khopesh Scalpato, 2019. Pencil, black marker, orange marker, gold metallic ink on paper. Photograph by Victoria Froberg

When society continuously denies structures needed for basic survival, one learns how to forge something different, from fire if necessary. That first figure on exhibition, created using gold leaf— a notoriously delicate and tedious material— as well as pencil, coils into a spiral towards the center of the canvas. Like the other pieces in the exhibition, each creature on display by AdE has countless pods that exist within it, ecosystems buried inside. Every member of the collective is neurodivergent and/or disabled. They are not offering explanations but showing—they have elevated themselves among the ruin, among the ashes like phoenix. “Pod mapping”, a theory coined by Mia Mingus, is a survival strategy utilized by disabled, neurodiverse, and chronically ill communities to quite literally re-draw your support systems. AdE has built pods everywhere.

This is an offering of a new world, and AdE's centering of fantasy is hopeful, imagining animal hybrids and organisms mid transition. This does not feel like a unique concept to come by as a marginalized person in the world. But to experience it centered on Via Margutta does feel like an intentional decision on the part of the curator, Eva Brioschi. I am crawling through my own grief as these artists challenge

this venue, my own discomfort obvious as I am made to look at bugs, presented with gilded insects. *Guardiano Dell'Ade: Khopesh Scalpato*, a diptych of two scarabs in a series of golden beetles, extend pincers for the earth. Small red veins travel through them like a power-cord amongst their grid system, witnessing them shift. Forced to navigate through the many complex systems of this world, and still, they grow larger.

After the fire of Palazzo Torlonia, the only remains among the ash were gold spheres. Just like the hints of the final painting, the gold emerges more clearly the further I make my way down the long room. A swirling, all encompassing spiral— I dub her “mother”. At her center, an eye filled with cells has been watching me the entire time. She begins to entice me with fantasies of a new world, absorbing and reflecting back my own experiences of rebirth. As I look around, I realize I am in a room full of suggestions on how to build utopia. I am being given a glimpse into how a chosen family has not only survived—but created opportunities to live. There is no shying away from vulnerabilities, the choice of gold is intentional: soft, malleable, and will change overtime, just like the human form.



Grande Cellula Madre, 2020. Gold leaf, pencil, black marker and orange marker on paper. 50 x 140 cm. Photograph by Victoria Froberg

In the final room, which I could have almost missed, the lights are dimmed, the space is cramped. I feel the hollowness of isolation creep back in, empty without the pods. The pieces are framed, small, and appear intentionally incomplete—no gold—have I entered the cell? I can begin to envision the formation of the next animal. There is collective labor required for survival, but there is also beauty. There is incredible power in visibility. What new organisms do we want to become? Does this require we abandon parts of ourselves completely?