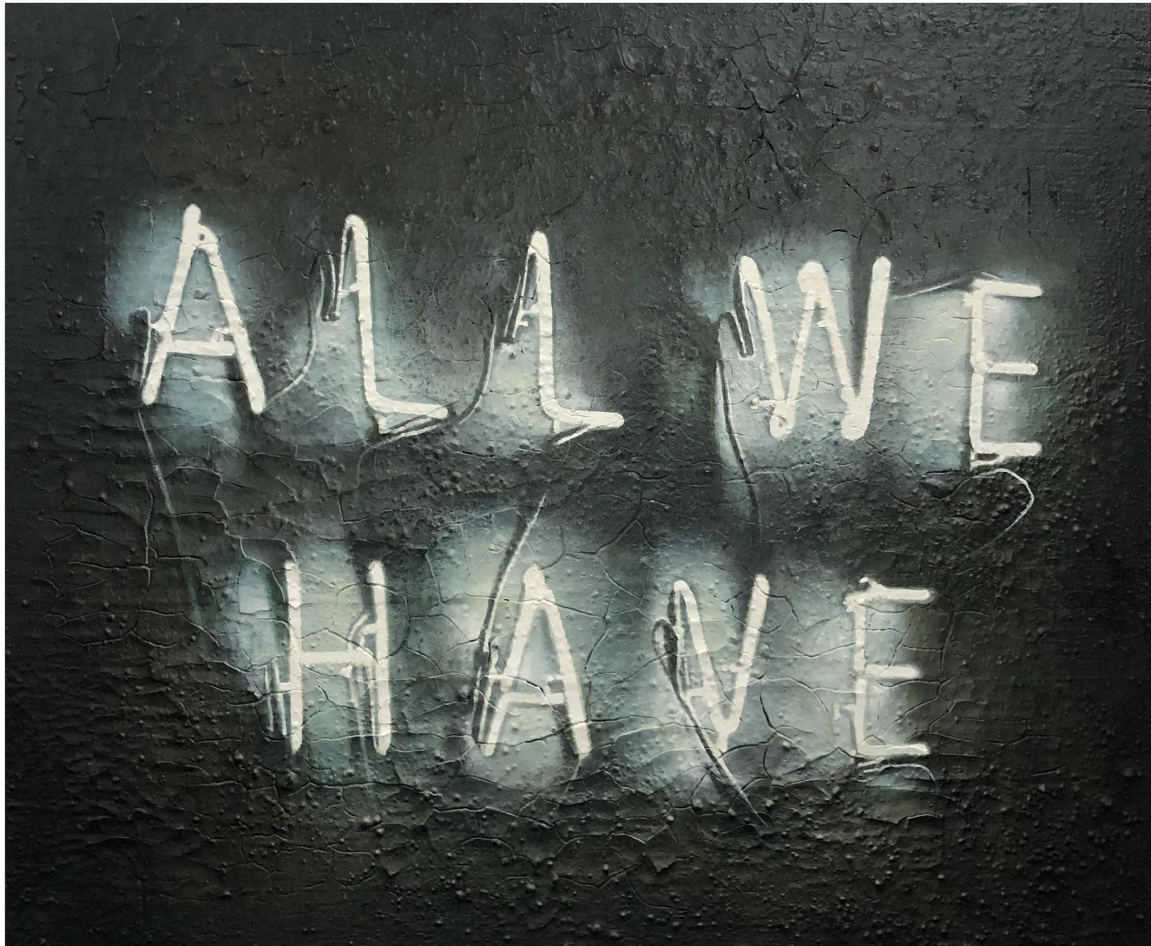


FILIPPO SCIASCIA: ALL WE HAVE

*Exhibition dates: 6 March – 10 April 2021*



Filippo Sciascia  
All We Have, 2019  
Gesso, oil on canvas  
120 x 100 cm

Yeo Workshop is pleased to present "All We Have", its second solo exhibition of the works of Bali-based Italian artist Filippo Sciascia.

The present exhibition features both mixed media paintings and sculptures that represent a continuation of Sciascia's abiding interest in light, and an exploration of the material and motific forms that one of the most fundamental elements of our universe may be embodied in. For the artist, light - and, of course, energy - constitutes the evolution of life and human civilization as we know it, playing a transformative role in the development of mankind's technological ascendancy.

As he puts it: "All of the energy on Earth originates from the Sun throughout history. Today we still generate electricity from fossil fuels, which are the remains of plants and animals that lived millennia ago - when, for the first time, we also had the idea of making a graphic mark with charcoal from burned wood, forever changing the way we communicate. What we were creating was a language that marks the foundation of our civilization, just like today's computer language."

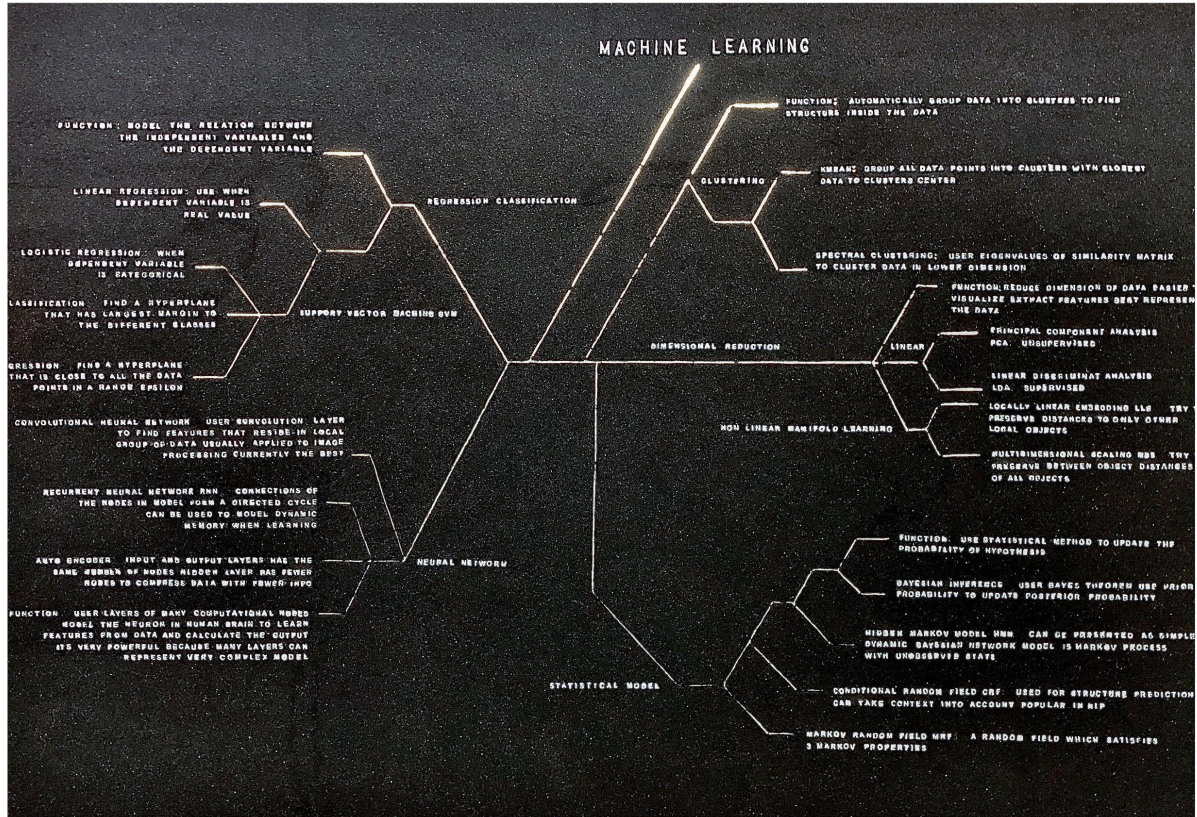
Featured in the exhibition are works that utilize volcanic sand and quartz, both materials from which silicon, and thus computer chips and other high-tech hardware, are ultimately derived; paintings that incorporate LED lights into their compositions, replacing the technique of chiaroscuro with actual light; works that are made from fossilized amber, a material that serves as a fossil record of our natural universe. Sciascia's work encompasses various histories, and the role that light has played in them: the history of evolution, the history of technology, the history of communication and, of course, the history of art.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Filippo Sciascia (b. 1972, Italy) is an Italian artist based in Bali, Indonesia. He studied art at the Institute of Art, Nordio, Trieste and Fine Arts Academy, Florence, in Italy. His most recent exhibition with Yeo Workshop was GODSPEED in 2019. He has had solo exhibitions in various venues in Italy, USA and Southeast Asia such as Sarang I, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (2016);

National Archaeological Museum of Naples, Italy (2013), Museum Castel Dell' Ovo, Naples (2012); Langgeng Art Foundation, Yogyakarta (2011); 54th Exposition Venice Biennale (2011); National University of Singapore Museum (2010); Galleria Poggiali Firenze in Pietrasanta and Milan (2010); Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur (2009). Over many years, Sciascia has explored the pictorial tensions between painting and imaging technology of the new era, challenging the art of painting as a practice. Choosing photographic imagery to re-depict on canvas, Sciascia captures the transitional process from one medium to another in an amalgamation of pixels, lines and forms. The emphasis on the process in his work rather than on the object demands a profound understanding of the character and history of each media. Sciascia demonstrates this knowledge through his consistent and loyal struggle with the challenges of representation and reality.





Filippo Sciascia  
Machine Learning, 2020  
Volcanic black sand, fossilized resin, led lights, wood  
175 x 120 cm





Installation view of Machine Learning

## ABOUT THIS WORK

The chief constituent of *"Machine Learning"* (2020) is a panel encrusted with black volcanic sand, a material widely available in Bali, where Sciascia is based. Set into the tactile, granular surface of the panel is a diagram that maps out the components of machine learning, composed of hundreds of letters and lines cast from fossilized resin. Machine learning is a form of artificial intelligence, a vernacular term for algorithms that are premised on the use of statistics to track patterns in large amounts of data, and thus able to analyse and predict user behaviour; models of machine learning are utilized by search engines and social media feeds, as well as recommendation programs on streaming services. Here, medium and motif collide: the immateriality of advanced computer systems - of mechanical cognition - is belied by a substance that provides the material basis of computer hardware. Sand, of course, is one of the sources of silicon, mined from the earth as silica sand or quartz, and used in the making of technological hardware such as microchips, memory cards and other components of integrated circuits. Sciascia is interested in the biological starting points of contemporary technology, and its origins in natural materials that were often formed millennia ago – the intersection of the digital and the mineral, the relentlessly contemporary and the occluded primitive.

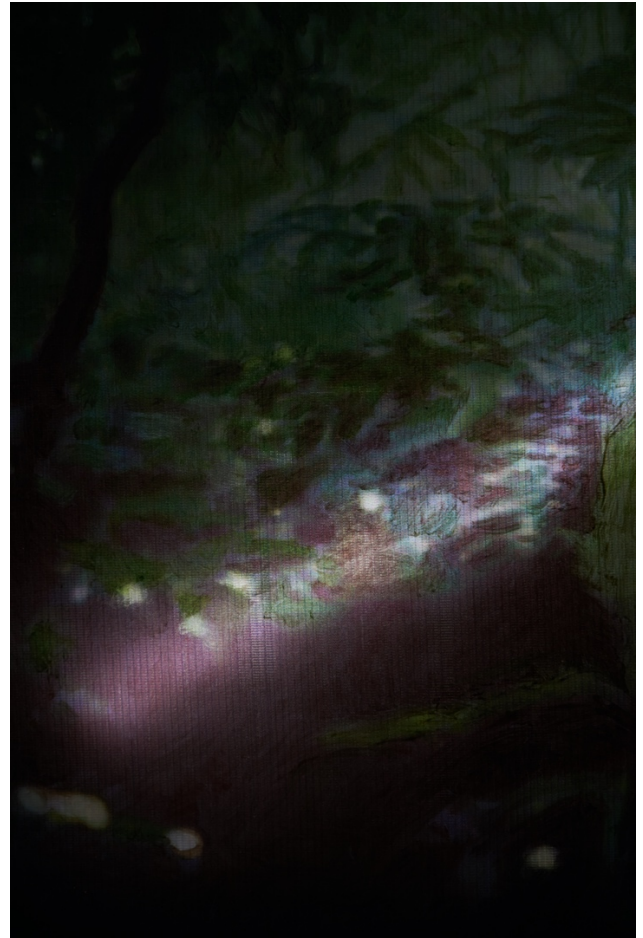






Filippo Sciascia  
Phylogenetic, 2019  
Oil on synthetic canvas and LED light  
88 x 152 cm





From left to right:

Installation view, Filippo Sciascia, *Phylogenetic*, 2019

Detail, Filippo Sciascia, *Phylogenetic*, 2019



Filippo Sciascia  
*Primitive Mornings*, 2019  
Fossilised resin aluminium, electric cable  
150 x 170 cm



Filippo Sciascia  
*Primitive Mornings (details), 2019*







From top to bottom:

Filippo Sciascia, *Primitive Mornings (detail)*, 2019

Installation view of Filippo Sciascia, *Primitive Mornings*, 2019



Filippo Sciascia  
*Clorofilliana*, 2020  
Gesso, oil on canvas  
44 x 57 cm





From left to right:  
Installation view, *Primitive Mornings* and *Clorofilliana*  
Filippo Sciascia, *Clorofilliana (detail)*, 2020





Filippo Sciascia  
*Lux Lumina*, 2020  
Gesso, oil on canvas  
41 x 29 cm



Installation view



Filippo Sciascia  
*Lux Lumina (details)*, 2020

## ABOUT THE WORKS:

*Phylogenetic*, 2019

Oil on synthetic canvas and LED light

*Primitive Mornings*, 2019

Fossilised resin aluminium, electric cable

*Lux Lumina*, 2020

Gesso, oil on canvas

*Clorofilliana*, 2020

Gesso, oil on canvas

The quartet of works here are a continuation of Sciascia's abiding interest in the materiality, the production and the metaphorical language of light. The representation of light has a long lineage in Western art history: in a break with the use of light as an analogy for divine grace in the Middle Ages, the archetypal Renaissance man, Leonardo da Vinci, is credited as being the first artist - and scientist - to analyze the optical properties of light and to depict its effects empirically. The dramatic dimensions of the technique known as *chiaroscuro*, which used the contrasts of light and shadow to create powerful psychological and atmospheric affects on the canvas, would flower in the work of Caravaggio, and, following him, during the Baroque era. Following that, the explorations of light's effects took new modes of realism during the Enlightenment, and, later in the nineteenth century, in the tableaux of the Impressionists, which foregrounded the optical subjectivities of light. *Lux Lumina*, for instance, is an oil painting based on a late eighteenth-century lithograph illustrating a meteorite exploding as it entered the earth's atmosphere. In referencing historical imagery involving light, Sciascia evokes both the history of the representation of light in art - the corona of linear rays here recalls another famous example, that seen in Bernini's sculpture of *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* - as well as an era, before the advent of recording technology, when scientific imaging was achieved through artistic rendering.

*Phylogenetic* and *Primitive Mornings* are emblematic of the development of light art in the twentieth century, from the fluorescent tubes of Dan Flavin to James Turrell's more recent spatial installations, as well as the work of Italian artist, Mario Merz, whose influence Sciascia acknowledges. The latter describes the use of actual light in his practice: "It's light that feeds the eye. In our century, we understood the energy - including light - that electricity can generate, and it is from that development that I had the idea to use energy itself, by incorporating electricity into my paintings. If I use oil paint or other media, my work will never have the properties and effects of natural light." *Phylogenetic* is a painting of a wooded terrain, the Stygian forest illuminated by a strip of LED lights placed behind the canvas, positioned to resemble, of course, a



slanting shaft of sunlight. According to the artist, the work may be read within a particular tradition of landscape painting in Western art history - one that substitutes the typical portrayal of bucolic woods with a lush, tropical jungle, foregrounding the biological matter of plant life and replacing the depiction of light with an actual light source, suggesting natural processes of energy production involving sunlight, i.e. photosynthesis.

*Primitive Mornings* seems at first glance to be a hybrid of minimalist sculpture and light art, but carved into a piece of fossilized resin is the eponymous phrase, which reveals the conceptual underpinnings of the piece. Sciascia's *Primitive Mornings* series returns to the originary moments of human evolution and civilization, inquiring into the symbiotic development of our technological and biological structures. (All works in the series are similarly titled.) Here, small, lighted cables have also been tied to the panel to evoke the presence of electricity. The work references the recent discovery of a strain of bacterial life, *Desulfobulbaceae*, living in sediment on the ocean floor, that is capable of conducting electric currents through its filament-shaped morphology. The use of ridged aluminium siding recalls the surfaces of these cable-shaped bacteria, but also alludes to the fact that aluminium, in its raw form, is found in the earth's crust in an ore, bauxite; most bauxite deposits occur in geological strata of considerable age.

Like *Phylogenetic*, *Clorofilliana* takes as its chief motif the use of light, albeit without the inclusion of light itself. Here, the depiction of biological life - both fauna (a leaf insect) and flora (the plant it mimics and feeds on) - allude to the fact that light, through the process of photosynthesis, is the ultimate source of existence.



Filippo Sciascia  
*Xuanlong*, 2020  
Volcanic sand and resin  
47 x 34 x 5 cm

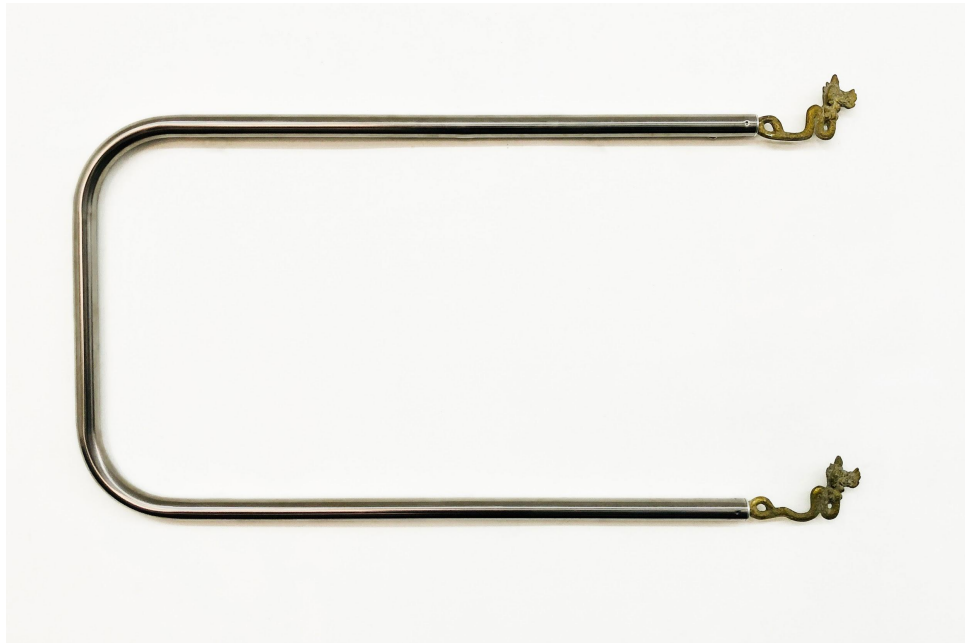


Installation views of Filippo Sciascia *Xuanlong*, 2020, Volcanic sand and resin, 47 x 34 x 5 cm





Filippo Sciascia, *Xuanlong (details)*, 2020



Filippo Sciascia  
*Xuanlong*, 2020  
Stainless steel, bronze  
99 x 52 cm



From left to right: Filippo Sciascia, *Xuanlong* (details & installation view), 2020





Details, Filippo Sciascia, *Xuanlong*, 2020  
Stainless steel, balinese wood dragon, quartz stalactite, 29 x 22 x 7.5 cm



Installation Views, Filippo Sciascia, *Xuanlong*, 2020  
Stainless steel, balinese wood dragon, quartz stalactite, 29 x 22 x 7.5 cm

## ABOUT THE WORKS

*Xuanlong*, 2020

Volcanic sand and resin

*Xuanlong*, 2020

Stainless steel, bronze

*Xuanlong*, 2020

Stainless steel, balinese wood dragon, quartz

Informing much of Sciascia's work is an interest in the hoary origins of civilization's contemporary technological and cultural systems. Here, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's paradigm of the social lives of things, or the "thing-in-motion", provides an apropos theoretical framework: "For that we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things. Thus, even though from a *theoretical* point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a *methodological* point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context."

The cultural biography of the object, then, reveals a broad economy of utility that may encompass varied forms of use. The artist's *Xuanlong* series is premised on objects and matter in motion, things that acquire new significance in purposive juxtapositions with other things; his works inflect the socio-cultural biographies of these objects, reconfiguring their semantic registers as much as their material ones. The first *Xuanlong* piece is a wall-bound sculpture that assumes the form of a dragon's head with a gaping maw, fabricated from a mixture of volcanic black sand and resin. The piece was cast using a readymade silicone mold that Sciascia acquired from a local workshop in Bali, where he is based; the casting process was accomplished without the use of the support shell that is usually required for even medium-sized objects, and resulted in the deliberate deformation of the sculpture's original shape. Here, the dovetailing of form and medium may be located in the myth of Naga Besukih, the dragon of Balinese lore that is said to reside in the crater of the island's volcano, Mount Agung, that remains active today. The etiological linking of volcanic activity and mythical beast finds, in Sciascia's hands, a correspondence in the recreation of draconian iconography from volcanic black sand, an imbrication of cause and effect. The brilliant corn-yellow of the wall on which the work hangs also proffers historical reference: it immediately recalls



the regal hue of Chinese imperial culture, but also the use of gold in Byzantine art - as well as, according to the artist, Vincent van Gogh's famous sunflowers.

The other *Xuanlong* works consist of assemblages of various found objects. The larger piece includes two diminutive bronze dragon sculptures affixed to an U-shaped length of stainless steel pipe; the sculptures were originally part of a Balinese incense burner. The smaller work likewise features a piece of steel piping, albeit of reduced dimensions, and a wooden sculpture of a Balinese dragon's head, which once adorned a walking stick - and from whose mouth emits a coral-shaped stalactite of cream-coloured quartz ore, resembling, of course, draconian flames. Sciascia observes: "These works combine the mythological symbolism of the dragon and its association with fire, with stainless steel - one of the highest achievements in technology's historical process, which began in the Stone and Bronze Ages, until our industries were revolutionized by its development. In one of the sculptures, the dragon has a piece of mineral stalactite in his mouth as if it was fire, but the quartz stalactite is another geological element in its primitive state, formed as well by heat (fire)."

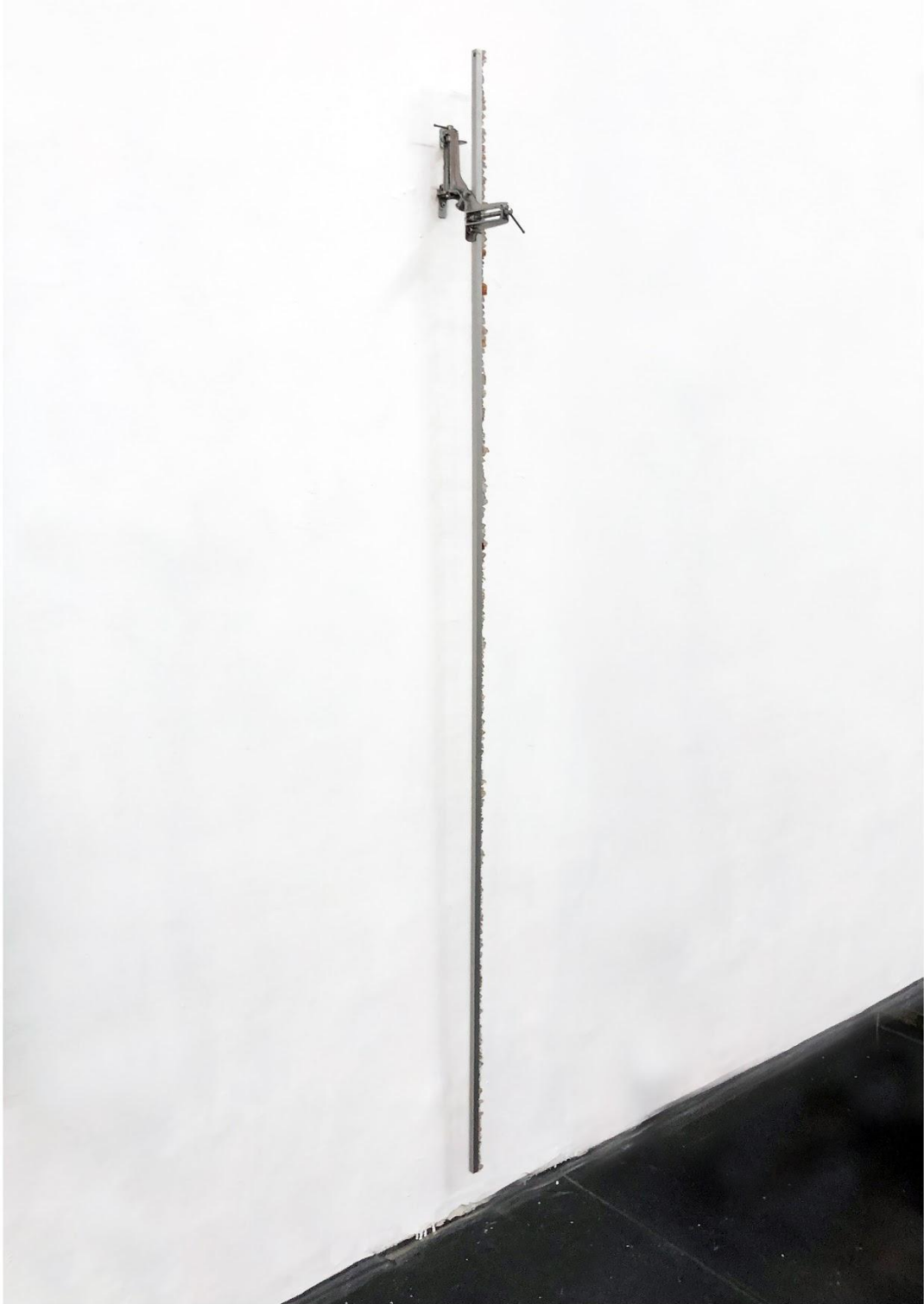


Filippo Sciascia  
*Crescita Tecno Organica*, 2020  
Resin, aluminium, iron  
300 x 8 x 2.5 cm



Filippo Sciascia, *Crescita Tecno Organica* (detail & Installation Views), 2020





Filippo Sciascia  
*Untitled, 2020*  
Mineral quartz stone, steel, aluminium  
200 x 19.5 x 3 cm



Filippo Sciascia, *Untitled* (detail & Installation Views), 2020



Filippo Sciascia  
*Primitive Mornings, 2020*  
Pulverised amber fossil and resin, organic leaf  
16 x 15 x 12 cm





Installation views of *Primitive Mornings*



Filippo Sciascia  
*Untitled*, 2020  
Fossilized shell  
12 x 9.5 x 5.5 cm



Detail, Filippo Sciascia, *Untitled*, 2020



## ABOUT THE WORKS

*Crescita Tecno Organica, 2020*

Resin, aluminium, iron

*Untitled, 2020*

Mineral quartz stone, steel, aluminium

*Primitive Mornings, 2020,*

Pulverised amber fossil and resin, organic leaf

*Untitled, 2020*

Fossilised shell

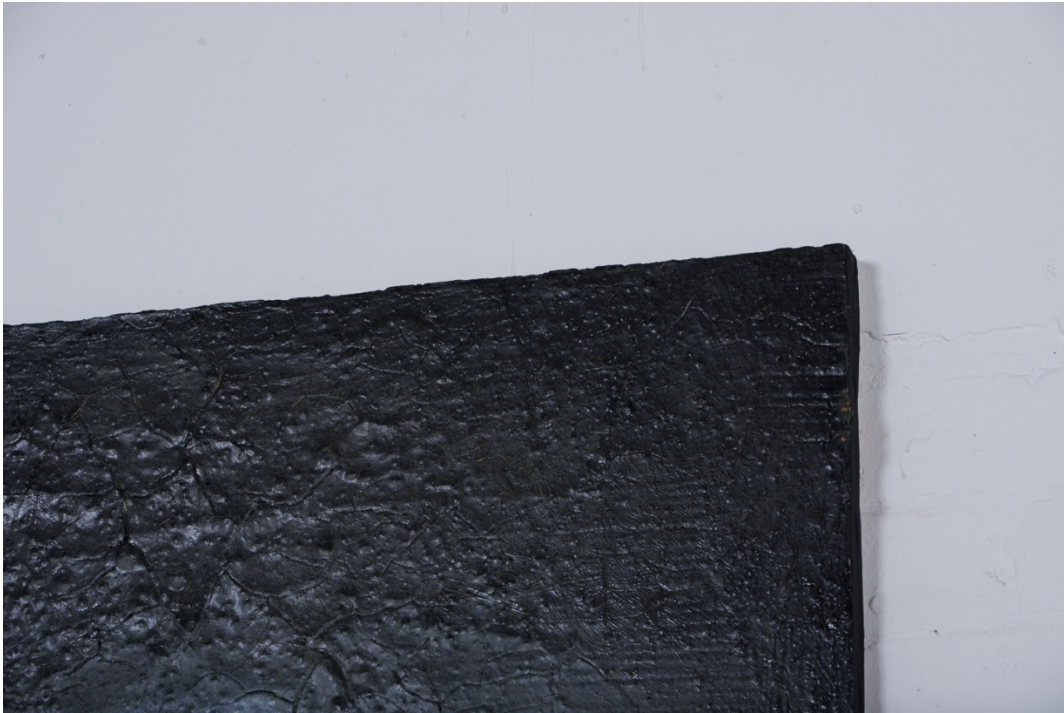
French historian Fernand Braudel's theory of the *longue duree* - literally, the long duration - is premised on the divergent speed of different timescales. For Braudel, the processes of geological, social and individual human development marches to different drumbeats. The *longue duree* frames environmental and societal trajectories in broad temporal contexts, juxtaposing the ponderous rhythm of geological time against the comparatively more rapid shifts of human civilization, and exploring the effects of material conditions on the course of history. The *Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, for instance, published in 1972, is concerned with the evolution of the natural environs of the Mediterranean basin, with its mountains and plains, seas and rivers, roads and towns. *Memory and the Mediterranean* (1998) opens with a history of the Mediterranean seabed itself, an account of the layers of sediment - from sand to clay to limestone - that provided the geological foundation for the narrative of the riverine civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. For Braudel, then, time, as experience or effect, unfolds at varying velocities within the processes of change, evolution and metamorphosis.

Sciascia's objects, in their physical make-up, bring into focus the notion of the *longue duree*. Primitive and modern materials are repurposed as asynchronous elements, gesturing at the glacial spans of geological timescales and the fact that, according to the artist, "all these materials related to science and natural biological structure are the foundations on which we humans stand." *Crescita Tecno Organica* and *Untitled* are both vertical sculptural forms that foreground the presence of pre-historic matter, juxtaposed against materials that arrived much later in the history of technological and industrial development. In these works, long, aluminium stands bear the weight of different substances: resin in the case of the former, quartz in the latter. Here, as is typical of many of his works, material and motif coincide. Adorning the metal spine of

Crescita is a serrated column which, as Sciascia notes, is intended as an abstract rendering of the jagged edges of the leaves of various plant species. The column is fabricated from resin, including a proportion of fossilized resin; resin, of course, is derived from coniferous trees, a medium that thus agrees with the botanical form of the work. Like Crescita, Untitled is marked by its use of geological material - in this case, a line of quartz ore.

Even more pronounced is the use of pre-historic materials in Primitive Mornings and another Untitled piece, but, here, both sculptures also share an autobiographical resonance otherwise rarely glimpsed in Sciascia's practice. Like other pieces in the same series, the moniker of Primitive Mornings recalls the ancient, pre-civilizational epoch of both man and earth - the early days of the *longue duree* of human and geological trajectories. The work is a sculptural rendition of a fragment of an imaginary Greco-Roman mask, crafted from fossilized resin, that suggests the art historical traditions of Italy, the land of the artist's birth. The use of fossilized resin is conspicuous; present in the clear, honey-hued amber of the material are bits and flecks of unidentifiable objects, a record of the natural environment that has been preserved in it. The botanical origins of resin also accords with what has been inserted into the open mouth of the mask: an organic leaf. The latter is, of course, an element that requires regular changing to remain fresh, a gesture that Sciascia remarks is akin to the Balinese practice of placing offerings at an altar. That the leaf is meant to resemble a protruding tongue again evokes the visual culture of the Hellenistic world: the expression recalls that of the Gorgoneion, the icon of the Gorgon's head with its tongue out, that functioned as an apotropaic talisman. The reference to Gorgonian myth also recalls the presence of the creature in the *trinacria*, the coat-of-arms of Sicily, where Sciascia originally hailed from.

Untitled consists simply of a found, fossilized shell. As the artist puts it, "fossils are all geological evidence of life, plants, organism, human, and animals. They tell us about our pre-historic environment." The motif of the shell bears autobiographical connotations, almost in the manner of a self-portrait: Sciascia notes that, for most of his life, he has lived in various foreign countries, where his typical way of life has involved been secluded in his studio, making art.



Filippo Sciascia  
*All We Have* (details), 2019

## ABOUT THE WORKS

*All We Have*, 2019

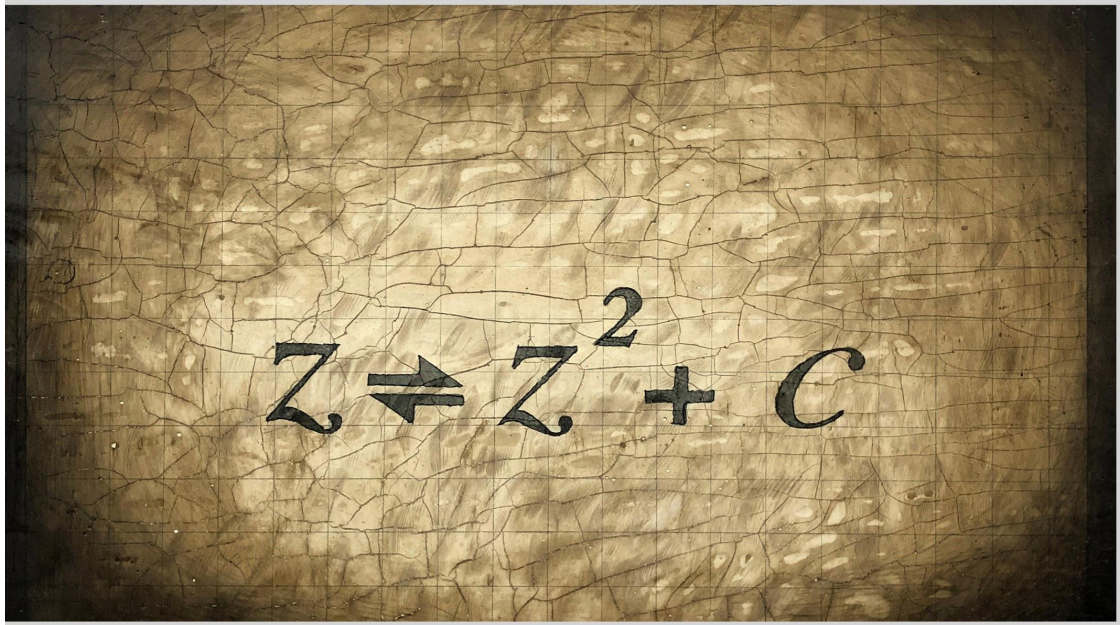
Gesso, oil on canvas

In the current exhibition, *All We Have* is placed above one of the windows of the gallery space. The aperture looks out onto the wooded surrounds of the Gillman Barracks precinct, and poised above the narrow vista of green is the painting, which consists of the titular phrase rendered as if to seem that the text is a-glow, or fabricated from light tubes. Where Sciascia's other work substitutes the depiction of light in with actual light sources, the reverse is accomplished here: what seems to be genuine light on the canvas turns out to be but a mimetic representation of, a return to art historical praxis. The motif of light, of course, is conceptually tied to the artist's abiding interest in the histories of art, technology and the natural environment, a theme that is reinforced by the work's proximity to the spatial realities of its presence - the declaration made by the painting seems almost to serve as a bald assessment of the wooded view beyond, the botanical production of energy through light mirrored in the light-shrouded text of the canvas. Mixed into the textual portion of the work is an ingredient that Sciascia sometime utilizes in his work: melatonin powder. Melatonin is produced by the human body to regulate our circadian cycles and sleep, and here it emphasizes the importance of natural light - as well as its absence, a fact that dovetails with the pretense of actual light in the painting.





Installation view , Filippo Sciaccia, *All We Have*, 2019

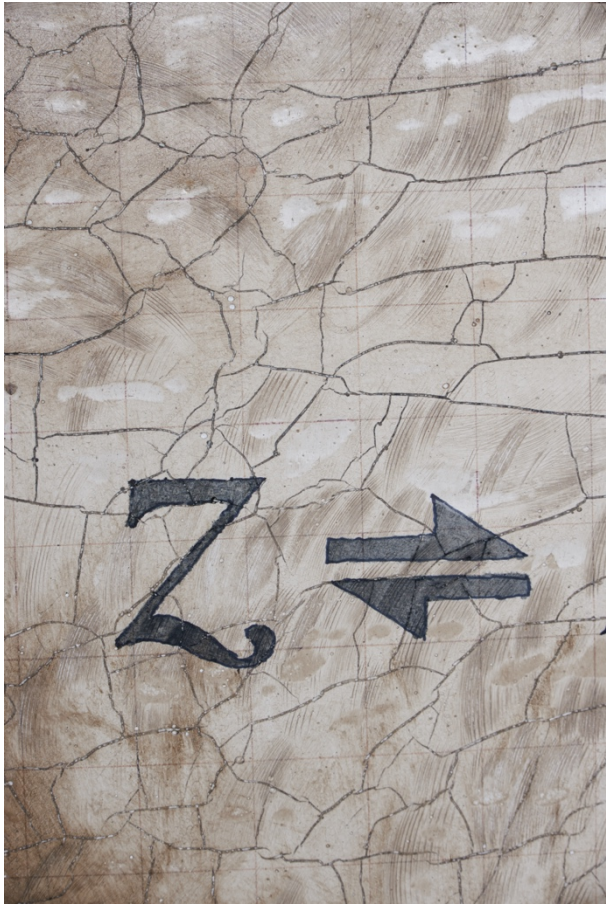


Filippo Sciascia  
*Theory of Chaos*, 2020  
Oil on gesso canvas  
45 x 58 cm



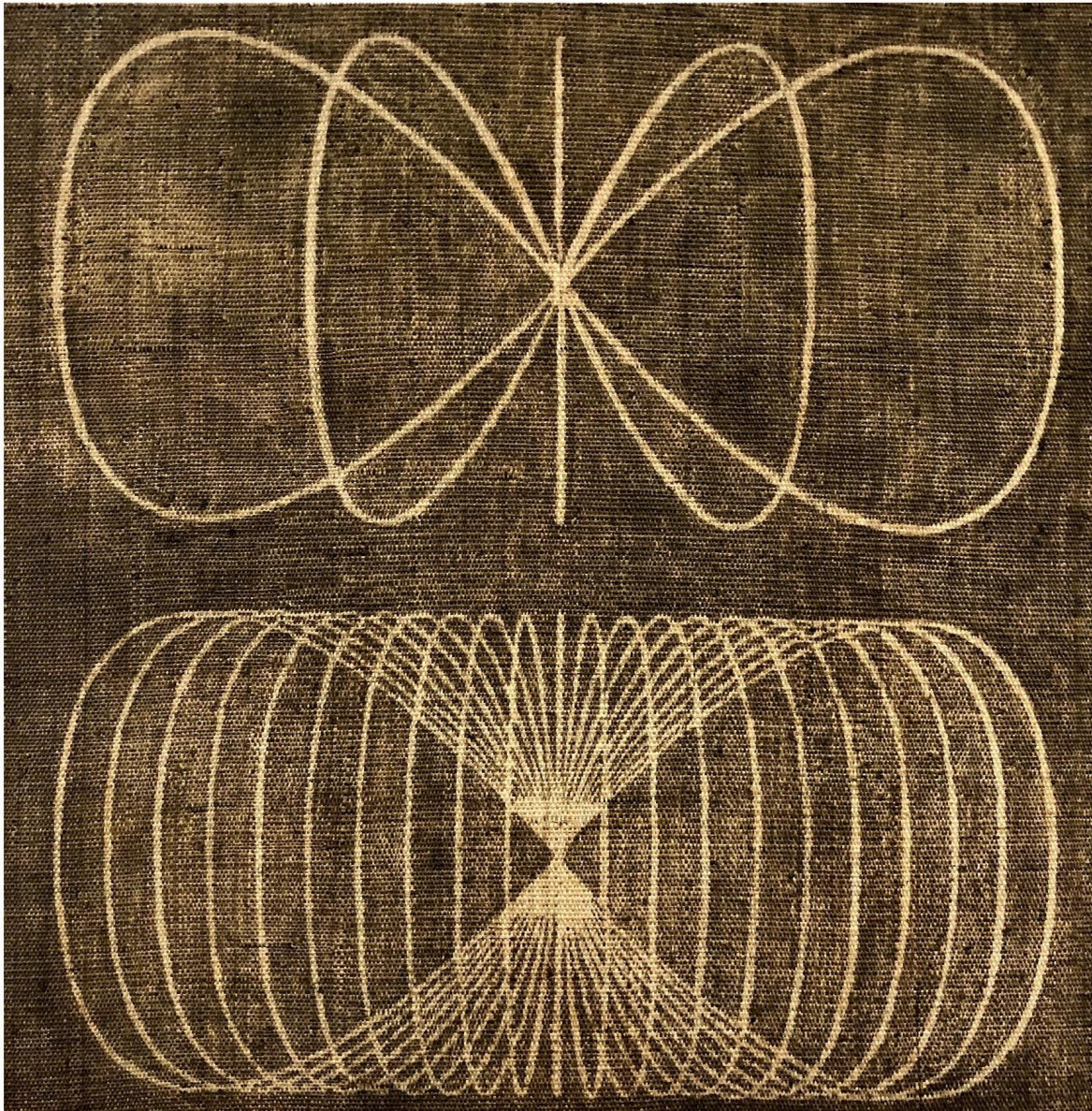
Installation view  
Filippo Sciascia, *Theory of Chaos*, 2020





Filippo Sciascia  
*Theory of Chaos* (details), 2020





Filippo Sciascia  
*Primitive Mornings*, 2020  
Oil on canvas  
45 x 59 cm





Filippo Sciascia  
*Primitive Mornings (details)*  
2020