

Michelangelo Russo
Jennifer Jabu

cCORDA



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Robert Rauschenberg, in discussing his use of 'waste' material made the point that there is no hierarchy of materials. Bronze or oil paint is therefore equivalent to an old discarded sheet of cardboard, or a broken refrigerator. His 'Constructions' further opened up the possibility of using anything to make art, and to respect and explore those qualities inherent in whatever medium is utilised by the artist. He also stated significantly that - 'You begin with the possibilities of the material.'

Michelangelo Russo and Jennifer Jabu use cardboard as the core medium in their practice but, unlike Rauschenberg, they reify the 'humble' material through exploring and exposing the inherent but possibly never-utilised qualities of the material. They are not concerned with simply presenting the material in its raw state, it is a vehicle, essential in its primary qualities, but amenable to transformation.

"In a contemporary context, materiality is particularly relevant in that contemporary art is understood to be a relic of the artist's process of investigation into the nature of things, via objects' materiality and artists' work to reframe meaning through aesthetic juxtapositions" Christina Murdoch - Mills ¹

Russo and Jabu effect a transmutation. It would be crass to describe this as an 'elevation' of the humble material, and 'humble' also may be inappropriate. We need to avoid these hierarchical constructs in discussion of this work. The process is the key. The techniques utilised continue their practice of 'upcycling', with works made from sustainable resources: salvaged cardboard, jute, rope, hexcel paper, wax, and pigments. Encaustic paint, which combines heated beeswax with pigment, is the finishing touch.

The use of encaustic as the final surface treatment provides the rich surface and Russo describes this as ... "finally embalmed with appropriate encaustic colour". Since encaustic was used in ancient Egypt the 'embalming' connection is apt. Embalming is not about death as such, it is really about life and transcendence.

"In our society, cardboard is often discarded – it is a utilitarian material most easily obtained yet it is this valuelessness that liberates it" Michelangelo Russo

In this statement Russo identifies the 'open' quality of the raw material. It is so neutral that it invites and can tolerate a number of different methods and divergent outcomes. (It is the very preciousness of expensive materials that can often stifle the artist reducing them to a state of anxiety and risk avoidance).

'cCorda' contains wall mounted pieces and free-standing three-dimensional works which share a lively, active surface - textural siblings. The structure and the rich surfaces displays the nature of their making. Instead of a neutral surface these are alive and constantly reveal and reincarnate the processes by which they have been realised. They have quality of raw honesty and communicate their making in their faces and forms. The process is in a sense still current, revealed and alive. The monumentality of the three-dimensional works is quite extraordinary, they project a force and presence which is undeniable. It is as if they could be any scale, they suggest a timelessness and conviction which belies their modest sizes. Importantly, all the works share a unique 'objecthood'.

Therefore, these works have an undeniable presence. Clement Greenberg explained that something has presence when it demands that the beholder take it into account, and these works operate in this way. They don't simply invite engagement, they demand it. Objects which possess significant attractive power such as this can draw the beholder to them and hold one in an immediate, intuitive embrace, an experiential engagement which excludes everything outside of it. They close the gap of conscious contemplation as many artworks rarely can. This intimacy of engagement is deep and real, and, as Martin Heidegger states:

Everything that might interpose itself between the thing and us in apprehending and talking about it must first be set aside. Only then do we yield ourselves to the undisguised presence of the thing. ²

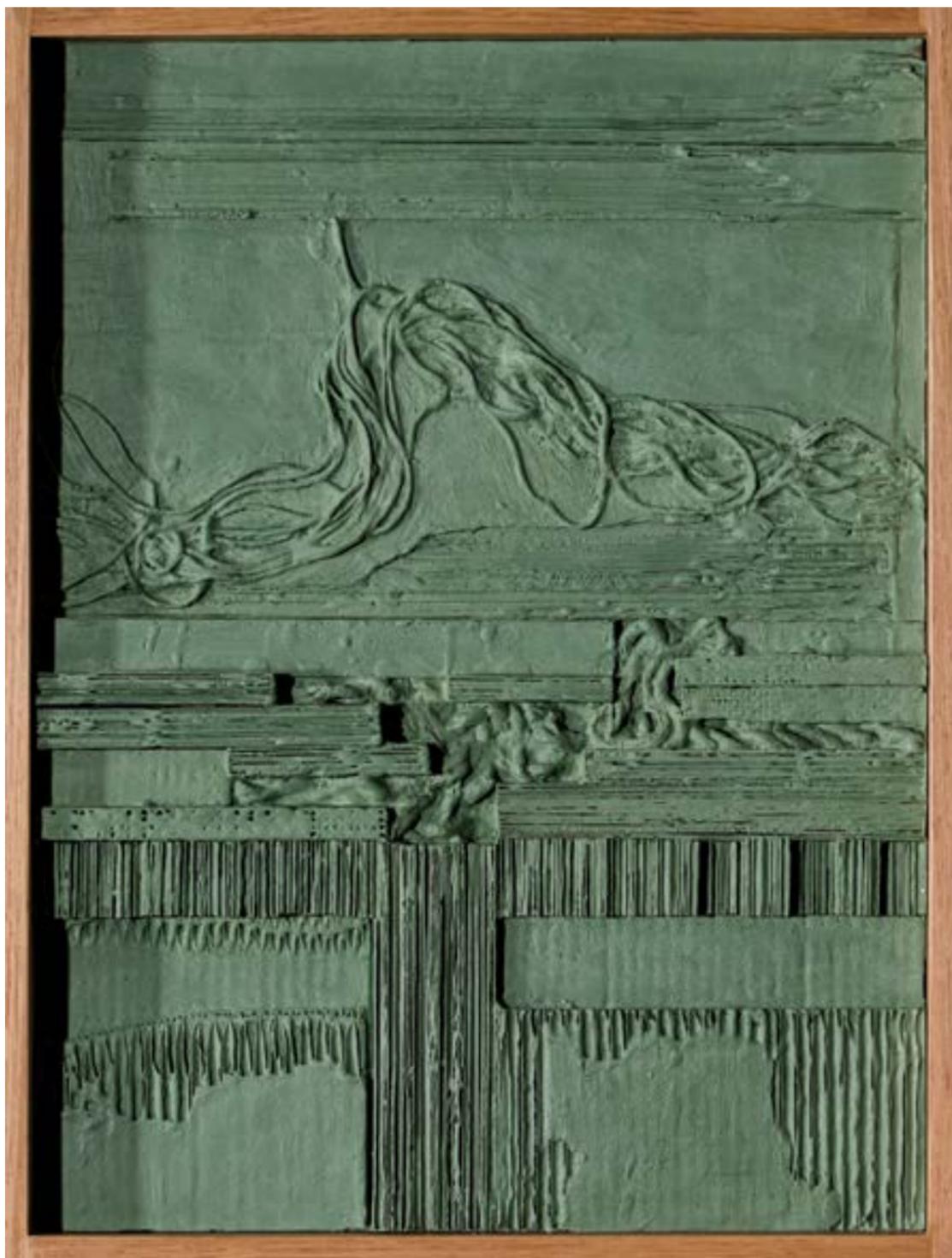
This experience cannot be forced. The object itself must have the power to subvert conscious distancing. The beholder must be open in heart and mind to allow this experience to exist with any artwork but that gap is readily closed in the presence of these objects.

Elsewhere I have often cited Susan Sontag's position on interpretation being the 'killing' of an artwork and a malformation of what the experience of engaging deeply and intuitively with the art object should be. Experiencing these works I am not tempted to consider comparisons, not inclined to make judgements, and not inclined to think beyond the experience itself. That's what makes these objects so powerful and the experience so rich.

Sean Kelly, March 2021

1. *Materiality as the Basis for the Aesthetic Experience in Contemporary Art* Christina Murdoch Mills
- The University of Montana 2009

2. *Martin Heidegger. Poetry, Language, Thought.*
Albert Hofstadter, trans. (New York, New York. Harper Collins Publishers. 1971), 44



Veronese 2020
encaustic on cardboard and rope on wood panel
cm. 63 x 48



Grafitico 2020
encaustic on cardboard and rope on wood panel
cm. 63 x 48



Ceruleo 2020
encaustic on cardboard, rope and paper on wood panel
cm. 63 x 48



Giallo 2020
encaustic on cardboard, rope and paper on wood panel
cm. 63 x 48

The cCORDA journey explores the next evolution of the symbiotic and productive collaboration between Jennifer Jabu and Michelangelo Russo. Their mutual background in architecture is clearly evident in the first incarnation: Cartoni.

Cartoni, a series of framed bas relief works saturated in stunning encaustic paint is very modular, restrained and contained.

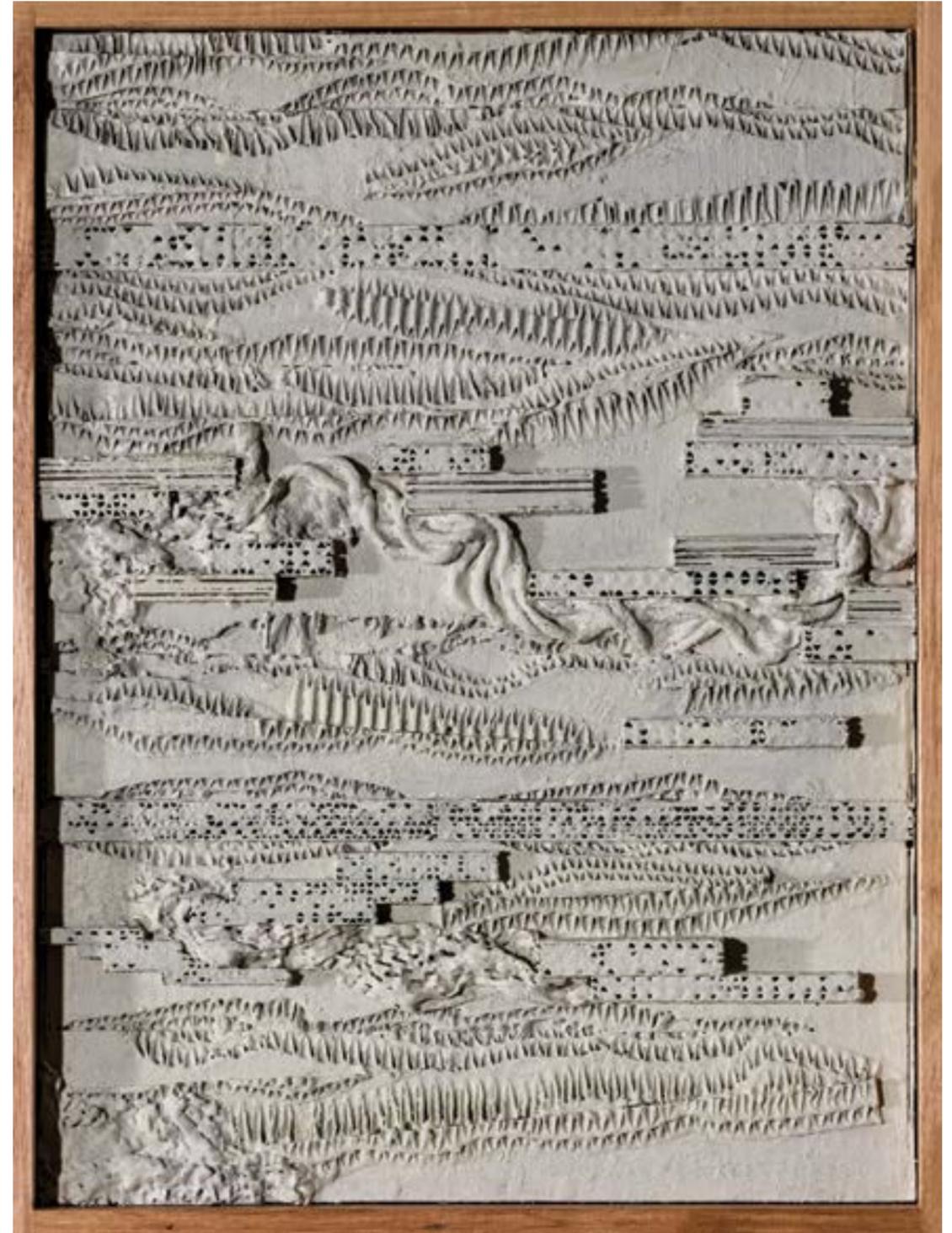
cCORDA invites disruption to the rhythm and discipline of Cartoni. It explores curves, interfering and tangling, that cross and insinuate within the grid. The encaustic medium binds the disparate elements into a completed whole.

Architectural elements are still revealed in the works - sometimes alluding to horizontal (plan) or vertical sections.

Singling out a particular piece, Alienico 2020 reveals what could be palaeontological skeletons captured in an imaginary mud bank and frozen time.

All the works invite the observer to imagine what each piece represents, the mood dictated by the colour and density of the wax finish.

Lida Bray
March 2021



Alienico 2020
encaustic on cardboard, rope and paper on wood panel
cm. 63 x 48



Ochre |M| 2021
encaustic on cardboard and rope on wood panel
cm. 72 x 62



ArancioB |M| 2021
encaustic on cardboard, rope and hessian on wood panel
cm. 72 x 62



Sculptura Grigioverde 2021

encaustic on cardboard
cm. 35 x 25 x 13

Sculptura Gialla 2021

encaustic on cardboard and paper
cm. 30 x 15 x 15

Sculptura Verde 2021

encaustic on cardboard
cm. 35 x 25 x 15

Sculptura Grigioc 2021

encaustic on cardboard and paper
cm. 27 x 15 x 15

Sculptura Rossa 2021

encaustic on cardboard and paper
cm. 32 x 18 x 11

Sculptura Bluc 2021

encaustic on cardboard and paper
cm. 40 x 15 x 15

Sculptura Cerulea 2021

encaustic on cardboard
cm. 48 x 21 x 19

Sculptura Ocra 2021

encaustic on cardboard and paper
cm. 25 x 15 x 15



ArancioB [S] 2020
encaustic on cardboard and rope on wood panel
cm. 38 x 30



Top: RosaCel [XL] 2021
encaustic on cardboard, rope and paper on wood panel
cm. 100 x 200



Bottom: GrigioCel [XL] 2021
encaustic on cardboard, rope and paper on wood panel
cm. 100 x 200

cCORDA

Michelangelo Russo's abstract evolution reaches into the essence of matter through inspired combinations of raw materials creating a physical yet subtly subconscious impact.

The new collaboration with Jennifer Jabu further investigates form and substance in 3D works that radiate presence and resonate with aesthetic detail.

The eye and the imagination wander into and across the cCorda creations, triggering dreamlike associations in counterpoint to the tactile grit and compression of the works themselves. Magical.

Hugo Race
March 2021



Calmo 2021
encaustic on cardboard, rope and paper on wood panel
cm. 125 x 113



Limesh |L| 2021
encaustic on cardboard, rope and paper on wood panel
cm. 125 x 113



Larimar |L| 2021
encaustic on cardboard, rope and paper on wood panel
cm. 123 x 136



Titanio 2021
 encaustic on cardboard, rope and paper on wood panel
 cm. 125 x 83



Titanio iii 2021
 encaustic on cardboard, rope and paper on wood
 panel cm. 63 x 48



Titanio ii 2021
 encaustic on cardboard, rope and paper on wood
 panel cm. 63 x 48



Titanio iv 2021
 encaustic on cardboard, rope and paper on wood
 panel cm. 63 x 48



Titanio i 2021
 encaustic on cardboard, rope and paper on wood
 panel cm. 63 x 48



Photograph by Jason Blake

Michelangelo Russo was born in Campobasso, southern Italy in 1962, Michelangelo is a visual artist and musician. He started painting at the age of 12 when he started frequenting the studio of a well known local painter, Franco Iannelli, learning various painting techniques. He had his first solo show at the age of 15.

During the 80s Michelangelo studied architecture and graphic design in Pescara and Roma.

In early 1990, after staging several shows in Italy, Michelangelo travelled to Berlin where he felt a strong affinity with the city's artistic energy. He established a studio in the heart of East Berlin, which at this time, shortly after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, was a fertile artistic ground for young pioneering artists. At the end of 1993, Michelangelo moved to Melbourne to continue in pursuing his career in both painting and music. Michelangelo's work features in private collections all over Australia as well as in Cuba, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the USA.

Michelangelo is also a talented musician. He has played in several bands in Italy, Germany and Australia. He has extensively toured Europe playing concerts and experimental music festivals appearing on several seminal recordings. Since 1994 he has collaborated widely with musician/songwriter/producer Hugo Race, and composers/musicians Wendy Morrison and Andrew Ogburn amongst others, appearing in many projects, recordings and performances

Jennifer Jabu was born in 1973 in Sarawak, on the remote island of Borneo, into a family with deep seated attachments to their ancestral village communities. Attachments that have been nurtured carefully and continue to this day.

Jennifer moved to Melbourne at the age of 14 to study and completed a Bachelor in Architecture, a Masters in International Urban & Environmental Management and a doctoral candidacy at RMIT. Jennifer's training brought her to see painting, architecture and sculpture as disciplines that influence, and are complementary to, one another. This realisation, along with inspiration from broad travels, memories of textile weaving in the longhouses of Borneo and strong Iban headhunter traditions have all formed a basis for a fluid view of transforming life experiences and memory to art.

A resident of Melbourne with a love for skylines, Jennifer brings architectural precision and fluidity to her work.

Curriculum Vitae :

Michelangelo Russo and Jennifer Jabu

2020 *Inaugural Group Show* One Star Gallery, Melbourne.
2019 *Image_Object* MONAFOMA 2020 at Poimena Gallery, Launceston.

Michelangelo Russo - Selected Solo Exhibitions

2019 *CARTONI Containers Contained* in collaboration with Jennifer Jabu at Fortyfive Downstairs Gallery, Melbourne.
2016 *Bestie e D'intorni* at Bird's Gallery, Melbourne.
2010 *Silence* at Anita Traverso Gallery, Melbourne.
2007 *Petals and Thorns* at Anita Traverso Gallery, Melbourne.
2005 *Wax* at Silvershot presented by Artefact, Melbourne.
2002 *Iso* at Goya Galleries, Melbourne.
2001 *Michelangelo Russo* at Goya Galleries, Melbourne.
Reticoli at Art House Gallery, Sydney.
2000 *Gold* at Goya Galleries, Melbourne.
1997 *For the Love of Orange* at A.R.T. Gallery Eden, Melbourne.
Souvenirs Grids and Scars at Art House Gallery, Sydney.
1996 *Paintings by Michelangelo Russo* at Foy & Gibson Gallery, Melbourne.
1993 *Malerei Fotografiche* Emulsion und Acryl auf Linewand at Pillango Gallery, Berlin, Germany.
1991 *Askartaz* at Babylonia, Berlin, Germany.
1988 *Africa Musica e Legna da Ardere* at Grigio Notte, Roma, Italy.
1977 *Michelangelo Russo* at Galleria il Punto, Campobasso, Italy.

Michelangelo Russo - Selected Group Exhibitions

2018 *Chromaotopia* at Tacit Gallery, Melbourne.
Diaspora Co.As.It., Melbourne.
2017 *Chromatopia* at Tacit Gallery, Melbourne.
Ritratti thirty one Italian artists from Victoria at Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Melbourne.
2016 *Moth to the Flame* Salon Hang, Melbourne.
2009 *Cut + Collate = Construct* at Anita Traverso Gallery, Melbourne.
2007 *The Only Constant* at Anita Traverso Gallery, Melbourne.
2004 *Arte di Ritorno* at Sala dei Chierici, Biblioteca Berio, Genova, Italy.
2003 *Seta: Traditions and Visions* at Exhibition Building, Melbourne.
2002 *Art Fair* at Exhibition Building, Melbourne.
2001 *Smoulder* at Art House Gallery, Sydney.
2000 *Quattro* at Chiara Goya Gallery, Melbourne.
1999 *11th Incontro Annuale* at Spazio Viola, Pavia, Italy.
1998 *Christmas Show* at Art House Gallery, Sydney.
1997 *Boys in Town* at Art House Gallery, Sydney.
10th Incontro Annuale at Spazio Viola, Pavia, Italy.
1996 *Christmas Show* at Art House Gallery, Sydney.
Inaugurazione Spazio Viola at Spazio Viola, Ciego de Avila, Cuba.
1995 *Red Ribbon* at Palazzo Tursi, Genova, Italy.
Darbo Gelsomino Negri Russo at George Paton Gallery, Melbourne.
Songlines from Distant Lands at Cathedral Room ANZ Gothic Bank, Melbourne.
1989 *5 Artisti da Pescara* at Galleria Cesare Manzo, Pescara, Italy.
Animals at Universita' Occupata, Pescara, Italy.

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Jason Blake, Lida Bray, Simon Calabria, Michelle Campbell, David Coles, George Cociglia, Mariella DelConte, Hugh Dickson, Dugald Jayes, Sean Kelly, Guy Obeid, Simone Pittella, Hugo Race.



fortyfive
downstairs

Photographs by @jasonmblake

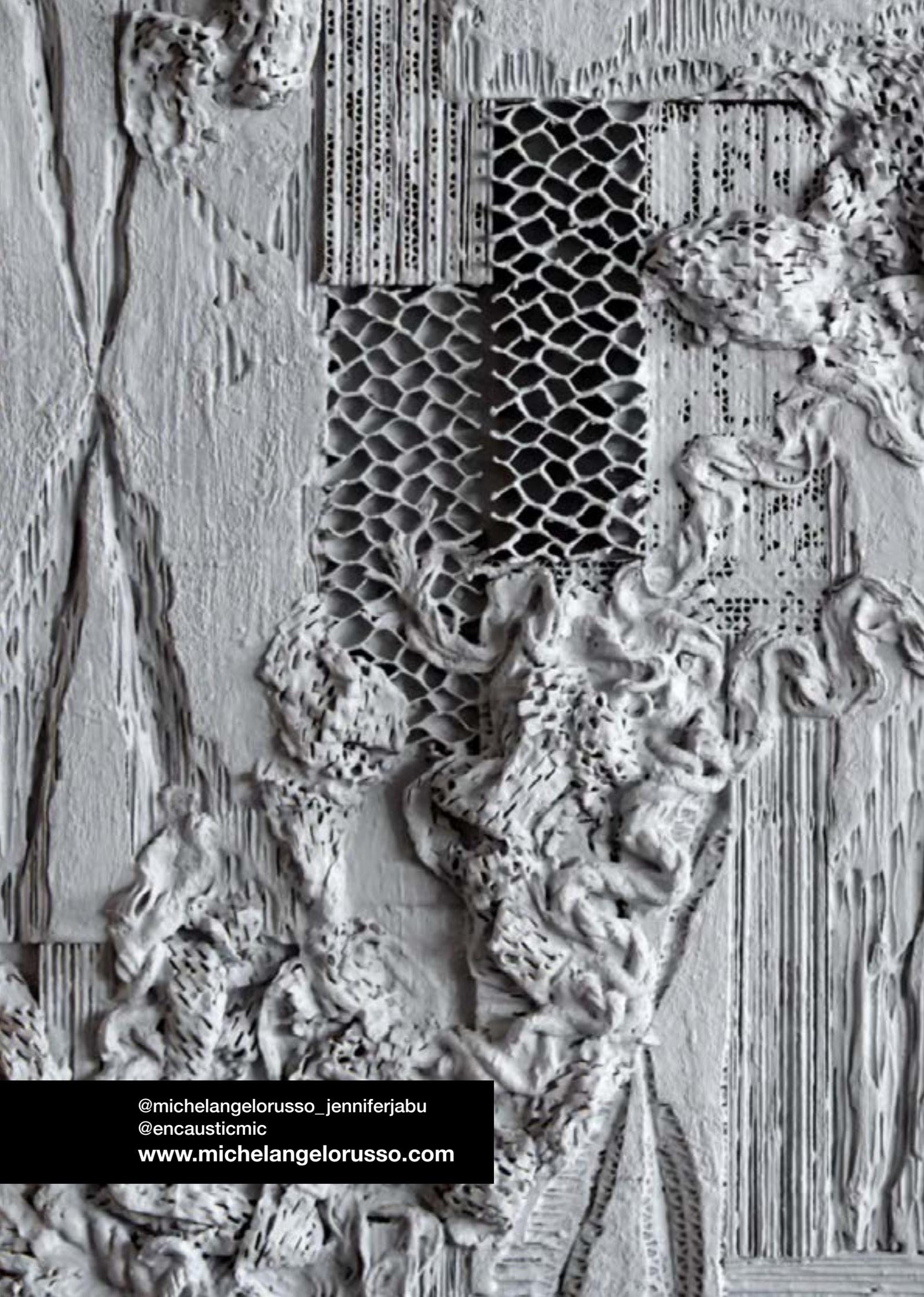
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