



Alexandre Farto aka Vhils

MAGMA

GLITCH – MAGMA GALLERY VENICE

July 2024

MAGMA Gallery is glad to present “Glitch”, the new solo show of the Portuguese artist Alexandre Farto aka Vhils, in our Venetian venue in Via Garibaldi 1735.

In his masterpiece “Invisible Cities”, Italian writer Italo Calvino expressed his passion for Venice, and for cities in general, which he saw as “a combination of many things: memory, desires, signs of a language.” The book, published in 1972, adopts the perspective of the traveller Marco Polo, who tells fantastic tales of imaginary places, all named after women. Reflecting on his landmark book, Calvino later said: “I have written something like a last love poem addressed to the city, at a time when it is becoming increasingly difficult to live there. [...] The image of megalopolis – the unending, undifferentiated city which is steadily covering the surface of the earth – dominates my book, too.”

Cities are the central theme in the work of Portuguese artist Alexandre Farto aka Vhils, who presents this body of work for the first time in Italy, at the new Venetian venue of MAGMA Gallery. In his striking visual poetry, which has been shown around the world in a variety of contexts, Vhils literally peels back the layers of cities by scratching their surfaces, such as billboards and walls. He also draws an ongoing reflection on identity, on life in contemporary urban societies and their saturated and homogenised environments. With the aim of humanising the urban landscape, he carves portraits of anonymous people who shape the city and are shaped by it. “It looks, indeed, as if we are approaching a period of crisis in urban life,” said Calvino. This could easily be a statement by Vhils, too — only 40 years later.

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On the occasion of the exhibition “Glitch”, instead of inventing new cities, Alexandre imagines portraits of invisible people who lived in them. The artist deals with the absence of images of individuals who were extremely important in the history of Venice, but who were not and still are not included in fundamental discourses about the city. Fictitious portraits of various characters who have been left out of the leading narratives of the Global North are brought to life through his signature technique of carving into piles of billboards collected from the streets of Venice. Advertisements are symbols of capitalist societies – they elaborate narratives and stimulate previously non-existent desires. These superimposed narratives systematically forget and erase the memories of those who really existed.

The urban environment is both subject and matter of Vhils’ work, all the layers that make up his landscapes give substance and form to his works. The material components that shape it, the ideologies that support it, the forces of chaos and order that push it forward, the tensions and aspirations that it arouses. The artist starts from the waste materials of the cities, from the billboards and posters that are found out in the streets. He overlaps them one by one and, with the technique of removal, carves layer after layer, giving life to the landscape of the city, a new landscape but of which we find traces in reality. Through the central work of the exhibition, “Cityscape Series #07”, Vhils shows the viewer how underneath, in a dimension invisible to the eyes, there is hidden a beauty waiting to be discovered.



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Alexandre Farto aka Vhils

Cityscape Series #07 - Venice, 2024

Hand-carved advertising posters

120x260 cm

€ 36.000,00

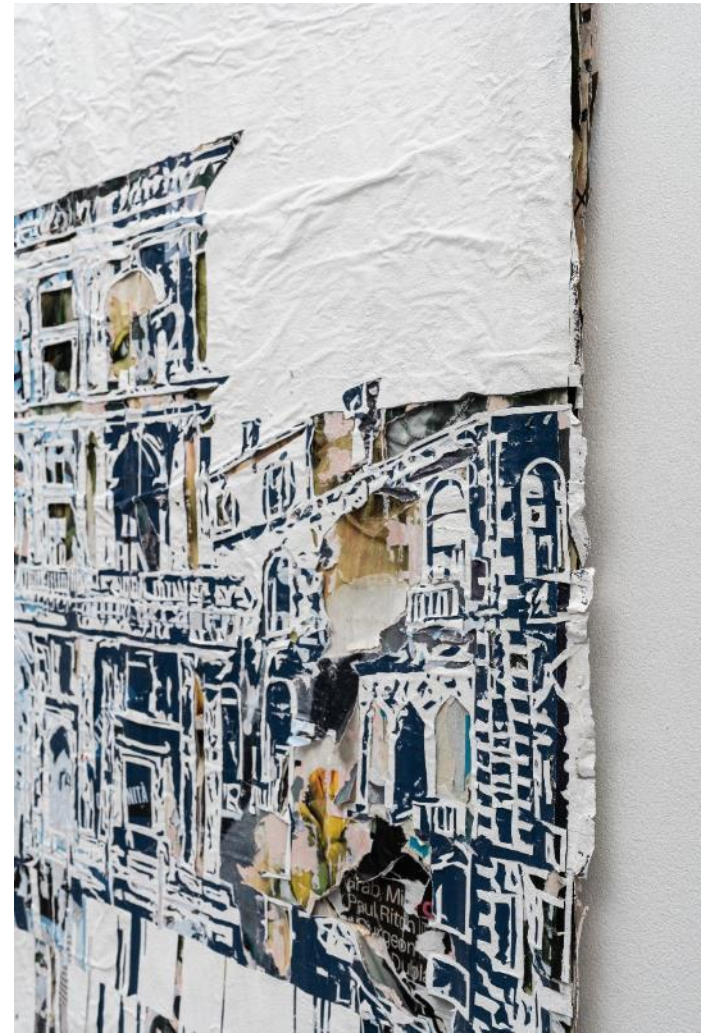
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Alexandre Farto aka Vhils
Glitch Series #04, 2024
Hand-carved advertising posters
110x80 cm
€ 18.500,00



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Alexandre Farto aka Vhils
Glitch Series #06, 2024
Hand-carved advertising posters
110x80 cm
€ 18.500,00



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Other Available Works



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Alexandre Farto aka Vhils
Lethargic Series #02, 2020
Hand-carved old wooden doors
197,5 x 77 cm
€ 27.000,00



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PORTAL SERIES, 2021

MAGMA gallery and Vhils Studio are proud to present the solo show “Portal”, a large-scale and immersive project by Alexandre Farto aka Vhils at the historical public venue Ex Chiesa di San Mattia in Bologna.

The use of doors has become prominent and recurring in the work of Portuguese visual artist, incorporating his experience with the urban environment. Gathered from abandoned or derelict buildings, transformed through the artist’s characteristic bas-relief carving technique, they have taken on a new life, challenging the viewer to move beyond observation, and begin a process of understanding. Largely unnoticed and perceived as simple objects of necessity, or partitions rendered meaningless when stripped of their purpose, for the artist, doors are fertile ground for exploration, imbued with profound symbolism.

Revealing how important it is for the artist to feed off the environment he is reflecting on, this new series of works features the portraits of Bologna’s inhabitants, portraying the lives and the people of the Italian city.

For Vhils, doors are portals. They are an opening into a collective psyche that explores contrasting ideas: ownership and freedom, seclusion and inclusion, permeability and impermeability. The doors that comprise the monumental installation here displayed were created during the height of the pandemic, a time disrupted by isolation, fear, solitude and an acute sense of curtailed freedom. “Portal” pays homage to every person who experienced the hopelessness of being deprived of opening their own door.



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Alexandre Farto aka Vhils

Portal Series #01, 2021

Old wooden doors, assembled, laser
engraved

218,5x70x46 cm

€32.000,00



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Alexandre Farto aka Vhils

Portal Series #02, 2021

Old wooden doors, assembled, laser
engraved

230x85x47,5 cm

€32.000,00



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Alexandre Farto aka Vhils

Portal Series #07, 2021

Old wooden doors, assembled, laser
engraved

203x87x45 cm

€32.000,00



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Alexandre Farto aka Vhils

Portal Series #08, 2021

Old wooden doors, assembled, laser
engraved

213,5x80,5x46 cm

€32.000,00



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