anni wu

SIPHONOPHORES
Ludovica Anversa and Manuel Cornelius
11.06.2026

Text by Edoardo Durante

To enter the exhibition is to be caressed, enveloped, and permeated by a subterranean force. To enter the exhibition is to cross a threshold where every boundary and every identity is temporarily suspended. This is a haunted exhibition, a porous environment. A zone of instability in which the image never presents itself as a fully formed presence; instead, it emerges slowly through dispersion, accumulations, and sudden condensations.

When I first saw the work of Ludovica Anversa and Manuel Cornelius, although these encounters took place at different moments, both intimate and historically situated, a reflection emerged that resonates across both practices: an awareness of life's fundamentally chimeric nature. A pre- and posthuman impulse, an ancestral, telluric, and unsettling tension. A metamorphic drive through which the force that traverses and transforms us is not an act of conscious will but rather an ancient force, older than the body it shapes, operating in complete autonomy. Amphibious in character, this force refuses singularity, inhabiting and embracing multiple forms simultaneously. After all, we are the result of a chain of relational processes that includes every living being: we inhabit the world in continuity with the forms that preceded us. We are the outcome of countless relationships with the environments we inhabit, part of a common body from which all species emerge, ontologically inseparable. Every organism can be understood as the temporary outcome of an infinite series of metamorphoses; transformation is no longer an exceptional event occurring within a pre-existing condition, but the very structure of life itself. We are therefore inclined toward becoming other, to borrow a Deleuzian notion. Variations of a single life moving across bodies, species, and generations, we are temporary forms through which the same life continues to mutate.

In Anversa's works, images surface through an oscillating movement that simultaneously gathers and dissolves matter. I fondly recall a conversation in her studio about the serial nature of her practice, a characteristic clearly present throughout her work, though one that does not imply the repetition of the same image. Rather, each work appears as a variation or evolution of those that came before it. The vertical tension recurring in several pieces functions as a creative axis around which the composition expands and contracts, giving rise to ectoplasmic presences of unstable morphology, where construction and collapse coincide. Nothing appears entirely stable. The painted surface does not describe, instead, it absorbs, retains, and allows things to pass through. It does not record a finished image but rather the fragile instant preceding its disappearance. Some forms silently expand, while others contract until they nearly dissolve. Even when an apparent symmetry emerges, equilibrium remains deferred, as though suspended within precarious membranes subject to torsion and collapse. Her painterly language arises from a layering of traces that continue to vibrate through glazes, abrasions, and acts of removal. These surfaces retain multiple temporalities, sustained by a continuous process of contamination that enables both sedimentation and return.

Within Cornelius's practice, structures emerge that alternate between density and rarefaction, fragility and decay. Filamentous systems, openings, milky accumulations, and translucent fields intertwine according to irregular rhythms. The result of an intuitive process that employs digital tools for the formal modelling of the work, his sculptures develop as composite bodies made up of modular units that together constitute a larger organism. These are forms in constant becoming, retaining a

visceral and unsettling quality; ambiguous configurations generated through a creative process in which boundaries fragment, surfaces appear permeable, and the interior seems to spill outward. By working with agar gels, a plant-derived material obtained through the boiling of marine algae, non-human agents become active participants in the sculptural process, gradually wearing down and partially decomposing the structure of certain works. As a result, the sculptures arrive only at a partial resolution, vulnerable, contingent, and committed to change.

The practices brought together in this exhibition testify to an attempt to reconfigure the exhibition space through a condition of suspension, a field of possibilities in continuous transformation. The works inhabit a liminal dimension and, through perpetual metamorphosis, operate according to relational and cooperative logics: distinct entities come together, contributing to the formation of a larger body generated by their shared existence. Much like the polymorphic siphonophores, planktonic marine organisms, hybrid and tentacular creatures composed of multiple individuals that function collectively as a single living being. Their specialized roles can be understood as organs within a shared body, exemplifying mutual collaboration and interdependence within a symbiotic form of life. A composite individual embodied by an entire colony; a multitude becoming one.

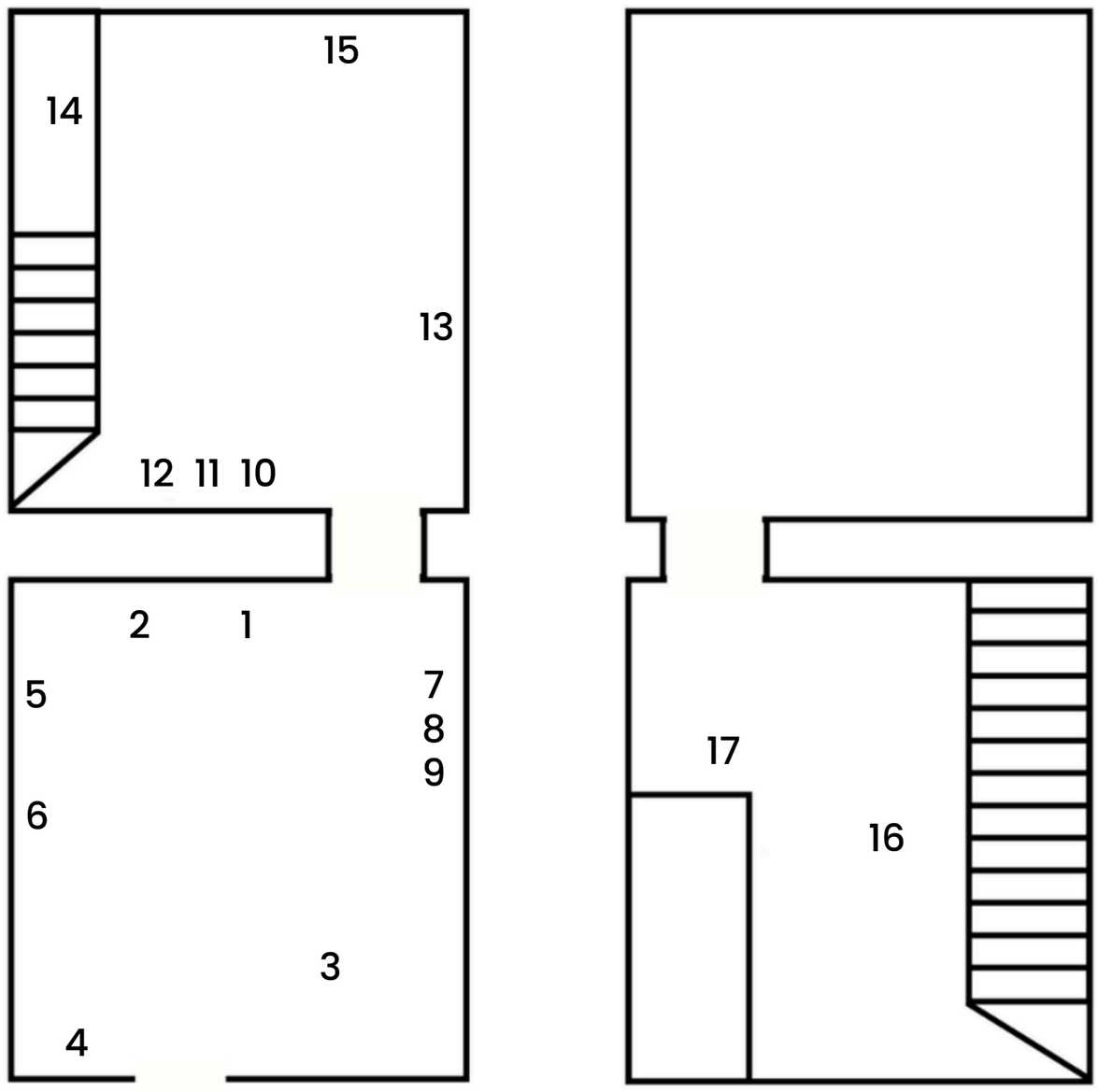
Ludovica Anversa (b. 1996, Milan, Italy) explores a liminal territory between figuration and abstraction. Suggesting states of transformation and latent memory, her paintings inhabit a fluid and visceral space where bodies escape immediate definition, submerging and re-emerging from the canvas surface. Moving through non-narrative spaces, her figures manifest as ambiguous, metamorphic and spectral presences, hovering delicately between the sensual and the disturbing.

In 2020, she participated in the residency programs at Palazzo Monti (Brescia) and Manifattura Tabacchi (Florence). She has exhibited her work in renowned galleries and foundations, including: Fondazione La Rocca, Pescara (2024); The Address Gallery (Brescia, 2023); MAC Museum of Contemporary Art, Lissone (2023); New Galerie (Paris, 2022), Galleria Massimo Minini (Brescia, 2022) and East Contemporary (Entreveaux, 2021). In 2021, she was named the winner of the Premio Francesco Fabbri.

Manuel Cornelius (b. 1991, Oberhausen) develops a multidisciplinary practice spanning painting, installation and stage design. Working through fragmented imagery, theatrical spatial constructions and psychologically charged atmospheres, his works explore states of alienation, performativity and emotional dissonance within contemporary visual culture. Alongside his visual art practice, Cornelius has created stage designs for choreographer Fran Diaz, including productions presented at Bayerische Staatsoper, LOT-Theater and LOFFT.

Recent exhibitions include Infinite Crawl at Lore Deutz, Cologne (2026), The Neoliberal Urge to Curate a Friendsgroup at ACUD, Berlin (2025), 90. Herbstausstellung at Kunstverein Hannover (2023), and A Pearl Laser on the Gothic Holodeck at Coherent, Brussels (2020). His work has been supported by grants from Stiftung Kunstfonds Bonn and Kulturstiftung des Freistaates Sachsen.

Anni Wu Gallery
Via Rosolino Pilo 14, Milano 20129
anniwu.com | info@anniwu.com
+39 351 3288 223



1. Ludovica Anversa
Night opens, I enter, Night shuts, I don't leave # 4
oil on linen
cm 145x70
2026

2. Ludovica Anversa
Night opens, I enter, Night shuts, I don't leave # 1
oil on linen
cm 145x70
2025

3. Manuel Cornelius
Couple at the Beach
silicone, powder coated fiberglas, pigment, polyethylenterephthalat, tights
cm 160x64x41
2026

4. Manuel Cornelius
Mask and Flower
powder coated silicone, powder coated fiberglas, pigment, polyethylenterephthalat, tights
cm 28x18x21
2026

5.6. Ludovica Anversa
Night opens, I enter, Night shuts, I don't leave # 3
Night opens, I enter, Night shuts, I don't leave # 2
oil on linen
cm 145x70
2025

7.8.9. Ludovica Anversa
Untitled
Untitled
Untitled (Lungs)
watercolor on paper
cm 29x21,5
2026

10.11. Ludovica Anversa
Grape
Floaters
oil on linen
cm 50x20
2025

12. Ludovica Anversa
Untitled
oil on linen
cm 50x20
2026

13.14. Manuel Cornelius
Untitled
Small Disguise
silicone, fiberglas, pigment, polyethylenterephthalat, tights
cm 61x38x48
cm 50x42x36
2026

15. Ludovica Anversa
Untitled (Womb)
watercolor on paper
cm 29x21,5
2026

16. Manuel Cornelius
Button
agar jelly, food dye
cm 5x10x10
2026

17. Manuel Cornelius
Untitled
silicone, powder coated fiberglas, pigment, polyethylenterephthalat, tights
cm 45x35x38
2024

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