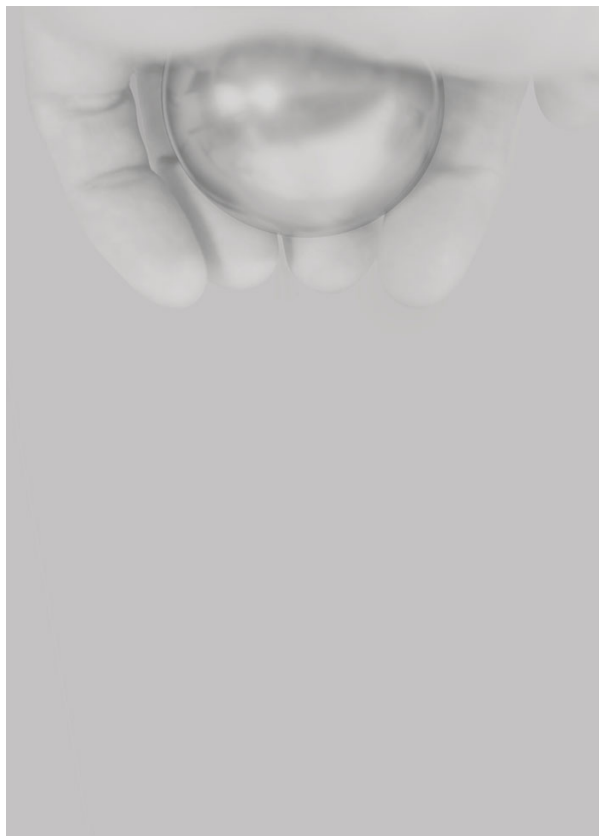


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September 20, 2017



## DAVIDE BALULA: IRON LEVELS

Opening reception:  
Thursday, September 21, 6–8PM  
September 21–November 18, 2017

Via Francesco Crispi 16  
00187 Rome

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*I am fascinated by tools and technology in general...I believe in the idea of an extended body. We know so little, we feel so much.*

—Davide Balula

Gagosian is pleased to present “Iron Levels,” new works by Davide Balula. This is his first exhibition in Rome.

At once surreal, comical, and critically engaged, Balula’s works examine the intersection of philosophy, phenomenology, and physics. For the Rome gallery, he has created an experiential trajectory that responds directly and specifically to the architecture. On entering the exhibition, visitors pass through a sculptural metal detector. A ubiquitous instrument of search and verification, the metal detector makes private belongings into objects of suspicion or potential threat. Its purpose is to reveal the metal, non-bodily material we carry with us each day—keys, coins, cell phone—that which we habitually treat as extensions of the self. The metal detector functions as a portal, further separating the idealized space of the gallery from the world outside.

In the first room, the visitor is invited to pick up and handle a stainless-steel ball, which sits in a ball-holder sculpted from local limestone. The carved holder evokes the organic softness and curves of skin, and the rendition of flesh and muscle as expressed by Italian master sculptors. The ball and holder explore the gravitational balance between body and earth, an invitation to consider one’s weight, mass, and density. In *Air Between Fingers* (2014), a 1:47 long video shot on an iPhone, Balula’s thumb and middle finger hover with a millimeter of space between each fingertip, occasionally touching as his control over the minute space slips, in a mesmerizing display of the forces of gravity, friction, and magnetism that act upon and within the body.

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The second, oval-shaped room of the exhibition contains a new series of Balula's *Burnt Paintings*, made for the sweeping curve of the room's wall. The works in this series contain two binary elements, one frame holding the charred charcoal residue of burnt wood, and a second frame holding a canvas imprinted with the charcoal of the burnt wood. In groups of two, three, or four frames to a work, these "paintings" sit together in positive and negative relationship, much like that of photography or printmaking. The process of making charcoal is slow and steady, with a gradual increase and decrease of heat so that the wood is not turned into ash, but retains the potential to burn again; the *Burnt Paintings* thus consider the cyclical, almost alchemical, transfer of energy in nature, a phenomenon fundamental to Balula's work.

**Daide Balula** was born in 1978 in Vila Dum Santo, Portugal and currently lives and works in New York and Paris. Collections include Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris; Musée d'Art Contemporain du Val-de-Marne, Vitry-sur-Seine, France; Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain Poitou-Charentes, France; and Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur, France. Recent solo exhibitions include "Sirène du Mississipi," Musée de l'Objet, Blois & Ecole des Beaux Arts de Châteauroux & Bourges, France (2007); "Endless Pace," Museums Quartier Wien, Austria (2007); and "La main dans le texte," Prix Marcel Duchamp, FIAC, Paris (2015). Balula is participating in the 2017 Biennale de Lyon, which ends January 7, 2018.

From September 19 to 24, on the occasion of the 2017 European Heritage Days promoted by MiBACT, one of Balula's new sculptures will be on view at the Biblioteca Angelica in Rome, Europe's oldest public library, founded in 1604. The sculpture will be shown alongside several precious editions from the library's archive: Stefano degli Angeli's *Della gravità dell'aria, e fluidi, esercitata principalmente nelli loro homogene*, a mathematical treatise on gravity and matter from 1671; a rare 1638 edition of Galileo Galilei's *Discorsi e dimostrazioni matematiche*; and Isaac Newton's *Philosophiæ Naturalis principia mathematica*, in which the author describes his law of universal gravitation.

**Image:** Davide Balula, *Irons Levels*, 2017 © Davide Balula.

For further information please contact the gallery at [roma@gagosian.com](mailto:roma@gagosian.com) or at +39.06.4208.6498. All images are subject to copyright. Gallery approval must be granted prior to reproduction.

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