

VEDOVI GALLERY

MINING THE SURFACE

September 18 – October 31 2025

Vedovi Gallery is proud to announce *Mining the Surface*, a group exhibition that examines the surface as both a material construct and a conceptual framework for art across the 20th and 21st centuries. This exhibition employs the notion of surface as a conceptual schema, highlighting artists who have subverted, punctured, or transcended conventional treatments of the pictorial or sculptural skin through mediums of painting, sculpture, collage, textile, and assemblage. These methods are exemplified in this curated section of intergenerational practices, encompassing works of Jean Arp, Agostino Bonalumi, Louise Bourgeois, Allora & Calzadilla, Dadamaino, Lucio Fontana, Robert Ryman, Kurt Schwitters, Gedi Sibony, Gabriel Sierra, Rudolf Stingel, and Christopher Wool.

Mining the Surface considers how this traditional boundary—historically viewed as a support or façade in painting and sculpture—has been reimagined as an active site of inquiry, rupture, and material meaning. This puncturing is initially exemplified in Lucio Fontana's celebrated cut works, which invite viewers to enter inside the substrate of art. *Concetto Spaziale, Attese* (1962) is an active iconoclasm, dismantling painting's history as an illusionary window and encouraging the understanding of art as both material presence and object of power. Dadamaino's *Volume* (1959) refers to this transparency, interpreting painting as simultaneously both opaque and flat, while Robert Ryman's *Untitled, Prototype* (1969) eludes such narrative models. By focusing on structure as a conceptual substrate, Ryman maintains his devotion to the austerity of the Minimalist legacy.

The exhibition equally reflects on the poetic and architectural implications of surface, prompted by Kurt Schwitters, a pioneering installation artist renowned for his *Merzbau* which, in 1933, reconfigured how art and space coalesce. Exemplified here in one of his poignant collage works, *Obne Titel (Par Avion)* (1947), Schwitters employs the additive qualities of collage to reduce structure down to the surface, creating a detailed palimpsest that speaks to the lived experience through time and memory. Similarly, Louise Bourgeois' intimate material manipulations, known for their unique combinations of the surreal and the macabre, are seen in *Untitled* (2005), where traditional techniques of quilting embody surface as a form of covering and concealment. This act of covering supports the architectural allegory embodied in Allora & Calzadilla's *Shape Shifter* (2013), composed entirely of used sandpaper sheets. This work describes the residual product of artistic labour.

By bringing such a breadth of works into dialogue, *Mining the Surface* offers a reconsideration of how the surface destabilizes boundaries between depth and appearance. The exhibition invites a critical reflection on this often-contested territory of modern and contemporary art, positioning surface not as a passive element, but as an active force in art's transformative history. By fostering a formal and conceptual resonance with the artists featured, punctuated by a myriad of transformations, this presentation suggests the eternal metamorphosis of the surface as a fundamental category in the evolution of art.

Contact

Vedovi Gallery
11 Bd de Waterloo, 1000 Brussels
contact@vedovigallery.com
+ 32 (2) 2 518 38 38