

Kerstin Brätsch/Eduardo Paolozzi *Sun Swallower*

*Sant'Andrea De Scaphis, Rome 30 June – 25 September*

Art dealer Gavin Brown may have shut down his eponymous New York gallery to join Barbara Gladstone, but his Rome space carries on. A deconsecrated ninth-century church, it features an exceedingly high ceiling, a seventeenth-century altar and dilapidated walls. There is something genuinely spiritual about it, which the German artist Kerstin Brätsch and guest curator Saim Demircan harness in *Sun Swallower*, featuring glassworks and stucco marmo pieces by Brätsch and aluminium sculptures from the 1960s by Eduardo Paolozzi.

Brätsch's bright glassworks, studded with blue, red, fuchsia and turquoise gemstones, shine like stained glass, and feature figures that viewers will instinctively categorise as occult, shamanistic, atavistic. The glassworks appear to fit seamlessly in the space until you are jarred by the sight of a long mechanical arm that holds them. The works' titles redouble

this bridging between ancient and modern, referencing subjects such as Munin and Hugin, a pair of raven spirits in Norse mythology who carried news and information to the god Odin. *Munin (Gedächtnis)* (2012–21) recalls a Tibetan Buddhist demon, with fiery eyes, each a different coloured sliced agate, and swirling stylised nostrils spouting bright red fire. The pieces, in this case consisting of Schwarzlot on glass jewels, sliced agates, church window bordering and lead on antique glass, are gorgeously executed patchworks of recycled materials. Below the glassworks are Brätsch's stucco marmos, a combination of plaster, pigments, glue, wax and oil on honeycomb that create shimmering marblelike sculptures. Brätsch, a painter by training, has spoken of following the logic of the brushwork in a different language, which is precisely what is happening here – indeed a few of the works

are called *Brushstrokes*. In *Fossil Psychics for Christa (Stucco Marmo)* (2019–21), a psychedelic pixelated face looks out at us in neon shades of pink, blue and orange.

Brätsch's works take up the walls while the floor is the stage for Paolozzi's welded aluminium sculptures. *The Twin Towers of the Sfinx - State II* (1962), looking like something out of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), has been placed at the foot of the altar. Paolozzi, however, had a futurist type of faith in machines, and indeed these are not ominous constructions: *Girof* (1964), cocking its head at us like a puppy, is positively cute. Together, Brätsch and Paolozzi – one speaking the language of occult but playful signifiers, the other of a kind of science-fiction modernity – bounce off each other effectively and encourage us to embrace technology's brighter sides: a rare feat in these dark times. *Ana Vukadin*



*Sun Swallower*, 2021 (installation view). Photo: Daniele Malojoli.  
Courtesy the artist and Sant'Andrea de Scaphis, Rome