

# ARTFORUM

## Valerio Nicolai

SMART – POLO PER L'ARTE

Piazza Crati, 6/7

May 30–September 29

"*Prospettiva di una matryoska*" (Perspective of a Matryoshka) showcases Valerio Nicolai's propensity for producing multimedia works that cohere as if they were a single piece. Offering a blend of installations, sculptures, and paintings, the show was inspired by a system: the Chinese nesting box. It is an approach that verges on narration, almost turning the entire exhibition into a large work.

Upon entering, visitors encounter *Matryoska con spacca finestra* (Matryoshka with Broken Window) (all works 2017), a faded brick-red mattress covered in canvas and surmounted by a ceramic object that, while abstract, resembles an animal skull. Proceeding through the show, viewers encounter more installations that incorporate canvases and appear to be three-dimensional paintings.

Nicolai's point of departure is always a found object, which he then re-creates. Holding the object in his hand, the artist lets his imagination wander, repeatedly testing out positions for the item—for instance, by resting it on the floor, then remaking the floor as a work, as in *Matryoska con occhi a 8* (Matryoshka with Eight Eyes). Here, Nicolai drew two eyes, close together, on a household iron; he then reconstructed the iron in ceramic, with two ceramic eyes. Throughout the show it becomes clear that Nicolai paints from reality and chance occurrences, revamping both via a unique form of three-dimensional painting and thus yielding spontaneous narrations among the various items he engages with.

*Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.*



View of "*Prospettiva di una matryoska*" (Perspective of a Matryoshka), 2017.

— Marco Tagliaferro

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