



Lee Materazzi, 'Laced Hands 3,' 2022, c-print

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Lee Materazzi's 'Nipples Pulled Through' is freckled with interjections of her body

By AVA MORTON FEBRUARY 13, 2023



Playful compositions are enmeshed with uncanny gestures in the photographic and sculptural work by Bay Area-based artist Lee Materazzi in *Nipples Pulled Through*, on view through Sat/18 in Eleanor Harwood Gallery's intimate one-room space. Both humorous and subversive, the work in *Nipples Pulled Through* explores the complexities of portraiture and the impossibility of separating art and life.

Materazzi affirms that her young daughters are her collaborators, creating drawings, sculptures, and

collage in the studio they share together. In some instances, Materazzi creates sets for her performances using the remains of these art experiments, which are ultimately documented as photographs. Amid the vibrant textures, colors, and shapes, the photographs and sculptures are freckled with interjections of Materazzi's body.

Through windows carved into these sets, one can make out fragmented gestures—fingers and nipples poke through holes in a metallic-coated collage, hair drapes through perforated fabric, hinged deep-blue limbs embrace beneath cut-out cardboard—that blur the boundary between the artist's body and the picture plane. In this way, the photographs and sculptures are simultaneously whimsical and unsettling.



Lee Materazzi, 'Yellow in Between,' 2022, c-print.

In *Yellow in Between*, Materazzi obscures her face, denying the viewer the privilege of seeing her features. She presses her figure against the stitched white and blue fabric, exposing her hands and legs above the material, seamlessly entwined into the patchwork fabric. The hybridity present in this photograph serves to blur the boundary between art and life, which is a thematic throughline in the exhibition.

Folded and Folding are the two sculptural works that face each other on opposing corners on the gallery floor, giving the viewer insight into the physicality of the photographic work hung on the surrounding gallery walls. *Folded* takes shape in the form of a pale blue cardboard box filled with casts of the artist's knees in the same color, arrested in a bent pose. While in *Folding*, a bright yellow chair leans against the wall in an almost closed position; its base is painted dark blue and adorned with plaster casts of the artist's tongue. Both pieces are open, inviting the viewer to see inside the box or beneath the chair's seat, but instead of voyeuristically gazing at a nude body, the viewer is presented with a flippant collection of appendages.



Lee Materazzi, 'Patchwork,' 2022, c-print

In *Laced Hands*, Materazzi photographs her hands in three poses decorated in scribbles of black, purple, green, yellow, and orange marker. Black lines trace her veins, radiating out to her fingertips. The daily ritual of making art with her daughters is inscribed on the surface of her skin. As much as any frequent act, this pastime informs a part of her identity. Yet, again, this photograph only depicts a portion of her body and one aspect of her life. By intentionally obfuscating parts of her body, the viewer cannot see her in her entirety and, therefore, unable to gain closure.

Materazzi's ever-evolving performances, photographs, and sculptures are open-ended, foregrounding the constellation of lived experiences that shapes her practice. By overtly focusing on seemingly innocuous gestures, activities, and materials in her surreal yet assertive compositions, Materazzi employs humor to destabilize reductive ways of seeing while asking viewers to reexamine beauty in the mundane.

LEE MATERAZZI: NIPPLES PULED THROUGH runs through Sat/18 at Elizabeth Harwood Gallery, SF. [More info here.](#)

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