

maltchique

in the end, it's that we chose

The 2024 series, *in the end, it's that we chose*, grapples with humanity's yearning for a performative identity that transcends material time. The pairing of the stone's ancient lineage with the industrial coldness of steel and enamel; or the juxtaposition of steel and enamel against the texture of encaustic and the fluidity of oil, foreshadow a conversation about the body and technology, inviting interpretations of the decision its title suggests.

The first work, *in the end, it's that we chose n°1*, grounds itself in fragments of onyx, a natural material with a deep geological history, immediately introducing a temporal depth that surpasses the ephemerality of human life. Upon this stone rests an etched steel plaque, an age-old and artisanal technique used to imprint and immortalize portraits on memorial markers, rendered in an industrial, precise, and cold material. The image inscribed on this metallic surface employs a reticulated pattern (also known as halftone), a technique that transforms a continuous image into a discrete composition of dots. This reticulated image is filled with enamel.



*in the end, it's that
we chose n°1, 2024*

*etched steel tombstone plaque,
enamel, onyx fragments*

51 x 56 x 03 cm
20 x 22 x 1.2 inches

The enamel-filled reticulated image presents a close-up of a face, a synthetic portrait generated by artificial intelligence and physically realized in the metal through acid etching that forms minuscule dots where the enamel ink accumulates. The face bears an intense expression: an open mouth in an act oscillating between piercing pain and rapturous ecstasy, intensified by the unsettling presence of metallic implants piercing the lips, reminiscent of sutures. The eyes, abstract and almost watery, deepen the sensation of vulnerability and suffering, or perhaps, of a transcendental experience.

The etched steel plaque serves as a fundamental material link between the works in the series, establishing a conceptual resonance through the use of this technique associated with memory and mourning. The reticulated image inscribed on this metallic surface presents the same face that will be seen in the other work.

In *in the end, it's that we chose n°2*, a synthetic portrait is etched onto a steel plaque that is overlaid with layers of encaustic and oil. Encaustic, with its roots in funerary art and the rituals of image preservation, particularly in ancient Egypt, introduces a strong connotation of attempting to fix something in time. However, the way the oil paint spreads and settles on this waxen layer suggests the opposite: a memory or an image fading away, leaving behind only vestiges and traces of its dissolution.



*in the end, it's that
we chose n°2, 2024*

*etched steel tombstone plaque,
enamel, onyx fragments*

*51 x 56 x 03 cm
20 x 22 x 1.2 inches*

A new synthetic iteration of the same portrait is etched in the second work of the series. The most evident mutation lies in the mouth, which takes on an almost animalistic form, as if encased in a rigid, shell-like structure. This drastic alteration of something fundamentally human evokes a sense of strangeness and a loss of original identity, perhaps suggesting a failed attempt at containment or isolation.

The very duality present in the works – the memorial solidity of the steel plaque confronting the organic and synthetic mutations of the faces – illustrates the Foucauldian tension between the desire for a fixed identity and the reality of bodily materiality. As we contemplate the two works in the series in the end, it's that we chose, a strong resonance emerges with Michel Foucault's thoughts on the notions of utopia and the body. The choice of the steel plaque as a fundamental support in both works directly relates to the human preoccupation with memory and the attempt to fix identity beyond mortality.



in the end, it's that we chose n°1, 2024 - detail



in the end, it's that we chose n°1, 2024 - detail



in the end, it's that we chose n°2, 2024 - detail



in the end, it's that we chose n°2, 2024 - detail

In his reflections, Foucault describes the cemetery and the tombstone as representations of a “utopia of the dead” – a geometric space where the body is figured as solid, geometric, and eternal. The choice of the steel plaque as a support in the works of the series echoes this desire for permanence and the fixation of identity, reinforced by the material’s durability.

However, the representations that emerge from these etched steel plaques challenge this search for a fixed and idealized identity. Far from the serenity expected in a memorial, the faces are presented in a square portrait format, a contemporary digital standard where the faces display mutations and expressions laden with pain, ecstasy, or strangeness. This juxtaposition of formats seems to contradict the “utopia of the dead,” bringing to the fore the “sad topology of the body” that Foucault also discusses – the materiality, the imperfection, and the inevitable decay that the idealization of death seeks to erase.

Contemporary technology, especially artificial intelligence, expands the human search for an idealized self-representation, going beyond mere editing to the creation of digital identities that can transcend the human form, a yearning that the “utopia of the dead” also reflects. The synthetic faces generated by AI in these works can be seen as a glitch in this pursuit of a perfected, fixed, and digitally engraved “self” upon the coldness of steel. However, the deformations and intense expressions in these technological representations suggest the persistent “sad topology of the body,” resisting digital idealization.

Thus, the title of the series, *in the end, it's that we chose, 2024*, explicitly raises a central question explored in the works: the nature of this implicit choice lies at the threshold between the pursuit of an idealized image in the digital age – a new form of utopia – and the irreducible materiality of the body, posing a question about the different paths of transformation that this choice may imply.



in the end, it's that we chose, 2024 - installation view

And finally, the series confronts us with the persistent tension between the human desire to transcend the fragility of the body and the stubborn reality of our materiality, even in the age of advanced representation technologies. The choice that the title presents us with, therefore, may be about how we navigate this threshold, and perhaps art, like these works, offers us a space to contemplate the complex implications of this decision.

2024