



Life in Lie

Francesco Cagnin

Bottom of the Fjord, 2026
Seabed on table
Variable dimensions

Francesco had 11 months to make the show. We met him at an art fair in Barcelona and extended an invitation at a café. We talked for an hour, while he laid out elements of contemporary life that he was either fed up with or still in love with. He had recently seen Lars von Trier and Jørgen Leth's *The Five Obstructions* (2003) and proposed to watch it together; we never did. After briefly talking about minor emotional irritations, we exchanged hugs and decided to give it a couple of months before meeting again, now back in Oslo and Zürich respectively.

Francesco made it clear that he didn't want to speak about money or potential funders. It was either of no interest to him, or ruined the interest in everything else. He was keen to be subjected to limitations. Stepping out of our usual role as producers and allies, we proposed to Francesco that he make a work about love. He never responded, instead showing us images of one his newer works, *Intolerance*. Months later, during an hour-long meeting from a car, excitement grew with the proposal of a new work, described (and later to

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by Francesco Cagnin

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be titled) as *Bottom of the Fjord*. The work is the laying out/bare a quarter of a ton of seabed. Initially described as a gut-mind connection trust operation, it was always a very concrete and practical proposal. It was never about Oslo, as the piece can be reproduced in different contexts, nor ecology, an abject and formless matter, or sculpture, although it wouldn't matter if it were to be read in such a way¹.

During the preparation of *Life in Lie* there was, for a while, an image problem as any image seemed too partial. The broader image became too abstract. And everything else — the riddle he avoided, because riddles, a trigger-word, are sentimental (they believe obstruction exists in order to be solved); the diagram he wouldn't employ (because diagrams are even more moralistic than riddles) — came down to the same fundamental suspicion: to make something clear, one first has to agree on what the information is, and why it has been arranged that way. This is very convenient, unless convenience is the problem.

An artist born in Mirano, on the mainland of Venice, and based in Zurich, Switzerland, **Francesco Cagnin** studied at IUAV (Venice), SOMA (Mexico City), and graduated at ECAL (Lausanne) in 2016. His work has been exhibited internationally, including at Autokomanda Belgrade, Kunsthalle Zürich, Centre d'Art Contemporain Geneva, Fondation Ricard Paris, Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa Venezia and the 16th Quadriennale di Roma.

¹Francesco Cagnin: "In the last few weeks, while exercising my imagination and trying to visualise *Bottom of the Fjord* inside Pachinko, I started noticing something strange: my news feed suddenly filled with images of the exposed bottoms of other bodies of water, revealed by this summer's drought. I couldn't help reading this coincidence as a kind of omen. There is a recurring tendency among certain artists to notice something in reality, unscrew it from its context, and rescrew it onto the wall of a gallery. The number of coincidental encounters that have accompanied the making of this work makes me think that many of us are trying to deal with similar things, only through different forms. And perhaps it is precisely when those forms begin to differ that we are prompted to disagree."