



LIZ O'BRIEN

New York

PETER BINGHAM

8 Prism VI & VII

Scagliola and pigmented plaster.

British, 2025

Dimensions

6"H x 40"W combined x 8.25"D

Reference #8PrismVIIandVIII





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SCAGLIOLA and PETER BINGHAM

First conceived in ancient times and revived in Baroque Italy, scagliola is a technique used by plaster artisans to mimic the look of marble stone, both natural and invented. By combining colored inclusions in a gypsum plaster medium, then burnishing to high shine when just damp, the artist can create a piece that approximates the strength and appearance of marble without the constraints of natural stone. The pigments, in highly imaginative color combinations and complex compositions, are not a surface application but rather are integral to the material.

Often more prized than a quarried stone, scagliola has the benefit of being seamless which made it popular for large scale interior applications since its reintroduction in the 17th century. Used to clad columns, pilasters, fireplace surrounds, and altars, it could be applied to canvas and, while wet, wrapped around a support and finished in place without joints. Highly labor intensive and created at great expense, scagliola features prominently in the grand homes of Europe, including Buckingham Palace and Peterhof, and might not be immediately recognizable to a modern visitor unfamiliar with the technique.

Today, Peter Bingham revisits scagliola from a distinctly modern perspective using found and scavenged pigments to create the veining in their monolithic consoles and tables. Bingham makes tongue-in-cheek references to the marble that their material isn't by chipping away at the corners of the pieces almost as if a sculptor has stopped mid-chisel while making a statue. Bingham's pieces are patently not from the heyday of scagliola with their blocky forms and muted colors. Using brick dust and soot to tint the inclusions he adds to the plaster body, the anachronism of embracing the grand scagliola technique is undermined by the pared down shapes and reclaimed materials. What persists from the historic use of scagliola is the irresistibility of the material, the allure of the unknown, the question is it or isn't it real stone and does that matter?