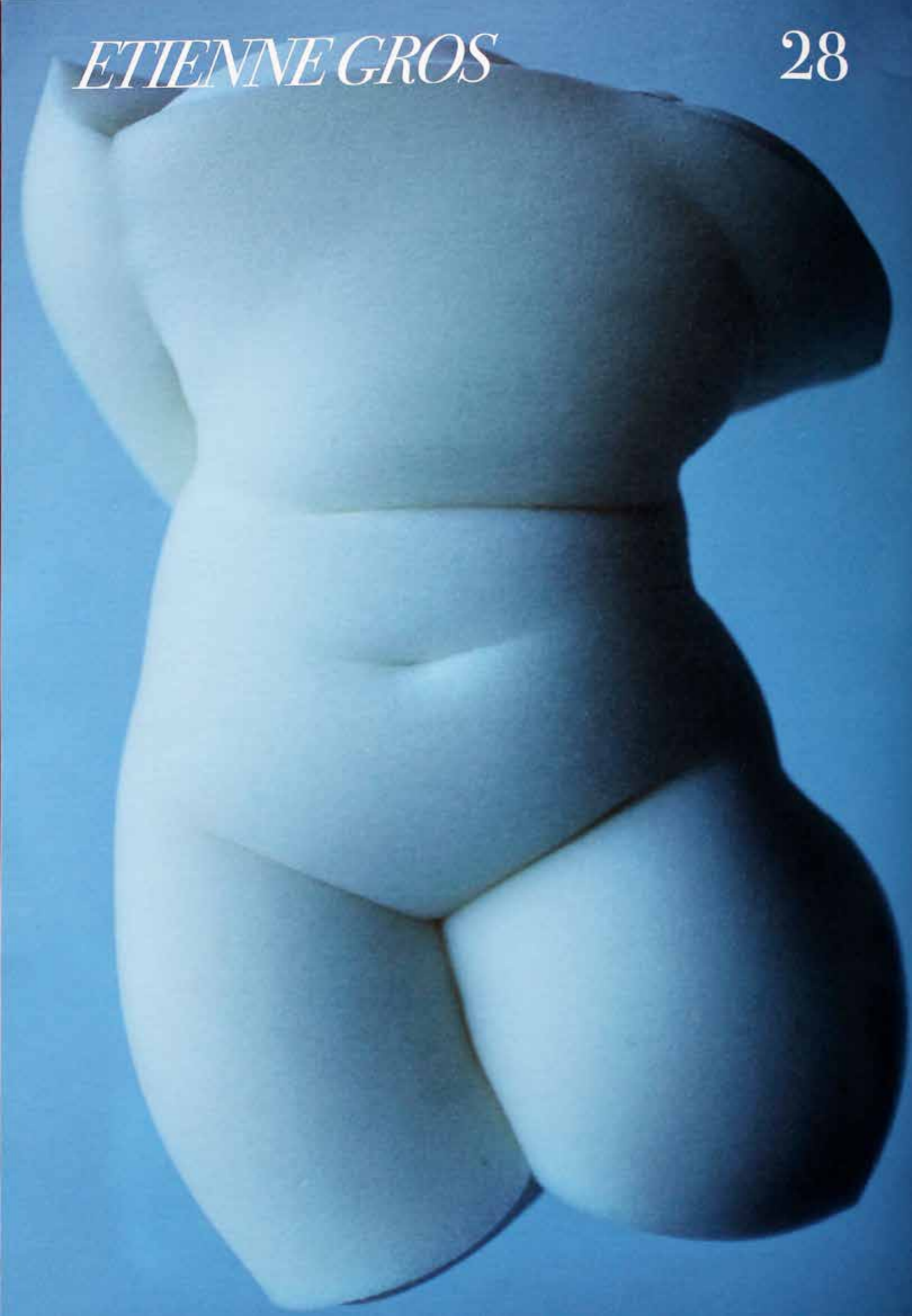


# DREAM



A MAGAZINE ABOUT  
OBJECTS AND MATERIA



**THE SERIES OF FOAM SCULPTURES ARE BASED ON AN IDEA OF UNIVERSALITY RELATED TO THE CLASSIC CARVINGS THAT WERE REDISCOVERED DURING THE ROMANTIC ERA AND TO THE CULT OF RUINS AND FRAGMENTS. I'M INTERESTED ABOUT THIS FACE-TO-FACE BETWEEN THE MARBLE, WHICH IS A STABLE SUBSTANCE AND THE FOAM, WHICH IS KIND OF UNSTABLE AND BIODEGRADABLE AND THEREFORE FEELS MORE ALIVE AND SIMILAR TO OUR HUMAN ENTITY.**

**GG** Whether it's through painting, drawing or sculpture, your work focuses on the human body. How did the body become a source of inspiration to you?

**EG** When I was young I used to draw all kinds of subjects—landscape, still-life, fantasy—so I could try different techniques. But as I grew up, the human body became much more important to me, especially during my years at the School of Fine Arts in Paris. I used to live in a small town and was from a family of ten brothers and sisters, so coming to Paris was like jumping into a different and amazing world. Visiting the Louvre for the first time was a big life event for me. I could spend hours gazing at those representations of human anatomy from the great masters. Michelangelo's slaves, Titan, Gériacult, David and Ingres paintings were then, and still are, a huge inspiration for my drawings.

**GG** Regarding the foam series: how did you end up deciding on the definitive idea and shape? Did you do some research on materials or techniques beforehand?

**EG** One day I was in my atelier and I was working on a random piece of foam without paying much attention. I squeezed the foam with my hands and wrinkles appeared. It was odd: it looked like wrinkles on a human body. I tried to fix these shapes with different steel threads, pushing them into the foam so I could give it a human shape.

The most difficult part was trying to keep the threads fixed on the foam and making it look the way I wanted. Sometimes a few unwanted wrinkles appeared on it and easily ruined the harmony. I know the work is finished when I feel the sculpture will lose its purity if I go further, so I have to be very conscious all the time.

I like this material because it has a great symbolic value in today's society. Polyurethane foam is used by the majority of humans of all countries and of all social categories. Every day, we are in close contact with this foam, sitting or lying on top of cushions, on an armchair, a sofa, a bed, inside a car—everywhere. This foam is wrapped in cloth or leather and adapts to our body and models itself on our own shape. We are born, we sleep, we make love and we die close to this material.

Besides, this particular foam with its texture, its density, its lightness, its pores, its colour and its softness has the same characteristics of human flesh. What is fun and exciting is to go to the radiologist with my foams for an X-ray and reveal the steel skeleton. I do this for every sculpture. The buyers of my "Foams" will also have their X-ray. I think this medical approach brings more humanity to my work, becoming a metaphor of what is alive.

**GG** And what about the smoke?

**EG** The smoke is something more difficult to make. I started drawing with carbon around 1984 during my art studies in Paris, but in a different way. I filled the sheet of paper with black carbon and I drew, removing some black parts and leaving prints on it.

Then one day I went back to these habits by accident. I was playing with the flame of a candle [when] I discovered I could draw in a different way with smoke. It became an astonishing experience as I realized I could refrain from modifying and erasing to make new representations of the human body with paintbrushes or pencils, but [instead] the flame of the carbon. Once the carbon has kindly touched the sheet of paper; it rests on it and nothing else.

Of course a great part of it is unpredictable, and I let it be. Nevertheless, I use oil lamps with wicks of different lengths to diversify the smoke intensity and take control over the execution, just like a painter using different brushes.

It happens that I have to throw away a great number of sheets before I can see an interesting shape. And suddenly, as if by magic, it reveals itself. From that point on, the difficult part is to conclude the drawing without ruining it with too much flame.

**GG** It is kind of a performance. In some way, one could think that you, by drawing with smoke, capture the action of the fire on paper. Would you say that by doing so you express the intangibility of fire?

**EG** Yes. The fire, like the water, can't be fixed to a surface. The coal sediment produced by fire is just the trace of its existence. A good alliance between the fire and myself is needed to get the volumes and traces I want. There are very few moments of magic one must learn to wait for and to provoke.

**“I PREFER TO KEEP THE BODY AS THE MAIN SUBJECT BECAUSE TO ME IT FEELS LIKE AN EXTENSION OF MY OWN BODY, IN WHICH I EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT VISUAL ALTERATIONS REGARDING THE COLORS, THE SUBSTANCE, THE SHAPE OR THE LIGHT.”**

**GG** In your paintings, it looks like you have a preference over perspectives that are very close to the models. Why?

**EG** In my first paintings, the characters were fully represented from head to toe. Gradually, painting after painting, I frame-zoomed as if I wanted to go deeper inside the human body. It was instinctive. I also like this fragile separation between abstraction and portrayal. The close-ups on a part of the body mixed with colour and substance blur the reading. Somehow, the gaze fades and yet the body is there, but it's hidden.

**GG** What is the meaning that you give to colour in your works? Especially concerning your paintings, there is a particular use of colours and techniques (solid colours, brush). Could you share a few ideas on your painting technique?

**EG** I start by stretching the linen canvas on the frame and then I smooth down a thin sheet of paper on top of it. It's like a fine skin that allows me to erase the fabric of the canvas. Once the canvas is dry again, I put it on the floor. Then, I do the abstract work using colours. They have to be separated or mixed in harmony. Usually, I tend to use warm colours that create substance when placed on top of black and white.

When I feel satisfied, I hang the painting on the wall of my atelier so I can start with the second phase, which is drawing volumes and separation lines according to mass and colours. I never know the outcome of the work. I just let myself go and use my knowledge of anatomy. The image draws itself progressively after a series of colours and cutter scratches that enhance the richness of the substance. If I'm not convinced, I can start these tasks all over. I use

acrylic paint because it gives me more freedom. It dries faster and has a flat look.

**GG** You often make series out of the topics you work on. Is repetition a part of your artistic research? What is the aim of these variations for the same topic?

**EG** Needless to say, I have quite an obsessive connection to the body. But, even if the way I create may seem repetitive, I know each piece will be unique. There are so many variations during the process which make them all singular and particular, even being part of a series.

I prefer to keep the body as the main subject because to me it feels like an extension of my own body, in which I experience different visual alterations regarding the colours, the substance, the shape or the light. I'm also interested in how my work will evolve throughout the years, just like I will, not only physically but artistically. The series helps me picture this evolution.