

# THE NEW PAGANISM OF THE ULTRA-POP IDOLS

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Idol of Technology and Consumption, 2008, glazed stoneware, 52 x 22 x 22cm

planet but that we want to possess even to the extent of counterfeiting. Paolo Porelli has put into focus this strong moral stance as the tragedy of our times. Intending to evoke a reaction in those who contemplate his work, he has decided to put himself forward with the potent physical presence offered by ceramic sculpture, so masterly set in place by him.

These sculptural presences are anthropomorphic representations of alarming behaviours to which Paolo has given form. They are the contradictions of our affluent society that are jeopardizing the environment and the very life of the Earth, prey to the imperative spell of producing and consuming, motivated by profit regardless of how much pollution results. Even the titles of the works declare these fixed ideas with authoritative force: *'Idol of Technology and Consumption'*, *'Materialist'*, *'Energy Promoter'*, etc. In their posture, these sculptures are similar to antique votive figures. They have been inverted however and transformed into negative and deconsecrated connotations by contemporary clothes, brazen colours derived from the pop imagination; often they recall the super-heroes of numerous cartoons. They carry objects-attributes that almost always are moulds of industrial objects but that can be transformed into hermetic presences as 'ready-mades' or enigmas. If

2011: all of our desires seem readily accessible, wallet permitting. Technology, in the entirety of its multiple applications, incessantly surpasses each of its previous successes; it rushes, casting aside unwelcome obstacles, in an unending, and by now, uncontrollable acceleration. Unfortunately, its acceleration does not correspond to an equivalent optimization of our ethical conscience, which is instead becoming extinct. Nature is no longer seen and respected as the territory of beauty and harmony of which we ourselves are part but rather as something to be depleted as if a mine to be exhausted to its final vein. Thus, in the triumph of the most savage capitalism, nothing less than a slogan of the Stalinist period seems surprisingly and paradoxically still relevant: "Nature is not a temple but a construction site", composed of dust and pollution. The evil conscience of a profoundly schizophrenic society is now dominant. A society of people who for one week of the year anxiously seek uncontaminated paradises for their vacations while for the other 358 days of the year they pollute the environment, in an almost inevitable march towards ecological disaster.

And thus, into this edifying picture, the *Ultrapop Idols* modelled by Paolo Porelli appear with perfect timing: contemporary totems that nevertheless conserve an archaic aura and mystery. They present their "offerings", those objects and products so desired by us, often noxious for the health of the

Zoologist, 2010, glazed stoneware, 55.5h x 28 x 20 cm





the terracotta, that gives them form, seems to be born of the positive union of the four mythical elements of which the world is formed (water, air, earth and fire), in contrast, these sculptures present themselves as simulacra, bearers of energy used negatively by contemporary man for objectives often unconsciously destructive. And thus, this short-circuit between the memory of the past and the urgency of the present renders these figures in the same instant ancient and contemporary, disturbing but also amusing, mysterious and yet transparent in their role.

Swept away by statistics and polls accurately manipulated to impose certain truths, we have also lost the magical and harmonious aspect of numbers and transformed them into mere equivalents of money, the only force that now moves and orders our destiny. And thus are born the '*Accumulator of Numbers*' and the '*Number Eater*' invented by Porelli. Correctly, the Roman artist then reserves a special attention for fire as an emblem of that energy of combustion that propels world-wide technology, but in his works "there is also a parallel allusion to the psychological fire by which modern civilization is traversed: frenzy, acceleration, exaltation are behaviours of a futuristic memory that expresses the cerebral temperature to which we are subjected that assume aspects of animal aggressiveness ('*Zoologist*').

His idols have human physiognomy but often they do not even possess a face, covered by objects that they themselves want to impose. With a conceptual leap, Paolo Porelli purposely emphasises these presences; he renders them

*Number Eater*, 2010, luster glazed earthenware, 60 x 20 x 18cm



*Energy Promoter*, 2008, glazed stoneware, 51 x 31 x 21cm

*Materialist*, 2009, glazed fireclay, 53 x 36 x 20cm



surreal and grotesque and therefore, in the end unreliable. He wants to reveal their empty semblance, their nature of inconsistent simulacra, to convince us to distrust false values and the pure materialism that have become an integral part, noxious and fundamental, of this civilization.