

Artist in the spotlight

THINKING THROUGH MAKING

WITH PEPE VALENTI



This is an exclusive interview with Pepe Valenti by SmithDavidson Gallery.

Mostly working in the fields of art and collectible design, Pepe Valenti is a young sculpture and installation artist. Valenti was born in Barcelona but moved to London at the age of 12. He graduated from Design Academy Eindhoven in the Netherlands in 2022 and has been working as a full-time artist ever since.

Moving around has taught Valenti to value differences and to adapt quickly. He changed schools often, where he met various types of people, from all over the world, with different cultural backgrounds, social status, and family dynamics. “And to this day, it’s in the differences that I find pleasure,” Valenti stated. “I learned not to judge a book by its cover, to appreciate beauty in the small things. Just because something is unknown or different does not mean it’s bad, in fact, that’s what I find it interesting.” Valenti often feels most creative when he is discovering new things—whether environments, materials, or skills.

He would return every couple of months to Spain, usually to the coast or countryside. For Valenti, going back was an energy shot. “Being in nature, floating in the water, or being surrounded by trees gave me so much energy to go back to London or the Netherlands and continue doing whatever I was doing at that time. I think somehow, I try to recreate those experiences with nature, and create pieces that have that same energy shot, that unexplainable power nature holds,” he explained. Alone, floating in the water or walking through forests, he would find inner peace.



Pepe Valenti, *The Portal* (2025)

“In addition, I was always doing something with my hands since I can remember. I was the artist of the class, or the year, not necessarily because I wanted to be, just because I have always found peace in creating.”

Becoming an artist then was a gradual process, led by intuition. “When I graduated, I sold some work, and with that, I could make new work. Slowly, it became my life. I want to believe it was destiny,” Valenti said. “For now, I do not see myself doing anything else. I have my dream job at 25; though it is not always easy, but every job has its perks, and who knows, maybe tomorrow I will do something completely different.”

El Mar

Pepe Valenti orientates his work in the boundary between design and art, exploring his fascination for materials and their relationship with aesthetics. His artwork results from a meticulous search to understand materials and processes, and he does so by physically experimenting with them. He works with stainless steel, usually plated with other metals, such as in *El Mar Wall Piece*, *Copper Sunset and Sunrise Wall Piece*. “When I first saw a piece of shiny metal at the beginning of the research for my graduation work, there was an instant connection, an intuitive attachment,” Valenti revealed.



Pepe Valenti, *El Mar Installation* (2023)



Pepe Valenti in front of *El Mar Installation* (2023)

“I was looking to make my own sea, and somehow, perfectly polished metal was the perfect material. Its interaction with light, its ability to transform and communicate movement, yet remain still, the craftsmanship behind it, and the ability to achieve a mirror finish. And not to forget, I think we humans are very attracted to reflections, and that is something I learned after I created my first mirror pieces. Everyone was interacting with them, from babies to grandparents, from selfies to laughter. There is a certain link with water, and in our first nine months on this planet, we spent [our days] floating [in the womb].”

The sea and its waves motivate Valenti endlessly. His graduation project, El Mar Installation, depicts the phenomenon where an infinite number of sparkling reflections are created by the sunlight hitting the water's surface. These moments mesmerize Valenti and return repeatedly in his work. Inspired by the immersive experience of the El Mar Installation, he created various sculptures, smaller but with a similar sense of wonder and beauty and with different plating, such as chrome, copper, and brass, to mirror the sunrise, sunset, and 'el mar' ('the sea' in Spanish).



Pepe Valenti, *Sunrise Wall Piece* (2022-2024)



Pepe Valenti, *El Mar Circle* (2025)

Intuitive and hands-on

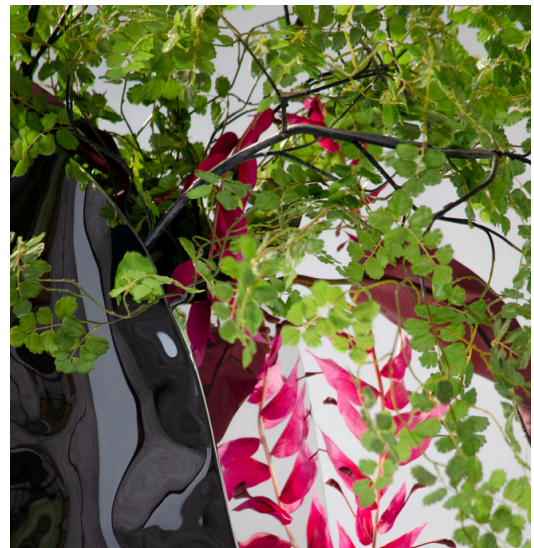
The process of creating a new piece varies. "It is always different, I hate it, and I love it," Valenti revealed. "I don't really have one way. Sometimes an idea comes to me, either from a moment, a material, or an experience. When I say I hate it, I mean I have not mastered it. It has more power over me than me over it, "it" as in creativity. It comes to me most of the time when I am on vacation, exploring a city, discovering new art, finding unique techniques, or immersing myself in nature. And when I say I love it, I mean I love the feeling when creating, the euphoria, the energy, the hopeful and boundless emotions attached. I am always seeking to find those emotions." Usually, it is through the process that he finds them, as he goes into it without a fixed expectation of the outcome.

"Working with my hands, letting them do the thinking, letting go of any preconceived ideas, and allowing the process to shape the outcome is a very important part when creating a new piece—letting the craft shape the material, having a conversation with the piece, understanding what it needs."

While Valenti's inspiration comes from raw and untouched matters surrounding us, his work remains very polished and refined. With an intuitive and hands-on approach, he is able to create an interesting contrast between the source and the outcome, a visually striking scene that he hopes reflects his experiences in nature. "I hope they feel a little of what I feel in nature, that mix of calm, energy, and wonder. For me, floating in the sea or walking through a forest can be transformative. If my work can spark even a glimpse of that same feeling, then it has done its job," he declared.

Valenti's installations have been displayed at numerous international exhibitions, including Art Miami, Milan Design Week, PAN Amsterdam, Design Biennale Rotterdam, and more. In 2023, his work was also on display at Art Museum Z33 in Hasselt, Belgium and at Koninklijk Theater Carré, Amsterdam. The same year, he was nominated for the Kazerne Design Award and won the Zuiver Scholarship 2023.

Currently, he is experimenting with stone, feeling as if he has discovered a whole new world due to all the different skills and craftsmanship. "I feel like a kid again," Valenti mentioned. "Moreover, I am also finishing quite a big piece where I keep on defying the boundaries between art and design."



Pepe Valenti, *El Mar Vase* (2025).