

ELMGREEN & DRAGSET

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ELMGREEN & DRAGSET AT FONDAZIONE PRADA

Elmgreen & Dragset explore the present condition of the body in the post-industrial age at Fondazione Prada's Milan venue. On view until August 22, 2022, 'Useless Bodies?' brings together a wide selection of the artist duo's sculptural and performative works in one of the foundation's most ambitious thematic investigations to date. Spanning more than 3,000 sqm, the exhibition unfolds in four gallery spaces and the courtyard, which have been transformed into a series of different universes, each with its own atmosphere, theme, and aesthetic. Together, the spaces compose an immersive investigation of our physical presence in an increasingly digitized world, where the body is losing its centrality or is even completely superfluous.

our bodies are no longer the main agents of our existence,' state Elmgreen & Dragset. 'They don't generate value in our societies' advanced production methods as they did in the industrial era. One could claim our physical selves have even become more of an obstacle than an advantage. In the 19th century, the body was the producer of daily goods, whereas, in the 20th century, the body's role became more that of the consumer. Twenty years into the 21st century the status of the body is now that of the product – with our data gathered and sold by Big Tech. With the publicly available knowledge surrounding the harvesting of data from tech companies being so inane, and the rapidly accelerating rate at which such companies are expanding into every aspect of our lives, it does sometimes feel a little scary to think about our bodies' future role.'



Exhibition views of 'Useless Bodies?' by Elmgreen & Dragset Fondazione Prada, Milan | Photo: Andrea Rossetti, Courtesy: Fondazione Prada, unless stated otherwise From left to right: Luigi Secchi, *Al lido*, post 1893 | Elmgreen & Dragset, *Pregnant White Maid*, 2017 | Elmgreen & Dragset, *Invisible*, 2017 | Elmgreen & Dragset, *He (Silver)*, 2013 Header image: Elmgreen & Dragset, *What's Left?*, 2021

THE IMMERSIVE INSTALLATIONS OF 'USELESS BODIES?'

Elmgreen & Dragset's 'Useless Bodies?' exhibition unfolds as a path that starts from Fondazione Prada's Podium, to the Nord gallery, to the Cisterna and, finally, to the outdoor spaces. On the ground floor of the Podium, the duo's works are exhibited alongside classical and neoclassical sculptures. This juxtaposition, inspired by Fondazione Prada's inaugural exhibition 'Serial Classic', shows both similarities and differences in how artists have mediated the male body through sculptural practices spanning centuries.

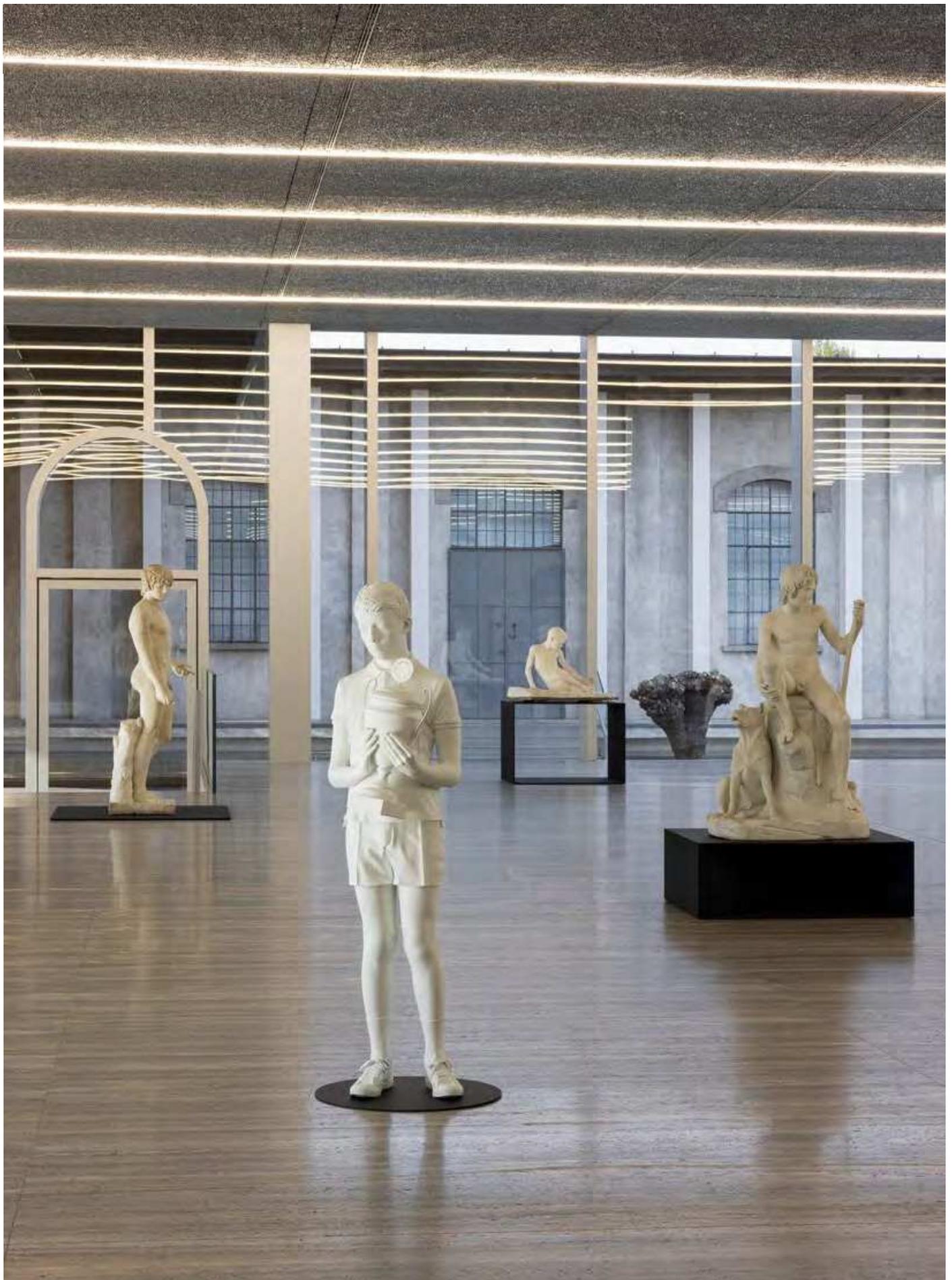
The second floor of the Podium is transformed into a vast, abandoned office landscape that explores the body's changed role in the context of labor. The immersive installation comprises a repetitive pattern of seemingly endless rows of workstations that evoke dystopian movie sets from films such as Jacques Tati's *Playtime* (1967) and Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985).



From left to right: Elmgreen & Dragset, *Watching*, 2021 | Elmgreen & Dragset, *For today I am a child*, 2016

In the foundation's Nord gallery, visitors encounter a futuristic vision of a domestic setting that fuses together elements of a bunker, a spaceship, and a science lab. This installation questions the way we exist in our homes today, especially now that we share them with technology to such a high degree. The audience is free to wander the space and explore the clinically designed objects, where the only moving presence is that of a robotic dog.

The fourth interior set up takes place in the Cisterna, where Elmgreen & Dragset look into how the wellness, leisure, and health industries pressure us to conform to new body ideals. The building's three rooms are turned into a forsaken spa-like environment that includes an abandoned swimming pool and a locker room. *'As our bodies are being rendered useless by technological innovations, the ever-expanding wellness, leisure, and health sectors are offering countless new ways to "solve the problem of the imperfect body,"'* reads the exhibition text. In the central room, a new work titled *'What's Left?'* explores the role of the body as a political actor or instrument of social change.



From left to right: Antinoo Farnese, Il secolo | Elmgreen & Dragset Flo, 2020 | Luigi Secchi, Al lido, post 1893 | Bertel Thorvaldsen, Hyrdedreng, 1822-1825 [Pastore]

Finally, the outdoor spaces of Fondazione Prada host a number of sculptures that look into how our bodies are physically regulated in the public sphere. By slightly altering familiar, everyday objects, these works encourage a re-evaluation of the ordinary and highlight how we negotiate the control mechanisms embedded in public spaces. The exhibition is accompanied by a 500-page publication titled 'Useless Bodies?', which is conceived as a thematic extension of the show, with multiple perspectives from over 35 authors –philosophers, artists, writers, scientists, and thinkers– addressing our changing perceptions of the body and its status today.

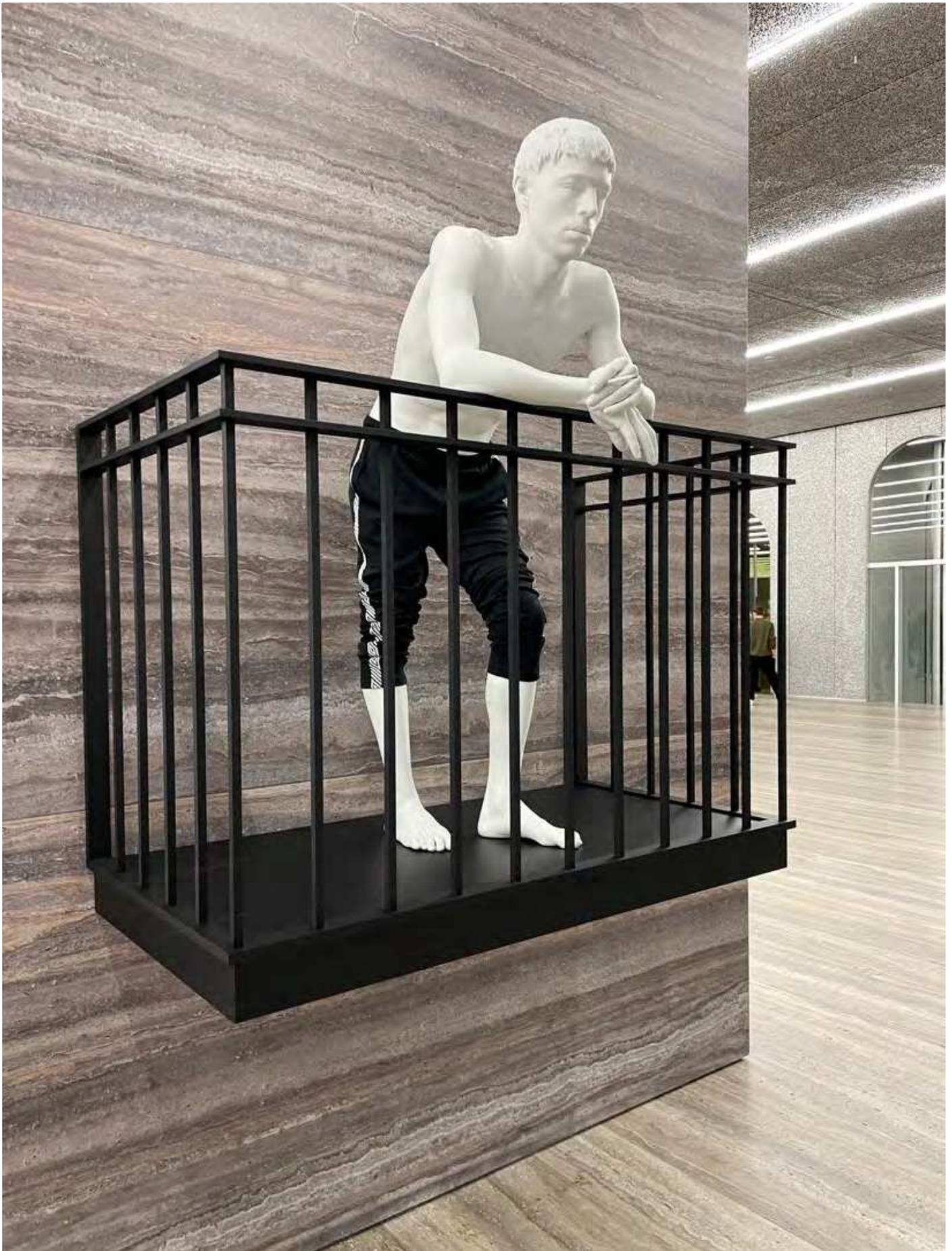
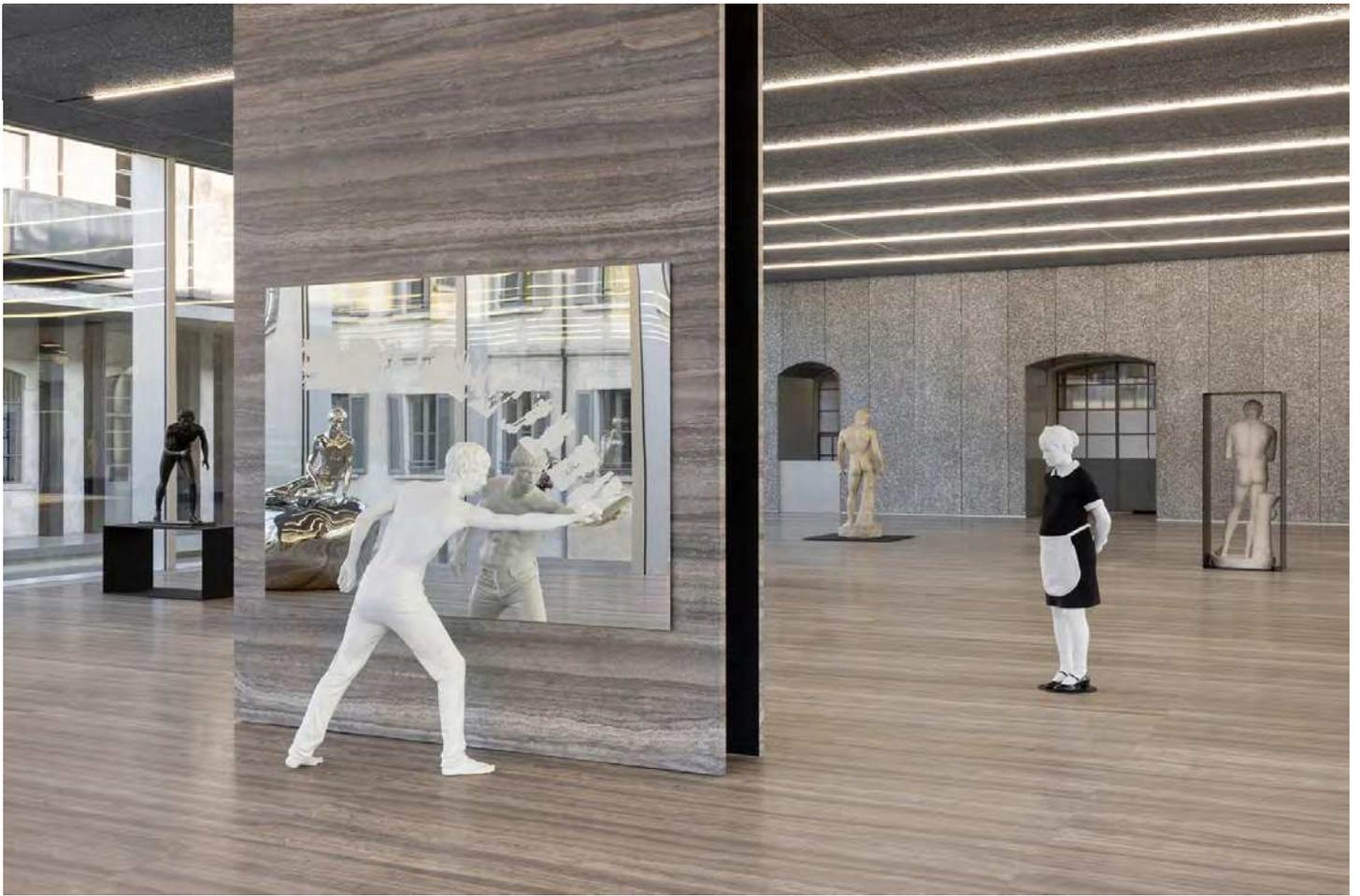


Image © designboom



From left to right: Corridore, I secolo a.C. | Elmgreen & Dragset, The Painter, Fig. 2, 2021 | Gladiatore Farnese, copia romana del 190-199, originale greco 460 a.C. ca. | Elmgreen & Dragset, Pregnant White Maid, 2017 | Atleta con strigile, 1938



Image © designboom



Elmgreen & Dragset Garden of Eden, 2022



From left to right: Elmgreen & Dragset, Doubt, 2019 | Lucio Fontana, Concetto Spaziale. La fine di Dio, 1963



From left to right: Elmgreen & Dragset, Circulation, 2019 | Elmgreen & Dragset, Untitled, 2011 | Elmgreen & Dragset, Pollarded Tree, 2022



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From top to bottom, from left to right: Nancy Grossmann, *Black*, 1973–1974 | Elmgreen & Dragset, *The Bed*, 2019 | Elmgreen & Dragset, *Looking Back*, 2022 | Elmgreen & Dragset, *Untitled (After The Lovers)*, 2015



In the foreground: Elmgreen & Dragset, *Piscina di Largo Isarco*, 2021 | In the background, from left to right: Elmgreen & Dragset, *Too Heavy*, 2017 | Elmgreen & Dragset, *I must make amends, Fig. 2*, 2019



In the foreground: Elmgreen & Dragset, Piscina di Largo Isarco, 2021 | In the background, from left to right:
Elmgreen & Dragset, A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall, 2021 | Elmgreen & Dragset, Free Play, 2018



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From left to right: Elmgreen & Dragset, Marriage, 2004 | Elmgreen & Dragset, The Touch, 2011



Elmgreen & Dragset at Fondazione Prada | Photo by Andrea Rossetti



Elmgreen & Dragset, What's Left?, 2021



Elmgreen & Dragset, What's Left?, 2021

