



**Riccardo Baruzzi «My Valley»
January 21st - March 18th, 2023**

Over the last seventy years, the rural landscape of northern Italy has dramatically changed under the influence of industrialisation. What was once the countryside is now an extension of the urban outskirts, an area in search of social and political identity, as tradition gets forgotten and progress arrives unexpectedly.

This is the world that *My Valley* portrays, a series of works created by Riccardo Baruzzi for the Mark Müller Gallery. The Italian artist takes us into the visual and acoustic landscape of his homeland, the heart of Romagna, using images, sculptures, sounds and live performances. Surrounded by symbolic figures, masks and ghosts, we wander through a place of which, 'nothing is known, everything is imagined', as Fellini once said.

In Baruzzi's valley, the *Giunchi* (2023) hang from the ceiling. They are slender and supple sound sculptures inspired by rushes, common aquatic plants in the Ravenna marshes. In the exhibition though, the rushes are made of metal rods, painted string and porcelain elements resembling cowbells. In the hollow space of each chirps a vibrating toy, resembling the sound of cicadas.

The journey continues as we move around the disturbing forms of the *Spaventapasseri* (2023), scarecrows in English. The humanoids' bodies are composed of fine metal tubes, their terracotta faces can take the shape of either a snake or a hen. In place of hands, Baruzzi has added bronze reproductions of mysteriously mutated branches, which have long puzzled local botanists. The scarecrows wear drapes and clothing depicting small figures from a natural world, confined to the realm of representation.

Turning our attention to the wall, our gaze lingers on the photographic portrait of the artist, ironically showing us his paintings, as if they were the catch of the day. In the background are silos, smokestacks, a fisherman's hut, and the muddy waters of Ravenna's industrial port. The photo radiates its own light, thanks to a small digital frame, the keyhole through which one can peek, fantasising perhaps about what lies beyond.

The world of *My Valley* speaks the language of frugal craftsmanship, a kind of bricolage created solely with found objects. In this sense, Baruzzi's valley is the product of a radical assemblage, not only because of the source of its materials but also due to the many techniques applied: sculpture, sound art, painting, digital art, performing arts, and various other handicrafts.

What emerges is the portrait of an 'undisciplined' artist, by necessity and by will. Like a true ferryman, Baruzzi moves between disciplines, categories and cultures, in this region torn between land and sea, reality and dream, the human and the natural. It is here where Baruzzi survives, on the fringes of the arts, history and the psyche...

Right here, where others see monsters, Riccardo Baruzzi finds his most beautiful forms, and cares for them.

Luca Libertini