

Mirko Baselgia

structura / sistem

Exhibition in Ardez: July 29 – September 3, 2023

Opening: Saturday, August 5, 4 - 7 pm

The exhibition Mirko Baselgia - structura / sistem - “structure / system” in Romansh - brings together recent works by the artist that explore the diversity of meanings and manifestations of these two concepts. Observing, understanding and reshaping structures and systems, whether material or abstract, visible or hidden, that characterize the natural world and society, form a central aspect of Mirko Baselgia’s artistic practice. The in-depth study of organisms, materials, processes, and physical or conceptual architectures allow him to depict the diversity and complexity of our reality and to explore the mechanisms underlying the interdependencies and tensions between the various entities that inhabit the universe. In his artistic exploration, Baselgia questions his existence and the place he wants to occupy in the world, imagining new ways of living and interacting with all forms of life and the environment around us.

In the first room, our gaze is immediately caught by a wooden sculpture that welcomes us with its warm and lively presence. *my grandmother’s father was a carpenter too* (2022, apple tree wood shingles on apple tree trunk, 160 x 200 x 120 cm), with its precious shell of shingles, offers, like other works on display, a reflection on the skin and its function both as protection and of communication between our body, our person, our interiority and the outside world. The skin in its various forms is one of the recurring themes in the artist’s work, and the origin of this interest lies in his biography. Since his birth, Mirko Baselgia has suffered from a hereditary skin disease called ichthyosis vulgaris, which leads to dry, scaly skin on one or more parts of the body. Ichthyosis vulgaris is often called fish scale disease - the prefix “ichthyo-” comes from ancient Greek and means “fish” - because the scales typical of the disease, resemble those of a fish. Baselgia’s shingles works are therefore also a reference to his own body and identity. Moreover, my grandmother’s father was a carpenter too is a meditation on family structure and heritage and the way they shape our own lives.

The sculpture is accompanied by three paintings with geometric compositions and subtle color palette that reflects the mineral richness of the Alpine landscapes. The artist uses pigments obtained from stones that he collects himself, together with a family friend, in the region around his studio. These colors bear witness to the geological events that have shaped and changed the area over the millennia. On a conceptual level, the combination of the pigments with the regional larch wood used for the stretcher bars, the linen of the handmade canvases, and the beeswax of a local beekeeper used to cover the two small paintings can be seen as a reduction, an abstraction of a precise ecosystem.

Structures and systems are also reflected in the series of three plaster reliefs with mineral pigments - *Antupada II - The Bee dreams up the Flower and the Flower dreams up the Bee* (2022, 2/5, plaster, mineral pigments, Ø 55 cm, edition of 5 + 1 AP), *Antupada III - Bee and Flower are together in a Way in which, if you take One out, Both of Them disappear* (2022, 1/5, plaster, mineral pigments, Ø 55 cm, edition of 5 + 1 AP) and *Antupada IV - Fragments of a Dreamlike Illusion* (2022, 1/5, plaster, mineral pigments, Ø 55 cm, edition of 5 + 1 AP) - in the corridor of the second room are examined from an ecological but also formal point of view. These works highlight the strong interdependent relationships that connect all life forms to each other and to their environment.

The main area of the second room is entirely devoted to the material wood. The sculpture *tailored skin for forked tree (trachea)* (2022, european walnut shingles on pine trunk, 242 x 88 x 44 cm), the relief with shingles of burnt larch wood *Big Black* (2020, burnt larch wood panel, linseed oil, 220 x 136 x 5.5 cm) and the new series of wooden panels with more or less symmetrical compositions of burnt wooden circles *puncts da conzentrasiun* (2023, stone pine wood and burnt stone pine wood, 77 x 55 x 2.2 cm) touch on

central themes and concerns in Basaglia's work: his affection for wood, the recurring themes of skin and growth, his desire to make structures visible and to reflect on materiality and corporeality. For the series *puncts da concentraziun*, the artist follows the structure of the wood and works out circles in the places of the tree where the branches come from, which are burned and then reinserted into the panel. These points marked by the fire symbolize the concentration, the flow of energy necessary to give birth to new branches and leaves, so that they in turn can draw new energy from the sun. They also suggest an analogy with the energy centers of the human body, the collection and transformation points of our life energy.

Wood has been part of the artist's life since birth: for four generations, all the way back to his father, the craft of carpentry has been passed down in his family. In addition, his uncle and godfather were forest farmers. The smell of wood permeates his childhood memories and his whole life. The new series of wooden panels establishes a structural link between the body of the tree and the human body, pointing out that the functioning and history of any organism can be felt and understood in its matter and structure.

Text: Laura Giudici