

Hilario Isola

(Turin, 1976)

Several years ago, Hilario Isola left the city to set up his studio in an old watermill in the Turinese countryside. This privileged observatory on nature led him to take an interest in extra-artistic practices, such as winemaking and beekeeping, as well as carrying out experiments with often unforeseeable outcomes using organic materials. Along with the sound artist Enrico Ascoli, for example, he composed the sound installation *Auspicio*, 2015 with three demijohns full of grape must: by passing along a thin glass tube containing a quantity of honey, the gas produced by the fermentation process manages to activate hunters' birdcalls positioned in the upper part of the containers.

Three sets of works date back to 2016, different yet bound together conceptually and visually by the presence of the human face. *I Filosofi* are small metallic sculptures the shape and size of a nail, the head of which is sculpted with the semblance of great thinkers of the past. Some of them are immediately recognisable, such as Socrates, famous for his satirical physiognomy. They are thus portraits heavily characterised on an individual level yet at the same time universal archetypes of thought, brought together in an imaginary symposium beyond time and space.

The evocation of the banquet of the ancients brings wine and fruit into play in *Mani*, a bronze sculpture portraying a bunch of grapes which casts its shadow on the opposite wall. The viewer may complete the work by resting a hand on the handle, so the projection cast on the wall takes on the semblance of a bearded human profile, akin to that of a Greek philosopher. From the very title, which references the souls of dead family members that become objects of worship in the Roman religion, this work leads the sculpture back to its function of protecting spaces, re-establishing a point of contact with otherworldly forces. The relationship between nature and the divine sphere is further investigated in the series *Aruspice* which the two works in the collection belong to. Through a complex operation of the interweaving of thousands of rachises, i.e. the part of the bunch that remains once the grapes have been removed, the artist models these large masks endowed with a decisive olfactory presence which underlines their origin.

After graduating in Art History and Museology, Isola frequently draws on his own field of studies and on architecture, especially in the research carried out in tandem with Matteo Norzi, with whom he has collaborated since 2003. His fields of interest cover sculpture, installation, drawing and environmental-scale interventions. *Il quarto paesaggio* (2017) is a work produced to conceal the vision of a huge bastion of reinforced concrete on the hill of La Morra, in the Langhe territory. The artist coated the wall with an eco-compatible fabric featuring a detail from a painting by the divisionist Pellizza da Volpedo, masking the real landscape with the pictorial through the reinterpretation of the concept of restoration drawing on animal and military camouflage techniques.

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