

KETELEER GALLERY is very pleased to present *Sticks and Stones, a Prologue*, a solo exhibition by Luca Monterastelli (°1983. Forlimpopoli, IT. Lives and works in Milan, IT). The artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery consists of a completely new series of steel sculptures.

Where Luca Monterastelli's previous exhibition, *Old Masters (2020)*, was dominated by concrete, with some steel antagonists, this new series uses steel as its main mode of communication, with accents of organic found materials: sticks and stones.

Monterastelli is all about (re)questioning materials. He examines, deconstructs and manipulates it both physically and mentally to the point where it has truly transformed and therefore truly transforms our preconceived understanding and assumptions of it. He examines not only what it can (appear to) look like, what it was and what it can become, but also what place it holds in our consciousness. Materials and objects, too, have their own language, and like all languages it is embedded in social structures and thus brings forth its own logic, hierarchies and expectations. Monterastelli's oeuvre however, not only poses the question of what material means to us but also what we mean to it. What we turn it into, make it to be.

The steel sculptures on the wall elude any clearly defined identity. What are we looking at? A still life? A bird's nest? An altar of sorts?... They are both the result of the artist's obscure thought processes and vessels for our own, and since they all defy any obvious association, hinting at no familiar reference, they rely on our most spontaneous feelings. Monterastelli asks us to imagine not knowing what things are supposed to be, what they are usually used for and what they mean to us, and to restart from there: redefining by de-defining. All known enforced associations are expelled to allow for the material to be itself again, 'meaningless'. But not for long of course.

By going to the bone, the bare essential, using one of the most ubiquitously used materials, steel, and rudimentary found objects, sticks and stones, he strips away all predetermined narration, purpose and hierarchy and tries to re-liquify their meaning, so they can still become anything.

A simple steel pipe starts to look like a vase, a conduit, a gate, a curtain, a pedestal, a swirl, a squiggle... It leans, it holds, it writhes, it supports, it protects, it transgresses, it obscures, it unveils, it protrudes...

For the standing sculptures Monterastelli used ventilation pipes swirling in place, leading nowhere but here. No longer replacing stale with pure air, they seem to perform no function other than being transporters of thoughts and memories.

At first glance Monterastelli's works could be mistaken for being purely formalistic, but there is always a great deal of poetry to be found in them. His aim is not to strip objects from associations altogether – this is a gentle *tabula rasa* – but rather to make space for new modes of seeing and being, of interpreting and relating, to find novel expressions within a known visual language, to make the possibilities endless again! The enigmatic titles most obviously give away the artist's poetic temperament, but also his intuitive play with materials testify to an engaged sensitivity. By adding primitive tools to steel compositions or by bending pipes to form new entities he suggests a new use, a new dialogue, and in doing so, these odd ensembles of objects seduce us to fill in the large gaps of meaning with our own reveries.

Lauren Wiggers, 2023.

*“The works are a structure where the sticks and stones are just an
intervention that defines a narrative of mine at that moment.
In the future these sticks can become what the owners believe.
I used sticks and stones because they are grade zero materials.
The very work is the hot-dip galvanized steel superstructure,
in which everyone is free to construct their own narrative.”*

Luca Monterastelli

The exhibition will be on view 5 – 26 February, 2023.



For a detailed overview of the works, scan this QR code.