

Press release

BALES 2014/2017

Michael Beutler

curated by Ilaria Bonacossa

Endorsed by Regione Piemonte, Comune di Novi Ligure and Comune di Gavi

Opening Saturday 27 May 2017, 11.00 am

Fondazione La Raia, Strada Monterotondo 79, Novi Ligure (AL)

Free entrance with reservation to segreteria@fondazionelaraia.it

Novi Ligure, 5 May 2017 - Fondazione La Raia is pleased to present "**BALES 2014/2017**," a permanent work by Michael Beutler, a German artist known for his large sculptural installations made with simple, economical materials connected with crafts practices. This is the fifth site-specific installation, after those of Remo Salvadori and Koo Jeung A, commissioned by Fondazione La Raia and on view for visitors inside the biodynamic farming complex La Raia.

The project **BALES 2014/2017** was developed for the park of the Kunstareal in Munich, transforming the urban site into an agricultural field in which baling presses gathered industrial straw in bright fluo colors scattered by the artist on the well-groomed lawns of the park into round multicolored bales. The work was a group effort in which a team of farmers, invited to operate the baling machinery, took part in the creative process, rethinking the idea of authorial control and generating a sort of postmodern Pop Art, while emphasizing the extraneous character of a rural landscape inside the modern city. The uniqueness of each round bale also seems to demonstrate that the interaction between man and machine does not necessarily preclude creative intervention.

Reinstalled in the setting of the hills of Gavi, on a biodynamic farm like **La Raia**, **BALES** is transformed, focusing on the complex relationship between natural and artificial, between industrial work (now an integral part of most farms) and a personal, manual relationship with nature (at La Raia grapes are harvested by hand, the vineyard rows are left with unmown grass aisles, and all the processes of cultivation are based on Steiner's principle of interconnection between every presence, animal

or vegetable).

The large round bales in phosphorescent hues generate a shrill contrast, telling us something about our idea of landscape and its conservation. Beutler seems to be reminding us of our responsibilities in a system of mass production in which we take the ongoing existence of natural elements in the landscape for granted, while investing in a form of modernity that could easily lead to their gradual extinction.

During this period, Beutler is also a protagonist of the **57th Venice Biennale**, directed by Christine Macel, VIVA ARTE VIVA, in the Giardini delle Vergini at the Arsenale. With the support of **Fondazione La Raia**, he is creating by hand with a team of helpers, *Shipyards, 2017* a small *squero*, a place to make repairs on small boats. Again in this case, his sculpture is transformed into a true work of architecture, but one that is made with precarious materials like strips of chipboard, rolls of cardboard, rubber tubes or meters of rolled or stacked fabrics. Though large, the work remains ephemeral and apparently fragile. This project, like those before it, involves performance in its reinterpretation of the space, and has social impact in its will to react to the function of specific sites. The Arsenale that hosts the Biennale returns to its original purpose, with a small boatyard that operates with manual labor, without modern machinery, where human knowledge and skill become the protagonists.

Michael Beutler (Oldenburg 1976) lives and works in Berlin. His works have been featured in solo shows in many museums, including Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, and the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt. He has taken part in a number of biennials, including Gwangju, South Korea, and the Berlin Biennale.

Ilaria Bonacossa, curator and critic, after working for seven years at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin, has directed from 2012 to 2016 the Museo di Villa Croce in Genoa, a municipal institution for contemporary art. Since December 2016 she is the director of the international art fair Artissima, Turin. In 2007 she was a member of the jury for the Leone d'Oro at the 52nd Venice Biennale, where in 2013 she curated the Icelandic Pavilion; in the same year she was in the jury for the Inamori Foundation Prize, Kyoto.

Fondazione La Raia - arte cultura territorio was founded in June 2013 with the aim of promoting critical reflections on landscape in Italy and abroad, through contributions pertaining to multiple fields of

investigation. The foundation develops artistic, cultural, educational, scientific and research activities, also aimed at spreading specific knowledge of the Gavi area. To date, the foundation has produced three permanent works by Remo Salvadori and one by Koo Jeong A (on view for the public), a publication with Elio Franzini published by Corraini, and many public conferences on the landscape, including contributions by Gilles Clément and the French group Coloco, Paolo D'Angelo, Adriana Veríssimo Serrão, Francesco Jodice and Francesco Zanol. Fondazione La Raia was created by Giorgio Rossi Cairo and Irene Crocco, and is directed by Ilaria Bonacossa. The scientific committee is composed of Flavio Albanese, Marco Galateri di Genola, Vicente Todoli, Stefano Baia Curioni and James Bradburne.

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