

## Marepe

### ***Entre o céu e o inverno (Between Heaven and Winter)***

Galleria Franco Noero is pleased to announce *Entre o céu e o inverno (Between Heaven and Winter)*, the first solo exhibition by the Brazilian artist Marepe in Italy.

The exhibition in Via Mottalciata brings together a wide range of works that illustrate Marepe's artistic research and expressive approach of the past fifteen years of his career. These are works that touch on some of the themes dearest to him, and they also include his very latest studies. The exhibition is thus in perfect harmony with the large retrospective devoted to the artist last year by the Pinacoteca de São Paulo in Brazil, under the title *Estranhamente comum (Oddly Common)*.

Marepe's artistic practice is firmly rooted in his origins and in the events that have featured in his daily life. Living and working in the city of Santo Antônio de Jesus in the north of Brazil, Marepe's poetic vision is permeated by a rich mix of themes that contain clear references to the typical features of his native Bahia. There are allusions to the manufacturing and commercial activities in the territory, to the popular traditions of the Recôncavo Baiano, as well as personal, family, and childhood memories of when he would stay for hours in his father's hardware store or when he spent his time observing the ingenuity of the street vendors in Bahia.

One fundamental and recurrent feature of Marepe's works is his appropriation of everyday objects, which he finds at markets or in shops that sell useful, practical things. He systematically decontextualises and reinvents them, assembling them in compositions that express purely personal and improbable associations, thus redefining their nature, form, and meaning. Even though he is influenced by the Dadaist movement, in Marepe's case the use of *ready-mades* has its roots in very different needs. He refers to the objects in his sculptural compositions as *necessidades* (necessities) rather than *ready-mades*, for he captures and makes use of aspects that point to the great social and economic relevance they have for the Brazilian countryside and, in particular, for the Bahia region. The basic structure that the artist uses when creating his works is based on their memory and forms, and on the peculiar simplicity and spontaneity of the materials, and on particular chromatic compositions. Like this, Marepe encourages us to observe and study objects we are familiar with and that reveal qualities that would normally be concealed from – or unnoticed by – most people.

This is how his *Radiador*, simple air-conditioning radiators, turn into bare canvases on which he sketches landscapes, animals and figures that recall his childhood. It is how in *Os três*, a large canvas painted with acrylic colours that depicts a family scene with a boy – presumably the artist – who is all dressed up in bright colours, intent on playing with a little wooden car. The playful and carefree atmosphere created by the radiators appears again in *Simulador de caminhada*, in which pieces of equipment normally used for physical exercise are adorned with wicker balls, crystals, poles and broom bristles that reach almost up to the ceiling. In *Aquecimento Corporal da Seleção de Santo Antonio de Jesus*, the only video in the exhibition, we see a Brazilian football team warming up for a game, conveying a sense of spontaneity and cheerfulness through the choreographed singing of the players.

In *Abrigo* – literally 'refuge' in Portuguese – a slatted wooden grid forms the base for a precarious construction consisting of deck-chair cushions, an overlay for roofs in asbestos, an aluminium-lined blanket, and four pottery jugs crowned by the kind of straw hats normally used in the tropics to protect against the scorching sun. Although at first sight it looks pleasant, the structure is a direct reference by the artist to the crisis affecting thousands of homeless people in the principal metropolises in Brazil.

In *Carro de bandeirolas* a wooden toy car replicates the dimensions of a real car. Here the traditional steel bodywork is replaced by a plethora of colourful aluminium flags depicting the real, the national currency of Brazil. Wood is also the main material in *As Cabras* – a work consisting of two sculptures with elementary features like those of a child's drawing – showing two goats clearly disproportionate to their real size.

The two elements are a precise reference to, and an exaltation of the social and economic importance of this species in north-eastern Brazil, as well as an allusion to the small-scale crafts production of modernist furnishings in the country from the 1950s to the 1970s.

In the central space of the gallery is *Concha Acústica*, an installation consisting of eight elements that look like loudspeakers or instrument cases made of improvised elements, large plastic basins placed together on wooden stools arranged in a circle, possibly alluding to a chamber orchestra or a band. The colours, forms, and composition recall one of the most evocative and historical places in the city of Salvador de Bahia, the famous Concha Acústica of the Teatro Castro Alves, a cultural centre that has been going for 50 years and that is very dear to the artist. *Concha Acústica* also leads to *Cabeça Acústica* (1996), one of Marepe's most emblematic works – a real 'acoustic head' consisting of two concave elements in galvanized metal that form a casing and a slot where the head is placed inside the work. By placing their head inside the instrument, the viewer brings the performative object to life, isolating themselves from all external sounds and thus becoming as one with the work of art.

**Marepe** (Santo Antônio de Jesus, 1970), lives and works in Santo Antônio de Jesus in Brazil. His work has been shown in solo exhibition in international and private Institutions, including: Pina Estação, Pinacoteca de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2019); Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2007); Tate Modern, London, UK (2007); Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2005); Museu de Arte da Pampulha, Belo Horizonte, Brazil (2005). He has also taken part in many group exhibitions in Institutions such as: Sesc - Belenzinho, São Paulo, Brazil (2019); MASP - Museu de arte de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2019); Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2017); Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, USA (2017); Today Art Museum, Beijing, China (2016); MAM - Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2014); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA (2012); Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, Brazil (2011); Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima, Japan (2009); MoMA PS1, New York, USA (2008); ICA – Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK (2006); Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago, USA (2005); Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Houston, USA (2004). His work has been shown in biennials and international group exhibitions as: TRIO Bienal, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2015); 15th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2006); 50th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (2003); 25th Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2002); 26th Biennial of Pontevedra, Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain (2000); Guarene Arte 99, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy (1999); Bienal da Gravura, Curitiba, Brazil (1998); Bienal do Recôncavo, Centro Cultural Dannemann, São Felix, Brazil (1995; 1993; 1991).

A text especially written by the artist accompanies his exhibition:

*The show reunites unseen and previous works, pertaining to tougher moments in my path, nevertheless filled with faith. Faith is the word that encompasses my will to keep going. Last year's show at Estação Pinacoteca (São Paulo) was the positive response to my continued willingness. Brazilian singer Gilberto Gil writes: "Faith follows even those who don't have any, just in case" (mesmo a quem não tem fé, a fé costuma acompanhar, pelo sim, pelo não). In our times of uncertainty, where distorted values threaten the stability of acquired rights, faith is the leitmotiv to make sense of life. Never before have I seen so many people walking the streets with the word 'faith' printed on their t-shirts. The exhibition includes the works 'Simulador de caminhada' [Walk simulator], 'As Cabras' (The Goats), 'Abrigo' [Shelter], 'Arquipélago' [Archipelago], 'Radiadores' [Radiators], 'Como dois e dois são cinco' [As two and two are five], 'Concha acústica' [Acoustic shell], 'Verde e Amarelo' [Green and Yellow], 'Carro de bandeiras' [Car of flags], 'Pinaùna', 'Aquecimento Corporal da Seleção de Santo Antonio de Jesus' [Body Warming of the Santo Antonio de Jesus Selection], 'Desenhador I' [Designer I], and 'Os Três' [The Three]; the only painting in the group of installations and objects. While there is summer in Brazil, Italy has winter, two opposite hemispheres, which is why I named the show 'Entre o céu e o inverno [Between heaven and winter]'. I want people to be reminded that 'I Come From the Tropics', just like the title of the documentary about Maria Martins. Martins had a relationship with Duchamp, whom I could not fail to mention, as inventor of the ready-made. This show constantly reminds me of Fellini's 'Nights of Cabiria' when Giulietta Masina says: "che lumi strano". Perhaps this show has the same light.*

Marepe, December 2019