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German artist Michael Beutler...

20 Ott 2021

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German artist Michael Beutler's "Oak Barrel Baroque" installed at Fondazione La Raia



Oak Barrel Baroque by Michael Beutler at La Raia Estate. Photo: Anna Positano.

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GAVI - Four years after his project Bales 2014/2017, Michael Beutler returns to Gavi to create Oak Barrel Baroque, a new project on display for [Fondazione La Raia—arte cultura territorio](#) located at the Locanda La Raia in the Piedmont region of Italy. Oak Barrel Baroque is available for public viewing as part of the foundation's permanent display collection. This is the eighth site-specific installation following past works by Remo Salvadori and Koo Jeung A, commissioned by Fondazione La Raia, and curated by Ilaria Bonacossa.

For almost one decade, Fondazione La Raia has invited artists of different disciplines to take a critical look at the Gavi landscape. The artworks created on the property are permanently placed in La Raia's vineyards and fields, examining the relationship between the land, nature, and art. The Foundation develops, organizes and supports artistic, educational, scientific and research activities, especially the branches of knowledge that focus on the relationship between man and nature, biodynamic farming and Steiner pedagogy, and the history and traditions of the Gavi territory.

Oak Barrel Baroque is Beutler's second project for Fondazione La Raia, and reflects the heritage of rural architecture in the region, and resembles a country chapel, small theater, or a refuge for the people visiting the estate.

Beutler's inspiration came from the landscape of La Raia and the principles of sustainability that are key to the foundation's principles. Beutler explains: "The idea for the creation of the work started with the possibility of using the wood from barrels at the end of their life cycle, to transform them into a living space for use amidst the vineyards. At first, I wanted to build something larger, resembling a church, with the apse and a portico in the style of Palladio; then I realized that it was better to scale the size down. I wanted a structure similar to a typical country church in a small Italian town, blending various aspects of the Italy I love, and putting the typical structures and forms of the city into a rural landscape. Those aspects are all gathered here, in a single building."

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The installation was built on-site over a one-month period using barrique staves from La Raia Winery that have reached the end of their life cycle. Transforming La Raia into an open-air workshop, each oak stave has been meticulously positioned and interlocked by hand, using an ancient Japanese construction technique that requires no screws or bolts. The result reflects a small votive temple with a frontal pronaos, which simultaneously acts as an antechamber and a stage.

The apse of the small structure is a half barrel over four meters in diameter, resting on stilts in a hollow surrounded by oak trees, which symbolizes the complete life cycle of a plant that has been very important for the production of wine across the centuries. From the front of the structure, which is meant to convey a small church or theater, visitors can shelter themselves from the sun while enjoying the view of La Raia's stunning landscape and vineyards.

"In his new work for Fondazione la Raia, Michel Beutler explores the decontextualization of forms, processes, and the materials themselves, almost as if to encourage us to live in different contexts – urban or natural – in a seamless manner that fosters respect and awareness," says Ilaria Bonacossa, Artistic Director of Fondazione la Raia.

Link: <https://artdaily.com/news/140376/German-artist-Michael-Beutler-s--Oak-Barrel-Baroque--installed-at-Fondazione-La-Raia#.YXgSoNnMKkp>