

Giuliano Mauri: Nature's Bones

Fernando Gómez Aguilera

With his early nineteen eighties piece *Mulini a vento* (1980), Giuliano Mauri wedded his creative work to the spirit of the earth. From then on his *oeuvre* retreated from its militant conceptualist origins – and all that entailed in terms of critical undercurrent and anchorage in social concerns (Mauri had participated in the 1976 Venice Biennial) – to the intimate space of nature. From that vantage he has co-existed with a task shared with other artists who, each with his or her own strategy, explore the relations between humanity and the natural environment, renewing and at the same time keeping their distance from earlier American land art proposals. European creativity responded to artistic developments on the other side of the Atlantic by introducing a dimension of sensitivity which, generally speaking, rejected both aggressiveness and monumental scale, accessing nature or the landscape not as imposition, but rather as gentle transformation or use of its materials for plastic purposes.

Mauri's earliest works in this line, such as *La casa dell'uomo raccoglitore* (1981), *Codici acquatici* (1981), *Scala del Paradiso* (1982), *Altari vegetali* (1983), *La città del sole* (1984), and *Accampamento padano* (1985), positioned this creator in the domain of environmental art or art in nature, and, in his case, art with and for nature. He used “natural” materials – essentially branches and sticks – to manually *build* artefacts later sited in the countryside, where they would integrate into the rhythm of the surrounding plant life, proposing a dialogue of interaction with the environment by which they might eventually be shrouded or engulfed altogether. These artefacts were endowed with a will to contribute to the creation of the landscape. Air, land, plants and water were to be drawn to the space occupied by the work of art, generating a sort of *enlarged countryside*.

The artist's inclination to use artisanal techniques, devoid of all artifice and intimately related to the fluxes of nature itself, soon became apparent. Countering the auratic conceit of artwork and artists and contrary as well to the sophistication of the age of communications and technology, Mauri advocates the pre-industrial behaviour characteristic of the artisan-artist: he sees himself as a carpenter, a primitive builder, perpetuating one of the species' timeless, genetic traditions, condensed in the primary and transforming power of his hands. In the context of our age and the present world of art, this implicit praise of manual involvement and the direct handling of materials inherent in his creative work, his apparently regressive attitude, acquire enormous significance charged with cultural protest. But this, indeed, is the programme governing his *œuvre* as a whole, laden with dense layers of critical questioning.

Mauri seeks his distance from rationalistic and industrial conceptualism in artisanal manufacturing procedures, based on archaic building and assembly techniques related to the essential activities for survival in the chain of human evolution: farming, housing, fishing, tool-making. Despite the firm conceptualistic foundations, the intellectual premises, on which his *œuvre* builds, his programme is aimed to obstruct the formal emergence of theoretical content. The artist's pathos as a human being, the vital patina he conveys to the objects directly created with his own hands, constitute the backbone of his proposal. His art, indeed, can be seen as a human vestige, a box of reverberating anthropological echoes induced by the apparent simplicity of the creative process, which nonetheless involves meticulous and calculated design and complex execution: the sewing, weaving, joining, tying and so forth characteristic of primitive, timeless activities. But this vision would be induced as well by the austerity of the materials used – which form a part of a larger process of rejection of the sophistication of late modern art – and, finally, by the formal schematism of his pieces, akin to the handiwork characteristic of primitive cultures or farming peoples.

The anthropological substrate in Giuliano Mauri's artistic programme permeates all his work. His imaginary constructs or unspecific forms follow the time trail of the memory of the human race and the Earth. They trigger a dialogue with our foundational impulses, evoke instinct, delve into the genetic files of the human community and cling to dark zones of the conscience. Rite and myth inform their archetypical shapes: spirals and mazes, stairways and ziggurats, spheres, helices and ovals, closed geometric structures... While stressing the independence of form and the utopian impulse that inspires it, these shapes engage the species' civilization-

building memory. This is particularly visible when we pause to admire the fidelity with which Mauri designed and developed the primitive cabin trope, intended as a metaphor for humanity's essential dwelling, its shelter, its primary protection, in which he resorted to architecture of the imagination, forms of conscience related less to the body than to dreams, the ancient pulse of the soul. His habitable structures can be viewed as poetic metaphors for desire and utopia, and for the spiritual pulse so inseparable from that dubitative and precarious being, man: *Casa dell'uomo* (1985), *Tane della memoria* (1993), *Templo vegetal* (1996), *Casa della memoria* (1997), *Cattedrale vegetale* (2001), and *Tane di memoria* (2004).

The exaltation of materiality, which paradoxically generates insistent allusions to the spirituality ever-present in Giuliano Mauri's work, informs the layout of his creative universe: a material culture bound to manual labour, channelled through the poetics of dispossession, of expressive nudity, that refuses to seek solemnity – poor materials, primary techniques, austere objects, language stripped of all artifice. His organic artefacts assume the form of nature's bones – precarious corpses, architectural skeletons – whose interiors, generally covered with the framework and fur extolled by today's theatrical architecture, mirrors the exterior. The web-like structure that characterizes this expressive universe combines nodule with void. This is no coincidence. The void is a symbol that concerns Mauri's *œuvre*, conceived, once the pieces are installed in the landscape, to surrender to the course of its evolution, to be integrated, appropriated and metabolized. Withdrawal, reflection, absence, meditation and silence envelope, shelter and protect his artistic proposal and thinking.

Giuliano Mauri directs his attention to the soul of plant tissue, whose expressive minimalism, in which everything appears to be nearly nothing, irradiates both the warm pulse of life conserved in the natural material and art fashioned as a kind of penance. At the same time, the religious or primitive, almost mystic, poverty deployed throughout his *œuvre* is formulated as an attempt to rebuild the bonds with the precarious origins of the human race and its paradoxical relations with nature. But it also ultimately postulates a peaceful – albeit militant – confrontation with the technological hypertension and dehumanized artifice that characterize the post-modern age, in which a significant share of art – and indisputably the artistic system as a whole, lodged as it is in the heart of the marketplace – plays the same score, to the same tempo.

Giuliano Mauri's aesthetic option relates, on the contrary, to the domain of vulnerable

discourse, such as poetry, as opposed to abrasive, turbulent and compact consumer society and its competitive hierarchy. Much like visual calligraphy that responds to the demands of its own language, it weaves and assembles fragile, expendable, lightweight spaces, whose provisional appearance would appear to be subject to the laws of nomadism and scarcity, a contingent destiny, aptly represented by the impression of random or primary order conveyed by sticks and branches fused in the artisanal forge of the human hand and traditional technique. These perishable materials, exposed to the elements and natural cycles, are subject to gradual deterioration from wear or weathering. The changes in appearance deriving from this interaction between object-based artistic weaving and nature strengthen the plastic value of the works and bring them to life. Through symbiosis, nature appropriates the constructs, ultimately creating renewed plant architectures developing from and around the dyes moulded by the artist in his attempt to produce integrated forms, to institute a dialogue with the surroundings. His proposal generates permanent relational and expressive stress between plastic artifice (culture) and nature. The inroads made by time in his aesthetic fibre are suggestive of an essential feature of human life, our condition *par excellence*: our temporary nature, our organic composition that inexorably evolves towards deterioration and injury. That is precisely how Mauri conceives of his artistic objects, anchored to essence of the human condition, generated in the mirror of its life cycle, formal tropes, figures of speech of our passing.

Hence, Giuliano Mauri's discourse can be interpreted in terms of one of its chief components: the moral spectrum. His is, in actual fact, a poetics that embodies and at the same time projects an ethical schema, in a dual sense: humanistically and socio-politically. It lives at once inward and outward of the community, like a parabola. Besides formal architectures, his artistic programme contains a proposal for moral architecture and social ethics. This is hardly unusual in an artistic programme that takes its shape, if we focus on the keys to its inner meaning, from an intimate and austere code for the interpretation of life, which addresses the specific condition of individualism while seeking a position in the sphere of shared dynamics. What I mean to say is that his project is, in essence, a voluntarily ideological statement supported, moreover, by a not at all infrequent cultural inter-textuality. His is a proposal for culture that demands an alternative position in the territory of late modern art.

The procedural self-absorption emanated by the artist's *œuvre* as a whole is not unrelated to this circumstance and can be seen as one of the central features of his thematic concerns.

Some of Mauri's pieces even appear to be woven in a sort of mechanical surrender to the impulses of the subconscious, stressing that activity is, in this case, the essential value. Contrary to strongly entrenched notions enshrined by a romantic view of artistic creativity, firmly anchored in the culture of art, authors and authorship, the concepts exalted in such pieces are actor and acting, an approach closely related to the importance attached to the actual manufacture of the pieces, from mock-ups to sculptures and even very large-scale public art works. Activity as a notion is relevant not only to the artist's role, but also to the participation of the viewing public. Much of the artwork installed by Giuliano Mauri in both urban (*Zenobia*, 2002; *Osservatori estimativi*, 2001; *Passerella di gelsomini sul fiume perduto*, 2004) and open natural domains (*Osservatorio*, 1998; *Cattedrale vegetale*, 2001; *Reattore del canto*, 2003) is conceived as artefacts of mediation or inter-relations, in which the public takes part. They are designed around activity, meant to be walked through for sheer pleasure or even to serve some specific purpose. These are artefacts for life, architectures on a human scale than convene men and women to a meeting, an encounter with nature and the landscape, assuming at the same time the role of signallers, emphatic signs that emphasize the presence of air, water, shade, sunlight, gleam and reflection, in short, nature's writings.

The disturbance that Giuliano Mauri's proposal, clearly penetrated by vestiges of spirituality, wreaks in the system of the arts is far from irrelevant: fiercely independent art-nature work that rejects any romantic or post-industrial adscription, as far removed from invasive formulas that accost the environment as from aesthetic or pictorialistic appropriations of nature is necessarily disruptive. Mauri repudiates the compartmentalization of genres and advocates a creative space in which interference is the norm, where the threads of architecture, sculpture, crafts and landscaping are intertwined (*Le trombe del Paradiso*, 1987; *Bosco sull'isola*, 1988; *Albero dei cento nidi*, 1992; *Cupole Geovegetative*, 1993; *Cornucopia*, 1995; *Proyecto para Ipotesi di un nuovo ponte a Sarajevo*, 1995; *Casa della memoria*, 1997). He alternates functionality with purely creative expressions devoid of utility, cultural artifice built with respect for nature's interference with the object, until it dissolves into energy. In a predominantly technoscientific age, his linguistic formula, anchored in a devotion to manual activity and artisanal determination, navigates between the nihilism of evasion from the world out of disgust and an attitude of protest and rebellion: in other words, militant resistance. But above all, his aesthetic programme generates a wide range of critical demands. He questions the traditional confrontation between culture and nature; the ecosystem of the arts; the market and mass society; the culture of show business; the auratic conceit of artists and their conversion into

aseptic producers of projects; the endurance of the artistic object, and that of pre-industrial materials and techniques; the siting of artwork in the landscape; modern architecture; culture and appearance... His discourse depicts a whole, rich continent of forms, of course, but also of questions, characteristic of a proposal that can be likened to John Cage's pure desire to record the sound of plants growing. Giuliano Mauri's distant and austere universe, his vulnerable and very human lifeblood, grows in that same interval of delicate silence, that precarious void.

Giuliano Mauri's art in nature From the *One hundred-nest tree* to the *Cathedral of Plants*

Vittorio Fagone

*Come per verdi fronde in pianta vita.
(As vegetable life, through the green leaf)*

Dante Alighieri

In light of all the claims about technological progress aired in the last few decades and their pervasion in the catch-phrases of our contemporary world, it may certainly seem paradoxical to have to admit that, at the dawn of its third millennium, the art of Western Christian civilization maintains a wholly elementary and basic relationship with nature.

Giuliano Mauri's oeuvre stands as exemplary proof of the vitality of this relationship on the contemporary scenario. For approximately a quarter of a century (my first book on Giuliano Mauri was published by Prearo in 1981), I have been following and reviewing this artist's exceptional and deliberate creative development.

Giuliano Mauri first broached art in nature in the early nineteen eighties, i.e., precociously with respect to the international context of artistic exploration aiming in that direction. Until that time, Giuliano Mauri had worked in the domain of the "militant poetry" movement, a poetics geared to the political and social context that, beginning in 1968 and throughout most of the nineteen seventies, largely characterized the experimentation committed to a more direct and expressive communicability, in Italy as well as in France and Germany.

The first Mauri creation that connects with the anthropological and environmental approach inherent in art in nature is *La casa dell'uomo raccoglitore* (*The house of man the gatherer*) that Giuliano Mauri built in the surroundings of the Church of Sant'Agostino at Bergamo Alta. This 12x24x12-m structure is made of branches, cloth, wood, twine and mud. It is, in a sense, a manifesto piece. In humanity's primary historical dimension, instead of wandering

from place to place with other hunters, the gatherer chooses to build a sedentary settlement and bond with the land: to live from and with it, adjusting its productive capabilities to meet subjective human needs. And yet these new confines within the common habitat established by the gatherer and other members of the tribe are never out of harmony with the vaster natural environment. The creations on the Adda River, titled by the artist *Codici acquatici (Aquatic codes)*, which date from the same year as the Bergamo work, are more conspicuously guided by the new poetics. Distinct and continuous signs, seemingly the letters or ideograms of a natural alphabet, are drawn with twigs from robinia trees. These early works reveal a conscious choice that would become a constant and a canon in all of Giuliano Mauri's subsequent work: a new construct can only be legitimately housed in the landscape if made with materials pertaining to that landscape. Another interesting observation is that the artist's implementation and recovery of the primary techniques of material culture originated in this phase. The use of pruned branches as construction materials and weaving techniques for structural bonding prove to be particularly effective for the purposes of both plastic impact and significance.

A second and decisive element of these poetics materialized in the 1982 *Scale del Paradiso (Stairways of Heaven)*, also designed for the natural habitat comprising the Adda River and surroundings. This long spiral stairway slowly rises from the riverbanks and water towards the sky, seeming to depict the tension involved in natural and reflective – and from the terrestrial vantage, concrete – piety. The artist was to build such branch-woven emblems more and more frequently in the years that followed. The outcome of an open-minded vision and broad and free perspective, they are also the recognizable expressions of an acute sense of time. Physically dense and variable but not remote, the sky is in constant dialogue with the earth as the other pole of attraction for all plant life.

Natural piety is explicit in the *Altari vegetali (Plant altars)*, erected in the Lodian countryside in 1983. These unique constructs, in which a horizontal plane raised slightly off the ground abuts with an articulated upright structure made of tree branches and trunks, show that the plant world, by intertwining live branches around their supports, is capable of sculpting a plastic dimension, a projection both mirroring and portraying a close-up view of life's movements.

In that same year Giuliano Mauri built *Zeppelin vegetale (Plant zeppelin)*, a creation that

marks yet another important milestone in his work. The texture and weave of branches and stems are now geared towards the structural definition of a closed, spherical or ovoid figure whose transparency reveals each and every moment of the process of its self-definition towards an ever-changing form.

Another *Zeppelin vegetale* (*Plant zeppelin*), erected in the meadows surrounding the Adda in 1984, reiterates these connotations and enlarges them to an even fuller scale. In the same period, and again along the banks of the Adda, Giuliano Mauri built *La città del sole* (*The city of the sun*), a complex plant installation that sets the orderly geometric grid of twigs and branches, skilfully assembled in rhythmic succession, against the free and vital expanse of the forest, as if to underscore the two reasons for and two ways of living in nature that are possible today.

Samples of the “forest weave” were successfully introduced in 1985 as models of original research in visual language. That same year, the artist built his *Casa dell'uomo* (*House of the man*), a construct that transfers the plastic and symbolic dimensions of the 1981 Bergamo installation to the natural environment along the Adda, restructuring the work to new and more complex and linear demands. *The Isole vaganti* (*Wandering islands*), also dating from 1985, are particularly suggestive, linking the transparent bottom of the Lodian canals to the liquid surface of the water through the lightweight and varied weave of lattices and the self-propelled surfaces of aquatic plants and leaves.

In 1986 Giuliano Mauri designed a huge church to be built in the forest, made entirely of slender, upward-reaching natural structures. That same year, thanks to the co-operation of the Centro Internazionale de Brera (Brera International Centre), he was given the opportunity to erect this oeuvre-installation in the erstwhile Church of San Carpoforo at Milano. The result is suggestive and inviting. A veritable forest of carefully arranged deadwood boughs forms a Gothic structure inside a church with a Baroque floor plan. Each of these plant segments, in the rarefied atmosphere of the church, becomes a matrix of vivid signals, as well as the expression of a generative structuring force. The apse is completely occupied by an enormous cylindrical figure with an open weave and an aerial, spiralling wood way, that runs from the floor to nearly the top of the dome. Against the backdrop of the high surrounding stone walls and the sturdy wooden structure it is at once paradoxical and congruent. The interwoven branches neither rest on the stout surrounding wall at any

point, nor appear to clash with it: in common they have their upward thrust. But the “wooden church” proves to be more terrestrial and human, consistent with the awareness of time lapsed, a dimension that wholly defines the natural universe explored by the artist.

By the second half of the nineteen eighties, then, the guidelines of Giuliano Mauri’s creative work were fully established. In the environmental dimension, his creations seem always to be aimed at a dual objective: to spell out the terms of a possible approach to form that opens no gap between nature and manual creation; and to establish perceptive and real pathways in the landscape, able to inspire optical and more generally synesthetic involvement in anyone crossing it. This is the perspective from which the *Trombe del Paradiso* (*Trumpets of Paradise*) should be viewed. Installed in the Mantua countryside in 1987, they are made of plant materials in which despite the very large scale of the clearly inferred trumpet-like forms, they have a very terrestrial air; the pathways in *Fiume vestito* (*Clothed river*) that have turned the riverside landscape of the Marecchia into a lively and popular place to stroll, and the dense web of walkways through plant structures titled *Canti dell’esilio d’Occidente* (*Songs of Western exile*), were both built in Sant’Arcangelo di Romagna in 1988. Two other episodes indicative of the extreme polarities of the artist’s creative horizon date from that same year. Giuliano Mauri installed a number of his *Spore vegetali* (*Plant spores*), constructs obtained by interweaving branches in allusion to closed geometric forms, in the Villa Borzina di Busalla Park at Genoa; these structures are spores in the sense that they are transferred and transferable generative cores.

At around the same time, in and around the Adda, the scale of the artist’s work began to involve larger and larger areas, even whole islets in the river. Giuliano Mauri devoted his time and effort to creating his *Tessitura del bosco* (*Forest weave*). This combination of live plant elements, structural supports and intertwining surfaces forms a single fabric that never alters the environmental context, but rather intensifies its tangibility and prominence. The artist’s manual creativity seeks profound harmony with nature and tests the possibilities of modulating specific emblems in this reformed “alliance”.

The installation *Accampamento padano 2* (*Padanian campgrounds 2*) was erected for the 1989 Milanopoesia.

In 1991, at Monteciccardo, Pesaro, Giuliano Mauri attempted to combine these two

operational polarities in a new dimension. The tree, laden with spherical plant constructs hanging from its branches, seems to exalt its own generously hospitable and productive presence.

While the patient construction of the “forest weave” continued in this period along the banks and on the small islets of the Adda River, the *Albero dei cento nidi* (*Hundred-nest tree*) project began to materialize, on a more characteristic scale and context, in 1992. The artist loaded a gigantic holm oak, standing completely alone in the open Lodian countryside, with one hundred constructs made of intertwined plant matter, each one different from the next, that are only partially hidden by the spring and summer foliage and afford a striking and unusual image throughout the long snowy winter. Here, metaphor and reality seem not to diverge. The *Albero dei cento nidi* (*Hundred-nest tree*) is an indisputable – but never incongruous – presence and readily recognizable icon.

The two *Torri vegetali* (*Towers of plants*) were erected in 1992 on the occasion of the artist’s first encounter with Arte Sella. The sturdy interwoven geometry of these two installations, located on the edges of the woods, rises from among the treetops to reveal bold internal pathways. From inside the towers, the immediate surroundings acquire a plastic prominence whose shapes transmute in fluid succession from height to height.

In the nineteen nineties Giuliano Mauri’s works, installed in a diversity of landscapes (from Denmark to Germany, England and the United States), each of which would merit an individual analysis in the context of environmental references, earned broad international acclaim, encouraged by favourable reviews. The new decade, concurring with the new century, began with the erection of the *Cattedrale Vegetale* (*Cathedral of plants*) at Sella Valsugana, which finally brought ultimate recognition for the artist’s oeuvre as an intensely representative sample of today’s art and culture.

Giuliano Mauri built his huge tree cathedral in 2001 in the suggestive context of Arte Sella in the Sella Valsugana landscape, intact even today. This structure shows, in a way that very few other “environmental works” can, to what extent the oeuvre of an artist exclusively committed to direct contact with nature can be characterized by individual specificity while inspiring aesthetic complicity.

Arte Sella is an *unicum* in the contemporary artistic panorama in Italy and one of the few European areas, all of which are peripheral to the metropolitan capitals of the official art world and market, that are home – in Germany, France, Denmark and England – to the complex creations of the artists who have chosen the under-explored relationship between art and nature as their field of research. It is consequently perfectly logical that Mauri's *Cattedrale Vegetale* should have found its roots – quite literally – here and nowhere else. With a very short number of works made from natural materials, out of utter respect for the environment – hence its rightly claimed self-definition as *ecological art* –, but at the same time in absolute and non-transferable keeping with nature – whereby the term *in situ* installations –, Arte Sella is also an open-air museum *in progress*. The environmental works and creations on exhibit in Arte Sella share an “attitude” towards nature that grows out of recognition of the landscape, the emotions and signs it can convey, and a specific “material cultivation” of the environment. More explicitly, the traditional “land cultivation” that modelled and humanized the European landscape is recovered in an unprecedented dimension that draws both on memory and operational feasibility.

This fact, confirmed by the most perceptive contemporary art historians, is what distinguishes the artistic phenomena taking this direction in Europe beginning in the nineteen eighties and today included under the umbrella – rather imprecisely defined on the international scale – known as *Art in Nature*. Indeed, this same heading embraces the Land Art formulations typical of the nineteen sixties and seventies, a movement whose “controlled catastrophe” creations, designed to reveal the landscape's deep and disturbing geomorphological structure, were preferably sited in the natural desert scenarios of the United States. Michael Heizer, who together with Robert Smithson continues to be one of the foremost representatives of that radical exploratory movement, rightfully defined Land Art as the most characteristic expression of twentieth century American art. But these works are completely different from the “works in the landscape” by European artists, from Nils-Udo to Andy Goldsworthy, with which Mauri's *Cattedrale Vegetale* (*Cathedral of plants*) can be freely associated and usefully compared.

The drawings for this work of monumental dimensions were first published in Germany (in October 1987 in the journal *Münchener Zeit-Schriften*, whose editor-in-chief is Elmar Zorn) in the late nineteen eighties. At about that time, after the eighth edition of the Kassel Documenta, curated by Armin Zweite and myself, the two of us and Dieter Ronte discussed

the possibility of establishing a roster of and drawing links among the artists around the world committed to the exploration, with new strategies, of man's aesthetic and anthropological relationship with nature. Mauri's project, subsequently presented in the form of a maquette in the Milano Triennale and a number of major European museums, appeared to be difficult to actually build for its indisputable structural complexity, the need for a dimension consistent with the environment and the indispensable participation of a qualified and enlightened sponsor. Much to their merit, the province of Trent, in conjunction with the organizational expertise of Arte Sella, took it upon themselves to materialize their generous vision of the project.

The close bond between nature and architecture rests on the universal laws of physics. Columns and pillars are reminiscent of trees, of their irresistible upward thrust. Gothic intertwining, with its suggestive and subsequently glazed, openings, often draws inspiration from the living branches of trees. Cathedral architecture imitates the paths and silence of plant life. With their interiors designed for retreat and concentration, cathedral structures command undisputed respect as a general architectural reference.

"Working nature", as well as his plant materials, with ingenious, time-honoured techniques, Mauri has ambitiously, and to date uniquely, designed to erect a living cathedral able to render the age-old bond between earth and sky conspicuously visible.

Exemplary in its non-invasive siting and blending in vibrant harmony into the surrounding landscape with its long and slender naves, this cathedral is a terse and resonant mirror set between earth and sky. It is, certainly, pervaded by a primary spirituality. The remote memory of how humanity first eked out a livelihood refers the viewer from here to a future and a destiny that surmount all that is extinct and ephemeral in the substance from which all "works of nature" are vitally shaped. Anyone visiting the structure today will discover resonances and emotions at once personal and universal.

Certain elements that can today be identified as characteristic of Giuliano Mauri's intense creative career are present in the complex work involved in erecting *Cattedrale vegetale* (*Cathedral of plants*). The first of such elements is the keen intelligence of exploring a landscape in its transmutations, eclipses and regeneration. The Lodian countryside and the banks of the Adda River have rarely been interpreted by such an intimately involved actor,

but this same penetrating spirit has also successfully discovered the profound reality and inner voices of other places and landscapes. The artist's work has consistently highlighted the features of a new vision, focusing equally on foreground and perspective and choosing the highly mutable natural horizon as a vantage.

The bond between manual work and so much of human plastic creativity, which has materialized in different ways in the successive ages of history, here recovers its primary dimension. And the distance between material culture, linked to the production of everyday objects, and artistic culture, capable of symbolic expansion, is likewise subverted. The artist shows that nature can be "written" without retreating to remote vantages. The sense of nature expressed by Giuliano Mauri characterizes our times under what today is defined to be a *new alliance*; an approach that, far from setting culture against nature, invokes the "culture of nature" and is both witness to and clear proof of the artistic operability, in its most advanced and perceptive exploration, of such a culture.

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