

## **In a Waxy Silence** by Antonello Tolve

In this new chapter of his work, Giuseppe Tabacco (Rome, 1956) proposes a circular path, punctuated by 7 bowls made of clear beeswax which contain lentils, orzo, honey, dried olives, red wine, farro and raw wool. Not only do the pieces imaginatively recall the *Edictum De Pretiis Rerum Venalium* issued by the emperor Diocletian in 301 to confront galloping inflation ( polenta made from farro was, for example, the typical military food of the time), they also aim to chromatically and plastically define the narrative structure of the pre-existing architectural corpus. This is achieved precisely through the introduction of an intermittent device exposed to the outside of the surrounding space, a sort of *continuum*, a Benjaminian “constellation full of tension”. Luminous and transparent, meticulously shaped and polished by Tabacco, the seven containers - defined as *Reliquarium* (2021) by the artist - are, metaphorically, small places of welcome and hospitality, of inclusion and mixing of materials. The work directs reflection towards the horizon of the present, the relationship between participation and union, the transmission of memory and at the same time, of oblivion. The artist puts forward the hypothesis of a new (temporary) vision of the majestic space by introducing points of attention (sparks of clarity), potential signals and signs deposited asymmetrically with the aim of disrupting the symmetrical fixity of the Roman building. This placement orchestrates a variegated path of the gaze, a refined itinerary that - almost word for word - has all of the strength and impatience of *power in action*.

A precisely drawn plan by Tabacco, *Stilus* (2021), is a second, powerful intervention situated in the quadrangular environment of the Mausoleum. Here, the artist proposes an elephantine and agile pencil, roughly 4.5 meters in height, its hexagonal shape seeming to play with the octagonal structure of the space. Made of fine beeswax as is the magnetic *Reliquarium* and creating a decorative motif seemingly made of ivory, the piece contains within it: poppy petals, spikes of foxtail barley (also known as strozzacavalli- horse choker), couch grass (cynodon dactylon) and dog grass (agropyrom repens), daisies, sprigs of wild fennel or branches collected by the artist during one of his *pale and absorbed afternoons* spent in the Archeological Park on the Appia Antica. This refined installation makes reference to different linguistic stylistic elements - the obelisk, the column, the monolith - and it stretches mysteriously (solemnly) upward, as if to seek infinity and to write a chapter of history on the blue sky, in which the archaic and the present meet.

A series of wax tablets (reference to a Roman way of writing by engraving on *tabulae* or *tabellae* covered with impure wax or plaster with a *stilus*) is finally

scattered in the exhibition spaces, offering the viewer a journey in search of recesses and different points of view - of thoughts and presences - which fully reveal Giuseppe Tabacco's ultimate intent to create an intimate dialogue with the space, (a kind of temporary *Gesamtkunstwerk* previously touched upon in the unforgettable trilogy of works, *Well*, *Island* and *Paintings* made by the artist for the Museo delle Mura in 2015) with the idea of inhabiting the space in order to exhibit its fluid emptiness and beckon a kind of impartial silence, where the plan of the work seems to manifest itself liturgically, like an unexpected sound.