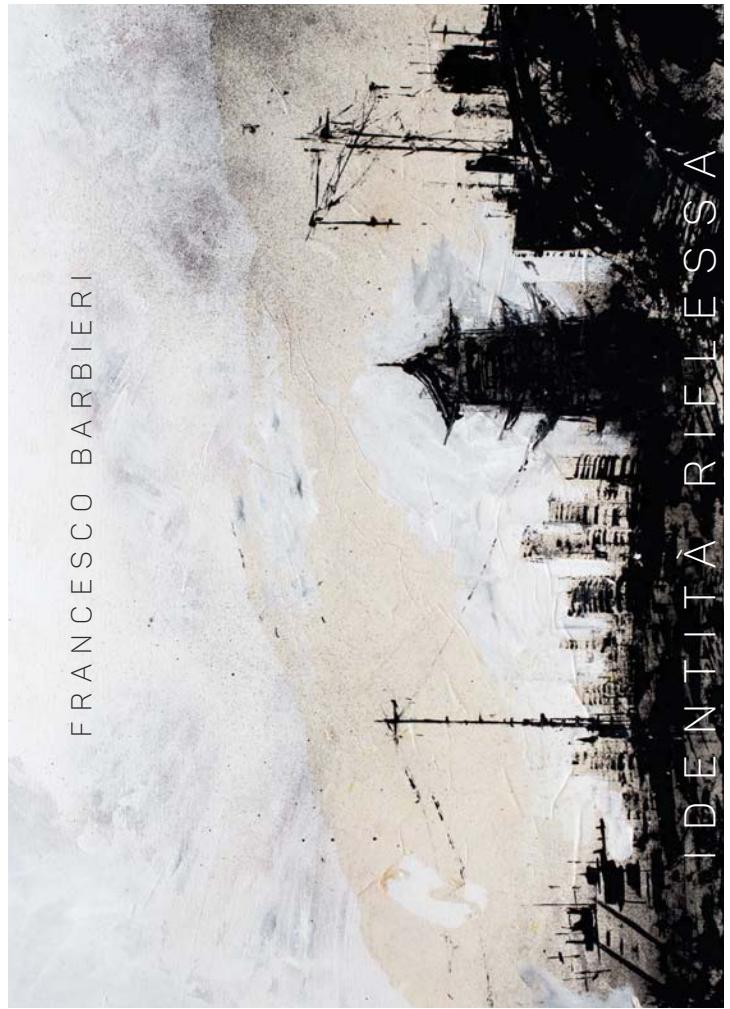


FRANCESCO BARBIERI



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IDENTITÀ RIFLESSA
DOPO NANJIING
MIRRORED IDENTITY AFTER NANJING

A CURA DI CURATOR ANDREA BALDINI

IDENTITÀ RIFLESSA
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GALLERIA LALINEA
ARTE CONTEMPORANEA MONTALCINO

F R A N C E S C O B A R B I E R I

"I didn't know before, but I've always painted Chinese cities." That's what Francesco Barberi told me when he resides at Nanjing University, even coming to an end. This might be "eighthaven's" famous sentence, which provides us with privilege access to the works included in his exhibition, but also illuminates Barberi's overall artistic evolution. This aesthetic journey, whereby Barberi has discovered what was once buildings also appeal: pagoda, temples, and ancient tower peaks in and interrupt the post-industrial skyline. We are beyond the system. Now, we live in a world that is monotonous, where tradition and modernity are in dialogue, light coexists with darkness, and life as nature not only reveals itself within the city, but sometimes demands it.

By going in the opposite direction of the majority of those also involved in Post-Spatialism, he refused to break through the streets of China. Barberi has based his own duality. In the walls of Ningbo, Beijing, Shanghai, and Wuhan, he has seen his iconographic and aesthetic reference to the past. This is not an easy choice. Barberi had to confront many difficulties in adapting to a new artistic identity, and preferred techniques. And yet, he has found ways to overcome difficulties, coming out of his art. His artistic view has become wider, more open, and his pictorial gesture firmer. In

his journey through an alien culture and through his different voices, Barberi has found the fundamental elements that harmonize all the complex and rhythmic motifs simultaneously resonating in this individual personality. Now, his hand can hold a paintbrush as if it were a stave cane, and vice versa. Barberi's paintings are always imagined and often associated in his calligraphy of the name of this newly found unity, a calligraphy of the name – though in Chinese and not in the style of graffiti – appears one of the paintings included in this exhibition. An amphibious creature, Barberi has discovered the cancrene country land and underwater creatures that inhabit the sky almost disappears. Conceived by a surreal being, his works are forms of expression lying "in-between", joining different domains and spheres: art and life, the studio and the city, the gallery and the street. Barberi's works emerge from his dialogue with all these contexts of crisis when the early path through the city can be found. In Barberi's biographical materialism, we find a dialogue between the cosmopolitan or metropolitan, and becomes cultural, or even apolitical, influencing not only the meaning but also the very construction of his pieces. Barberi practices the urban spaces surrounding him, and interact with its urban travelers. He literally brings back to his studio parts of the city's internal elements like cans of house paint abandoned around construction sites or tears

M I R R O R D I D E N T I T Y A F T E R N A N J I N G

line grained paper or even artworks, which all approach in his production. Rather than representing accurately a place, which is always imagined and often associated in his post-industrial condition. In this sense, we are not losing at mere landscapes seen from afar, we are consulting maps, biographies of our articulated world. This quality clearly appears in the series of megalopolis, where the sky almost disappears and we found ourselves submerged by the city, as if we were placed directly on the grid of its planning. When observing these maps, we also see our reflection, the reflection of individuals in time of crisis when the early path through the city can be found. In Barberi's biographical materialism, we find a dialogue between the cosmopolitan or metropolitan, and becomes cultural, or even apolitical, influencing not only the meaning but also the very construction of his pieces. Barberi practices the urban spaces surrounding him, and interact with its urban travelers. He literally brings back to his studio parts of the city's internal elements like cans of house paint abandoned around construction sites or tears

Andrea Baldini