

An Interview with Mirko Baselgia

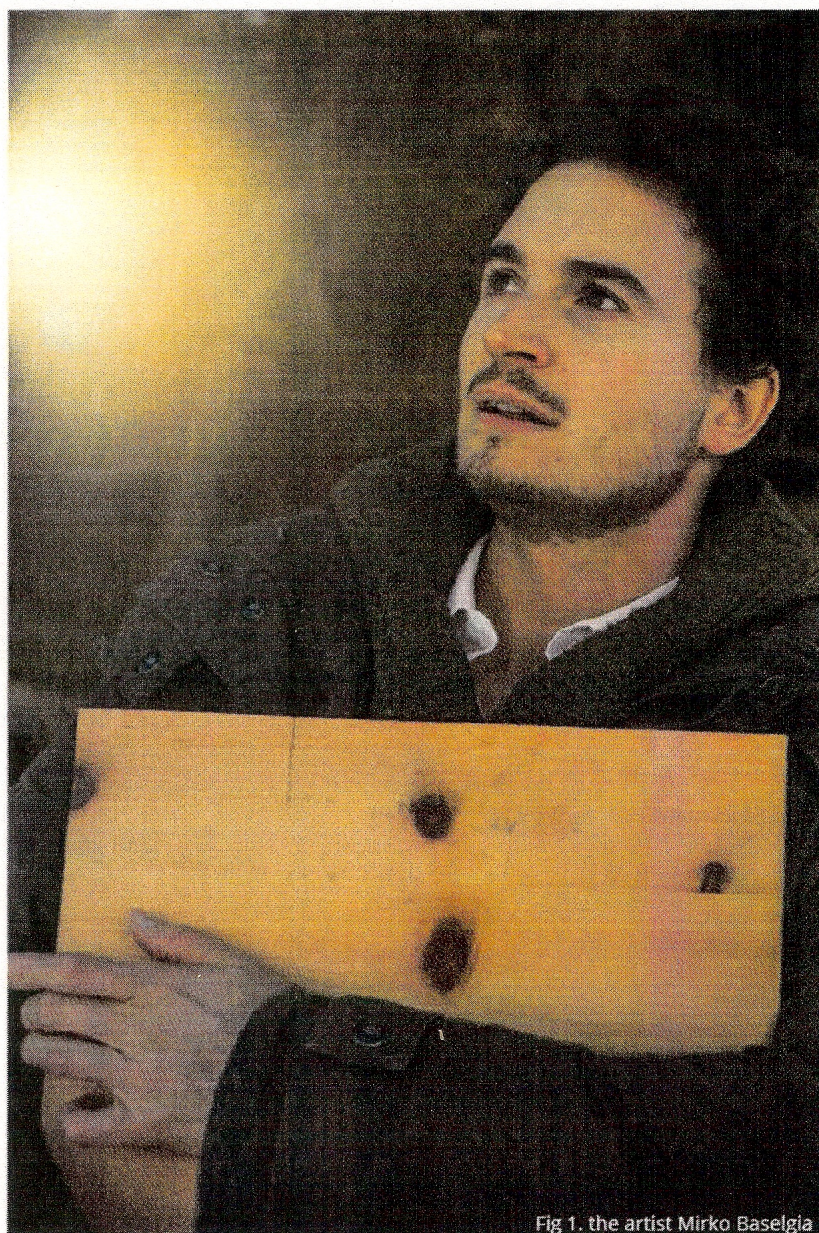


Fig 1. the artist Mirko Baselgia

Born in 1982 in Lens, Switzerland, Mirko Baselgia now lives and works in Grisons. Prior his BA & MA in Fine Arts from Zurich University of the Arts, he followed an Architecture Apprenticeship, specialized in building construction and structural engineering in Chur.

He received several awards and grants of which the most recent Kiefer Hablitzel Grant in 2012 and Manor Art Price Chur in 2013. His works are structural, patterned, intriguing elements and several works are based on experience and interaction restructuralization. Check fig 6 and 7.

Fig 2 and 3 on facing page.
Industrial Imprisonment London - 1811 and 2011

Tell us about the messages you are sending through your artwork.

The meaning of a message is created by the recipient and not by the sender. I am working on different levels in my work, which revolves around nature, our behavior in relation to our environment, and many social, philosophical and historical issues.

How did the people interact with your artwork?

That depends on the piece of art. There are works, where an active participation of the viewer is asked or other works where this interaction happens much later. For example, if a road safety fence in every day's life becomes visible again because it was previously perceived for the art world in a different material. But there are other works that require a physical distance because they are dangerous.

We saw a strong statement within the experiences you are providing, and it goes along the vision of organizing the cities and turning them smart. Did you plan this outcome?

There isn't actually a project where I can act upon the structures of a city. In the work with the cities I tried to find out whether the patterns of a city have a direct impact on the neural structures and the behavior of its inhabitants.

What is a smart city for you? From an artist's point view.

A city is a complex living construct, where in the best case, a balance is created between order and freedom of the residents. A smart city is for me a place where the needs of as many people as possible are covered without requiring major limitations of freedom. I believe that the density of traffic and the urban areas of today detriment of recreational and relaxation areas is what has long-term negative effect on the health of residents. Therefore, I think that it's very important to build pedestrian zones with large nature and relaxation rooms, these resources are essential for living.

What were the main challenges you faced explaining your artwork?

The biggest challenge in terms of explaining my work is, that the

viewer is often led by stereotypes or clichés and contribute to misunderstand my work and regard them as "Swiss". The use of materials from my environment and the implementation

by local craftsmen bases on an attitude and responsibility towards the environment and also towards global economic profit strategies. To get out of this narrow drawer it needs an open viewer and a good mediator of my artistic work. To me it is rather a consideration of our behavior as human beings with nature in general in a globalized and digital world and less a processing or confirmation of national stereotypes.

How do you reach the people and allow them to contribute?

My works are shown in various institutions and exhibitions, so I can reach at different locations interested observers. On these occasions also collectors from private and public collections address to us to buy works. Galleries and museums sell my

work and contribute in financing my projects.

Did you have any governmental support? How was it manifested?

As a cultural worker (artist) in Switzerland I can benefit from a wide promotion and support pool of different governmental, semi-private and private institutions. These contributions are partially awarded through competitions and partly directly for projects or exhibitions. I had the great privilege to benefit by this conveyor system and therefore I am very grateful.

In the absence of government support, do you think personal initiatives can be effective in the transformation of a city into a smart one?

If a state does not support its culture that is a sign that something is going wrong - that it is sick. It's like a body that you don't care of. "A state consists of its inhabitants" and so every personal initiative is a possible contribution to the transformation of a place.

How was your visit to Lebanon?

I'm very inspired and full of wonderful impressions. There have been a lot of great matches

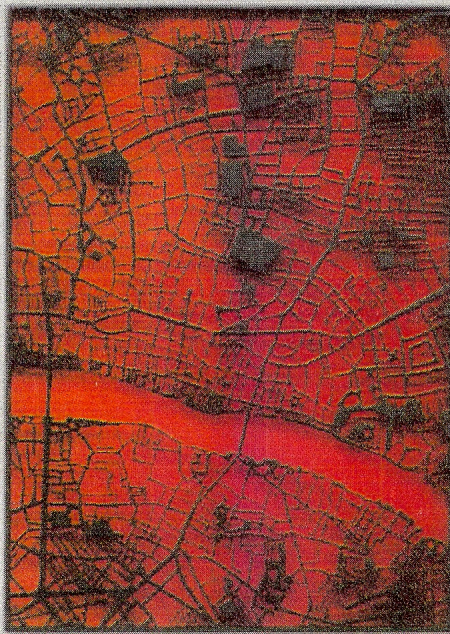


Fig 2

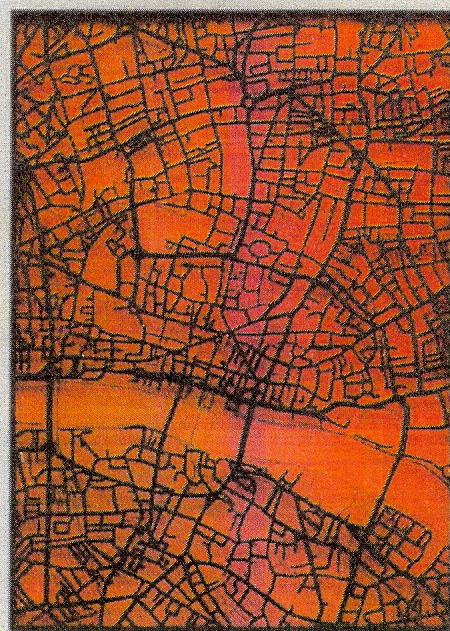


Fig 3



Fig 4. the artist Mirko Basaglia carrying his work

and the warmth and openness of the people here touched me. But I am also deeply concerned about how the nature and the environment are handled. The priorities are strongly focused on the daily life and the resources were and are consumed without regard to losses. For example, I could have bought a young cedar on a souvenir stand in a place where the cedar is probably more urgently needed than anywhere else.

Do you have any recommendations for Lebanon, Beirut, and its citizens?

It's not up to me to give recommendations, neither I know the country nor the needs of its inhabitants good enough. You can probably better answer this question for yourself, when you listen to the inner voice that tells you what you can do.



Fig 5. Antupada – The Bee dreams up the Flower and the Flower dreams up the Bee (2012)



Fig 6 and 7, entitled 'Restructuraziun', Fig 3 showcases the beginning phase of the exhibit and Fig 4 is after people stepped and entered the room. This scene highlights the damage we produce simply by stepping foot in nature.

