

Mirosław Bałka, *red nerve*, 2019

Castello di Ama, Gaiole in Chianti, Siena, Italy

Curated by Philip Larratt-Smith

October 15, 2019

Castello di Ama is pleased to announce the inauguration of *red nerve*, a new site-specific sculpture by the Polish artist Mirosław Bałka. This occasion marks the sixteenth addition to the series of permanent artworks conceived and realized for Castello di Ama for Contemporary Art.

Since the early 1990s, Mirosław Bałka (b. 1958) has mined the intersections of subjective memory and collective trauma through a body of work consisting of sculpture, installation, video, and drawing. His art obliquely addresses the nightmare of 20th century Polish history, from the Nazi invasion and occupation to the postwar Soviet regime. The humble and nontraditional materials with which Bałka often works—soap, ash, salt, wax, and so on—become resonant with historical and spiritual meaning.

At Castello di Ama, Bałka has suspended a single red thread in a cantina from ceiling to floor—a simple but radical gesture that has profound philosophical implications. A turning mechanism causes the thread to twitch and stir, investing it with a living presence and sensitizing the space around it. As the title implies, the thread is a metaphor for the human body, like a vein or umbilical cord that sustains a fragile and tenuous existence in the surrounding darkness. There is a spiritual dimension as well: the thread spanning the extreme height of the cantina metaphorically links earth and heaven, the visible realm of concrete things and the invisible realm of the spirit.

In *red nerve*, Bałka has created an image of the contingency and vulnerability of the human condition.

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