

*IDOLO* is the result of an invitation by the Mirafiori Foundation to create a temporary public work for the vicinity.

Historically the area was reimagined as a residential site, from the 1960s onwards it provided housing for factory workers, particularly those within the FIAT plants.

Amongst the tower blocks and low rise housing just across from the public park and beyond the mausoleum is a wild mountain river, the Sangone, which winds its way down from the Cottian Alps before joining the river Po beyond Turin. This river is quite at odds with the surrounding estates, their controlled vernacular a rational response to the needs of the people contrasted with the snaking wilderness of the barely contained water whose trajectory ebbs and flows with the mountain rain and ice melts. It is here we decided to place an object: a work of art perhaps, but also a catalyst of sorts for the landscape around it, aggravating its environs to become a part of them. A distant memory perhaps of *The Hay Wain*, John Constable's 1821 painting of agricultural England in nineteenth century Suffolk, an image resolute with feelings of national pride and identity.

Back in the 1950s this stretch of river had been used as a filming location for B movies, cheap and often exploitative films whose emphasis was on entertainment at any cost. The films shot here depicted exotic lands that were unspecific in their location although countries were alluded to, their visualisations drawing on a cacophony of exotic cliches. I think this is important as it emphasises the sense of otherness and beauty that this often forgotten stretch of river has, and it is why I was drawn to it. The idea of adventure and treasure also came from this vision, and the idea of something to be found in that river, the glimmer of gold and all the feelings of wonder, avarice and ultimately disappointment – a very human life cycle, it seemed.

*Roadside Picnic*, a science fiction novel by the Strugatsky brothers from 1972, is an allegorical tale from Russia during Soviet times depicting an area of land referred to as 'the Zone' where a visitation by aliens has left detritus that is both inexplicable and indescribable. Stalkers – trespassers and guides – illegally enter the Zone risking their lives and compromising their health to bring these objects out to sell to the research departments so that scientists can work out what these visitors wanted or meant by their arrival. At some point in the novel one of the scientists alludes to the situation as just a 'roadside picnic': the aliens stopped, they ate, they mended the car and left leaving the remnants of their time spent – the material having no more, or no less, meaning than this.

In many ways the discarded truck engine from the late 1960s, in its abandonment akin to the debris from another epoch, acts with this double meaning. It is both what it is – a redundant Fiat 650 N engine – but it is also a sculpture. It is the treasure which supplied the resources to construct its environs, the aspect of which is accentuated by the addition of gold plated sections. However these sections are only microns thick and, with time and the rising waters, will be washed away leaving the base metal exposed again, the gold washed downstream and disseminated into the river bed. It would seem the course of human life is ever circling back on itself, its trajectory woven into our environment and in dialogue with, or often in opposition to, the natural world.

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