

FLASH BACK

SCARECROW

artists as guardians of life

text by Alessandro Bulgini, ChatGPT and Christian Caliandro

The **SCARECROW** as a figure, a guard post, a presence that defends a living territory from aggression and external attacks.

Born to defend fields, scarecrows are among the oldest forms of protection created by humankind. Motionless figures, built from poor materials, they do not act through force but through sign, through presence. They do not fight; they warn. They do not chase; they stay. Traditionally, they serve to keep away what threatens the harvest, the fruit of slow and fragile labor. Today, however, their meaning can shift from the cultivated field to the social and political field.

In an era marked by aggressive leaderships, irrational decisions, and powers that seem to move without responsibility, the scarecrow becomes a figure of symbolic self-defense. It is an empty body exposed to wind, time, and gaze. Precisely for this reason it is powerful: it does not impose, it does not dominate, it does not govern. It exists as a threshold, as a silent warning. It reminds us that there is a limit not to be crossed, a territory to be respected, a community not to be plundered.

In its immobility there is an ethical choice: opposing without becoming what one is defending oneself from. The scarecrow is not a weapon, but a declaration of presence. It says: *"Something that matters is here. Someone is watching over this place."*

The scarecrow is passive; it neither attacks nor reacts, yet through presence alone it has the task (as it always has) of protecting what exists and existence itself. It is made in an emergency, with whatever is at hand. With what is found exactly where it will stand. It is assembled from the scraps and debris of life.

At this historical moment, in which power often seems to act like a predator, the scarecrow takes on a new function: not to frighten the weak, but to warn the strong. Not only to protect the harvest, but dignity, reason, and the fragility of the future. These figures, exposed like mute sentinels, remind us that humanity itself needs to be defended, and that sometimes the most effective form of resistance is to remain visible, stubbornly human, and not surrender to the madness of command. Scarecrows as political self-defense.

The scarecrow is born to defend the harvest from those who plunder without sowing. It is a poor figure, built from what remains, yet entrusted with a fundamental task: protecting future life. Today that field is no longer only agricultural. It is the world.

FLASH BACK

The scarecrow is art: a humble element that apparently blends into its context, yet performs an important role against certain dark forces. Scarecrow / art / artwork / artist is the **Guardian**.

We live in a time in which power is increasingly exercised by paranoid, authoritarian, unpredictable governments. Leaders who confuse strength with violence, decisiveness with brutality, consensus with fear. In this context, the scarecrow ceases to be rural folklore and becomes a political device. It does not govern, command, or produce obedience. It merely occupies space and makes a boundary visible.

It is the opposite of contemporary power: it does not speak, it does not promise, it does not openly threaten. And precisely for this reason it resists. It is a form of elementary, primitive counter-power, accessible to anyone. The scarecrow has no face, because power loves charismatic faces. It has no voice, because power feeds on slogans. It does not move, because power is obsessed with speed and permanent emergency. Its immobility is an accusation: it shows how often the noise of command is useless.

These figures remind predators that not everything is available, not everything is conquerable, not everything can be devoured. They are guarding bodies against arbitrariness, against decision-making madness, against the idea that the world is loot.

“Patients suffering from paranoid delusion often focus their paranoia on an external cause of torment, usually conforming to a Jungian archetype. In this case, a scarecrow.”
(Dr. Jonathan Crane / Scarecrow – Cillian Murphy in Christopher Nolan, *Batman Begins*, 2005)

In an era of “madmen-who-rule-the-world,” the scarecrow becomes a radical statement: not a leader, but a sentinel; not a weapon, but a limit; not a solution, but a refusal. Exhibiting them today means affirming that the defense of life, land, and dignity cannot be delegated to those who destroy them. It means saying that if power has become predatory, then resistance can also be simple, visible, and stubborn.

Like a scarecrow that remains standing while everything around it seems to lose its head.

DOROTHY: “How can you talk if you have no brain?”

SCARECROW: “I don’t know... but there are lots of people without brains who talk all the time...”

(Victor Fleming, *The Wizard of Oz*, 1939)

The scarecrow is a political body without power: it does not decide, command, or conquer. Precisely for this reason it is intolerable to those who occupy, annex, raze to the ground, and then call all this “security,” “defense,” or “historical necessity.” Where the armed State

FLASH BACK

erases human boundaries, the scarecrow marks a minimal yet obstinate presence: here there is and there will be life.

The scarecrow thus becomes an unstable and precarious monument to civilian victims, to occupied territories, to cities turned into rubble through the clean language of diplomacy and military operations. These works do not speak of abstract conflicts, but of real occupations, borders imposed by weapons, populations reduced to collateral damage; they speak of the moral failure of States that claim the right to destroy in the name of order, history, God, or the market.

A work that — as usual — is not entirely a work, that barely distinguishes itself from the rest, and that willingly blends with this “rest” (life / reality / world / territory), being a non-distinct element of it. Indistinct. Indistinction. Almost.

The scarecrow does not defend a nation: it defends the idea that no nation has the right to erase another. It is useless to armies, but essential against their logic: the logic that turns violence into administration and death into statistics.

This exhibition does not ask for peace as a slogan; it asks for responsibility and rejects equidistance. It rejects the language that masks extermination and occupation as accomplished facts. In a world where armed States behave like predators, the scarecrow remains standing as an error in the system: fragile, exposed, non-negotiable. A fake body that recalls what power seeks to eliminate first: presence, memory, dignity.

“I once said to a scarecrow, ‘You must be tired of standing in this lonely field.’ And he said, ‘The joy of frightening is deep and lasting, and I never tire of it.’”
(Kahlil Gibran, *The Madman*, 1918)