

## IN CONVERSATION WITH THE ARTIST AND THE PROJECT CURATOR

In this conversation, artist and curator reflect on the central themes of the project, exploring the relationship between contemporary art, collective ritual, light, and the identity of place.

**Your work often transforms public space into a site of participation and shared experience. In this project, light becomes the primary medium. What does light allow you to do that other media cannot?**

**Marinella Senatore:** Light is immaterial and, at the same time, profoundly social. People instinctively gather around it; it creates temporary communities. Unlike other media, light has the ability to transform a space emotionally as well as politically. It can create intimacy within public space, becoming a shared language accessible to everyone, regardless of age, background, or education. I am drawn to light because it carries memory, celebration, desire, and collective imagination. It is never neutral. Historically, illumination has marked moments of gathering, ritual, protest, and transformation. In this sense, light is not simply a visual element, but a social device.

**The Puglian tradition of *luminarie* has a celebratory and communal dimension, historically tied to festivals and collective rituals. What drew you to engage with this language, and how do you reinterpret it within your practice?**

**Marinella Senatore:** Popular traditions have always fascinated me because they preserve forms of knowledge and participation transmitted collectively across generations. *Luminarie* are extraordinary because they exist at the intersection of architecture, sculpture, craftsmanship, performance, and ritual. They are ephemeral monuments created for people rather than institutions. Engaging with this tradition felt very natural to me. My work often begins with vernacular visual languages that are emotionally accessible and deeply rooted in collective memory. At the same time, I am interested in subtly shifting their meaning — transforming celebration into reflection, ornament into both a poetic and political gesture. Through the language of light, *We Rise by Lifting Others* reactivates a tradition historically associated with devotion and festivity, turning it into a call for solidarity, mutual support, and collective strength.

**Your curatorial practice often explores the relationship between contemporary art and the identity of a place. Why was Masseria Torre Maizza the right context for Marinella Senatore's work, and how did the landscape and cultural memory of Puglia shape the project?**

**Raffaele Quattrone:** Masseria Torre Maizza is not a neutral setting. It carries within it the history of Puglia and its deep relationship with light, hospitality, ritual, craftsmanship, and landscape. Marinella's work resonates profoundly with these dimensions because her practice has always been rooted in community, participation, and collective memory. In Puglia — and particularly within the tradition of *luminarie* — light is never merely decorative. It is a social presence that marks moments of gathering, celebration, and belonging.

**Today, many hospitality spaces are incorporating contemporary art into their identity. In your view, what distinguishes an authentic cultural experience from the simple presence of artworks within a hotel context?**

**Marinella Senatore:** For me, the difference lies in whether art is treated as decoration or as a genuine possibility for encounter and reflection. An authentic cultural experience generates dialogue, raises questions, and allows people to feel part of something rather than simply consuming an image. This can happen through conversations, public programmes, shared experiences, or even through subtle emotional or intellectual frictions. Hospitality spaces become meaningful cultural platforms when they invest not only in displaying artworks, but in fostering relationships between artists, audiences, territories, and local communities.

**Raffaele Quattrone:** I completely agree. What matters is whether art functions merely as an aesthetic accessory or as a living cultural experience capable of generating thought, emotion, and dialogue. At

Masseria Torre Maizza, guests encounter the work of an internationally recognised artist in an unusually close — almost intimate — way. They experience it not within the neutrality of a museum, but within the rhythm of everyday life: moving through the masseria, inhabiting its spaces, and entering its atmosphere. This inevitably transforms the emotional relationship with the work. At the same time, the scale of *We Rise by Lifting Others* ensures that the installation does not belong exclusively to those inside the hotel. Even from outside, its presence and impact remain visible. In this sense, the work creates a dialogue between inside and outside, between guests and territory, transcending both physical and symbolic boundaries.

***We Rise by Lifting Others* is both a statement and an invitation. Installed within the open landscape of Masseria Torre Maizza, the work takes on new resonances connected to hospitality, encounter, and community. What do you hope visitors will project onto this luminous phrase?**

**Marinella Senatore:** I am not interested in language functioning in a closed or prescriptive way. I am drawn to phrases that different people can inhabit differently. *We Rise by Lifting Others* speaks about solidarity, but also about interdependence and vulnerability. It reminds us that individual growth is never truly individual. Within the landscape of Masseria Torre Maizza, I hope the work becomes both intimate and collective: something experienced personally, while also recognising oneself as part of something larger. I would like people to project onto it their desires, memories, frustrations, and hopes. In a historical moment marked by isolation and polarisation, even a luminous phrase can become a small gesture of care.

**Raffaele Quattrone:** The strength of the phrase lies precisely in its openness. It is simple and direct, yet it contains a profound idea: personal growth and collective growth are inseparable. Within the context of Masseria Torre Maizza — immersed in the Puglian landscape and within a culture historically rooted in hospitality and community — the work acquires an almost symbolic dimension. Light becomes not only a visual presence, but also a metaphor for human connection. I hope visitors experience the installation not simply as an image, but as an opportunity for emotional and personal reflection.

**The project will also include a public conversation in May. How important is dialogue — with audiences, collaborators, or communities — within your respective practices? Can moments of exchange actively shape the evolution of a work or curatorial project?**

**Marinella Senatore:** Dialogue is central to everything I do. My practice has always been built through encounters, collective processes, listening, and collaboration. I do not see artworks as autonomous objects, but as living structures that evolve through the people who encounter and activate them. Public conversations matter because they create temporary communities and spaces for shared reflection. Very often, the most meaningful aspects of a project emerge from unexpected exchanges, moments of vulnerability or disagreement, and shared stories. I do not believe culture should move in only one direction. A work changes through interaction, and the artist changes as well. That permeability is essential to me.

**Raffaele Quattrone:** For me, dialogue does not simply accompany a curatorial project — it is an integral part of it. Many decisive ideas emerge through conversations, encounters, and unexpected exchanges with artists, collaborators, audiences, or even with places themselves. I do not believe contemporary art should function as a closed system speaking only to insiders. I am interested in projects capable of generating relationships and opening spaces for reflection and participation. Public conversations are important because they allow a project to continue evolving beyond its physical presence. They introduce another layer of experience based on listening, interpretation, and shared thought. This is also one of the reasons I immediately felt a strong connection between Marinella's practice and Masseria Torre Maizza: her work is deeply rooted in collective experience and in the idea of culture as a space of encounter. In the same way, authentic hospitality is not simply about welcoming people, but about creating the conditions for meaningful human exchange.