

9, VIA DELLA VETRINA CONTEMPORANEA

INTERVIEW TO BENEDETTO PIETROMARCHI

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From drawings, to sculptures, to sounds...

Elisabetta Giovagnoni: From the brief, amicable conversations I had with you, I could sense the importance of your travels in your training and formation, as a source of inspiration. You have lived in Morocco, in London, and lately between Carrara, Capalbio, and Rome. I reckon your passion for art has been a constant in your meanderings. What is the relationship between the two?

Benedetto Pietromarchi: Since I work with my imagination, travels have always been an important source of inspiration, and a moment for me to absorb images. My relationship with travelling is thus essential to me: in my last trip to Egypt for instance, I was able to consolidate the use of drawing as an instrument to record sensations and moments in time. I keep these drawings as a bearing which I carry with me, and use them as a reference and inspiration for my sculptures.

Elisabetta Giovagnoni: Drawings as a first form of self-expression then, as a congenial instrument used to record images, sensations, and memories. How did the need to get into physical contact with matter come about?

Benedetto Pietromarchi: I have always felt this need, but it is during my Senior year in high school that a real interest was born. Two years studying architecture helped by giving me a notion of space, consolidating this need, which in turn brought me to Carrara, where I specialized in working with terracotta.

Elisabetta Giovagnoni: When one sees your work, regardless of the sensations it provokes, one is struck by your craftsmanship in working with terracotta, by how you succeed in creating pieces which are at the same time classical, and mysterious. However, in a way, it is as if you have made a backward journey: from an abstract to a figurative form of art.

Benedetto Pietromarchi: When I was studying architecture, I used to pick up recycling materials from the street, iron waste which I photographed, and stored at home. The idea was to create an archive of material which I would later use to make collages. A bit as I do during my travels with drawings. But I wasn't able to derive any logical sense from this endeavour, only having Tinguely's sculptures as a reference point. That is when I felt the need to have a more solid base, a structure through which I could grow as an artist, and that path has led me to figurative art, and to the study of its basic techniques and their use in sculpture.

Elisabetta Giovagnoni: So your trip to Egypt was apparently a fundamental stepping stone for your personal growth, as well as a stunning creative revelation when you saw a temple in Luxor...

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Benedetto Pietromarchi: I was stunned...in a temple, in front of a bas-relief bearing the image of high priests carrying the Pharaoh through a procession. At that exact moment my hieratic priest sculpture was conceived, and was made possible, among other things, thanks to the ancient Egyptians sculpture mastery in suggesting movement through a static nature.

Elisabetta Giovagnoni: This is perhaps why your sculptures have such a detached, but strong presence – as if they were receptacles of ancient wisdom – and they immediately remind concepts linked to “spirituality”. When you are not travelling, is the actual space you choose to work in important to you?

Benedetto Pietromarchi: The place where I work is very important to me. Whenever I can I work outside my studio, in a different location. It is sort of a small trip for me. Abandoned factories and buildings carry a strong expressive force with them, and they hold in their walls images and sensations from the past which I use as a source of inspiration.

Elisabetta Giovagnoni: In making your last sculptures you have not only used terracotta, but also new materials as lead for instance – for the figures – or tar, for the objects carrying sounds. It is clear these are clues to a new direction in your research, do you have a plan regarding the end-point of your research?

Benedetto Pietromarchi: For now, I have a starting point. These instruments represent the extension of a larger scale idea which includes both the terracotta and the tar and lead sculptures. They are part of a same universe, and they are a derivation, or better still: a product of these same sculptures.

Elisabetta Giovagnoni: In what way are they a product of the sculptures? And why have you decided to turn them into resounding objects?

Benedetto Pietromarchi: Because they form part of a same universe, and it is as if they were artefacts of my characters. My intention, as a matter of fact, is to show traces of an elusive civilization by exposing its art and culture as well. The resounding objects were specifically conceived as instruments whose voice should be heard through music. They originate from a passion I always had for music, and from the desire to work with musicians, who I could finally befriend thanks to my sculptures.

Elisabetta Giovagnoni: In order to obtain these sounds you have therefore worked with three young musicians. How did this communion between your sculptures and music work out? And how do you personally conceive this relationship between music and plastic arts?

Benedetto Pietromarchi: I met the three musicians separately and explained my project to them, and although they came from different musical backgrounds, they all seemed curious about the possibility of adding sound to my sculptures. I had a dialogue in mind between three sculptures making sounds emanating from three different instruments, so I showed the musicians the three different objects, and they then improvised sounds according to the sensations they felt when confronted with the objects. Each object is defined by an individual sound. The relationship between music and plastic arts is very subtle, and it requires a particular atmosphere to function properly. The sound, drawn close to a form, adds to it an additional perceptive dimension.

Elisabetta Giovagnoni: When we were setting up the exhibition we thought about how we could play with light and shadows. In your work, what is the significance and value of these two elements in relation to the sculptures you create?

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Benedetto Pietromarchi: Light and shadows are fundamental in sculpture because they define and guide its realisation. Shadows for instance, highlight and make faces and specific details stand out. But there is also another dimension in which light and shadows are greatly important, and it has to do with "reflection". The reflected shadow of a sculpture becomes an integral part of the sculpture, it takes possession of the space and creates an atmosphere. In the same way it does in paintings, it also defines a representative space.

In this first exhibition, the alternation of drawings and sculptures, the imperceptible nature of sounds and whispered voices, an atmosphere of lights and reflected shadows.

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