

Press release

"ABOUT SCULPTURE: from the material to the immaterial. Art between the 20th and 21st centuries"

**An exhibition for the debut of the Association of Art Galleries in Lugano
Vernissage: Wednesday 17 May, 6:00 pm**

The newly founded Association of Art Galleries of Lugano (GAL) is organising an unprecedented exhibition dedicated to sculpture from 18 to 21 May 2023 in the Asilo Ciani building.

The "ABOUT SCULPTURE: from the material to the immaterial. Art between the 20th and 21st centuries" exhibit is the first event promoted by GAL - Gallerie d'Arte di Lugano, the trade association founded with the aim of disseminating and making available to the public the cultural content resulting from the experiences of its members.

GAL debuts with a wide-ranging display that traces the history of sculptural technique from the 20th century to the present day, presenting works by **Tonatiuh Ambrosetti, Joël Andrianomearisoa, Rangga Aputra, Francesco Balilla Pratella, John Cage, Tony Cragg, Luca Frei, Alberto Garutti, Bruno Munari, Ruben Pang, Flavio Paolucci, Matteo Pugliese, Luigi Russolo, Paolo Scirpa, Vera Trachsel e Ronald Ventura.**

Thanks to the collaboration with the City of Lugano and the support of the Lugano Region, the city's galleries will be exhibited from May 18 to 21, 2023 in the Asilo Ciani, a recently restored historical building dating back to the end of the 19th century.

Founded in January 2023, the GAL Association brings together Lugano's art galleries that have worked in the sector for years and are an integral part of the city's cultural fabric. These galleries shared the project of working in synergy, with the constructive intention of presenting themselves as interlocutors for the public and the institutions, making their expertise available. Each with its own history, experience and professional background, they have joined forces to promote and enhance their rich cultural offer through wide-ranging initiatives, thereby creating a dynamic and virtuous network for the territory.

With the exhibition "ABOUT SCULPTURE: from the material to the immaterial. Art between the 20th and 21st century" the city's galleries are presented to the public, for the first time together, with the intention of presenting their work. The event is an important opportunity to introduce people to the world of galleries, helping disseminate the idea that galleries are not just a commercial activity, but that they are real cultural spaces curated by passionate experts: containers of art animated by the works of artists, by the professionals who work there and, nonetheless, by the people who visit them.

The galleries participating in the exhibition are **Buchmann Lugano, Galleria Allegra Ravizza, Galleria Daniele Agostini, Imago Art Gallery, KROMYA Art Gallery, Primo Marella Gallery,**

Repetto Gallery, Studio Dabbeni. Artphilein will curate the section dedicated to art publishing and artists' books.

The first exhibition promoted by GAL is dedicated to sculpture. The galleries have converged in this debut exhibition to present to the public a purely cultural review, in which the works selected by each participant become the pieces of a mosaic that make up the history of the development of plastic art in the last century.

Through a dozen or so sections, the exhibition presents itself as an itinerary on the technical, stylistic and conceptual evolution of sculptural language, exploring the processes, materials and unprecedented relationships with space implemented between the 20th and 21st centuries. In fact, the history of contemporary sculpture follows an articulated itinerary, also marked by radical ruptures that have launched new directions of research: transformations that have characterised the extraordinary and vital development of plastic art in its most eclectic creative potential.

If for many centuries sculpture had a precise and restricted identity, as industry and technology progressed, the way in which it was conceived and realised changed, sparking off an era open to the maximum freedom of boundaries and the legitimisation of new practices, the founding elements of contemporary work. Amidst unexplored languages and modes of expression that take up and update traditional practices, the exhibition at the Asilo Ciani brings together some of the most relevant sculptural artists of the last century, who have interpreted matter in a thousand facets, pushing the boundaries of its very presence.

An artist fully belonging to the 20th century and who went through the 20th century imbuing it with creative fervour is **Bruno Munari**, so eclectic and original in his multifaceted path as to be a *sui generis* figure in the way of conceiving art. Munari has always repudiated stylistic stereotypes and rigid classifications, opening up to the convergence of disciplines and a non-conformist approach to creation. Plastic art is also an area where Munari can experiment freely, forcing the conceptual and technical limits of tradition. This is evidenced by his *Scultura pieghevole rossa*, dated 1951, a steel work centred on the play of solids and voids that is as simple as it is incisive, and his iconic *Sculture da viaggio* created between 1959 and 1987, a concentration of ironic aversion to the monumentality of sculptural art as well as a poetic way of imbuing the work, at the height of its lightness, with memories and profound meanings.

Despite the extreme diversity of the final result, the material exhibited in all its physical meaningfulness is a common feature of the works of some of the artists in the exhibition. This is true for **Matteo Pugliese**, linked to a more traditional view of sculpture and material processing. Skilled in assimilating the constituent values of plastic art and the teachings of some of the greatest masters of the past and then re-elaborating them with renewed effectiveness, the Italian artist chooses to use sculptural technique as an expressive medium to give shape to his idea of energy and solidity at the same time. In his works, the impact of matter on space is strong. In fact, his *Custodi*, bronze and clay sculptures created from Pugliese's desire to mould figures that could instil confidence and balance, encapsulating the universal values that are the innate needs of all humanity are powerful and unyielding.

The solidity of matter also characterises the works of British artist **Tony Cragg**, sculptures with a powerful flow of energy that seems to defy the laws of statics but at the same time firmly binds the work to space. For Cragg, art is an attempt to recreate the fundamental structures of various life forms, capturing their exact geometry along with their irrational and impulsive souls. His sculptures, whether

made of Murano glass, such as *Curl* (2022), or bronze, such as *Standing* (2019), are sinuous forms that continually change, animated by an extraordinary vitality that imbues the material in depth.

Among the artists in the exhibition who test the potential of plastic art through the use of both elements belonging to tradition and unusual techniques are some non-European artists, who are able to bring the conceptual force of their research into the physicality of sculpture. **Ruben Panga** young Singaporean artist, manages to update one of the oldest materials in the history of art, ceramics. Hovering between figuration and abstraction, Pang's creations seem to appear before our eyes as metamorphosing bodies, in which the dynamism contained in the material celebrates the complexity of the individual. Works such as *The Phantom Throat* (2018-2019) and *The Hazard Star* (2020) seem to conquer the surrounding space with their elusive shapes and vivid colours, mirroring the dissonance that represents man's deepest emotional drives.

The work of **Ronald Ventura** is moulded with a classic material, bronze, skilfully renewed by the Filipino artist's typical design style. Mixing various images and motifs from Asian mythology and folklore as well as from Western culture, Ventura creates works that depict the disorientation of contemporary society. His *Zookeeper* (2018) is a hybrid creature that appears to us as an ancient deity, with human head and limbs and the torso and tail of a reptile: austere and grotesque, archaic and futuristic, it embodies the unalterable chaos of the world.

Interested in exploring new materials is Indonesian artist **Rangga Aputra** for whom sculpture is a means of self-discovery that brings back memories and innermost impulses and then gives them a concrete form. *Pressure* (2022) is the effigy of a disfigured face made eloquent by its barely sketched volume and its surface covered with scratches and grooves created by the processing of matter, symbolising the wounds that disfigure the human soul.

Also **Joël Andrianomearisoa**, a native of Madagascar, has developed his artistic research through different means of expression. This versatile approach to the creative process has led him to favour woods, minerals, textiles, paper and mirrors, all elements used to shape narratives that are never explicit but allusive. This is exactly what we see in his works *Sentimental Negotiations Act VII* (2013) and *Vertigo* (2022), two delicate and ambiguous installations through which Andrianomearisoa engages the viewer, raising awareness of those feelings we all have but are often unaware of. Fascinated by its narrative potential, many artists rely on the material to lead our perception into the territories suspended between reality and fiction, with the intention of exploring the themes closest to their heart. This type of investigation is in line with the work of **Flavio Paolucci**. For many years, the Swiss artist has established a close dialogue with nature, stemming from a visceral relationship rooted in the rural culture of the Blenio Valley, his homeland. Using materials such as wood, paper, marble, glass and especially bronze, Paolucci imitates and recreates certain elements of the natural landscape with skill and precision, in an intriguing interplay between truth and artifice. In his work *Tavolozza d'artista - Omaggio a Segantini* (2023) he reproduces the branch of a tree, restoring at times its knotty twists, at others its smooth surfaces, and then grafting a painter's palette onto it, as if it too were a newly grown leaf: a tribute to art that knows how to make the ephemeral eternal.

Akin to him in his careful research of materials is the Ticino artist **Tonatiuh Ambrosetti**, present in the exhibition with an installation entitled *Primigenio*, created in 2019. Some blocks of glass with barely rough shapes confuse us as to their natural or artificial origin and appear to us as elements without a historical location or precise source. All that exists is their "here and now" being, a unique and unrepeatably experience capable of connecting the human being to a transcendental, metaphysical dimension. The working of molten glass that makes the blocks resemble eroded ice blocks is an important part of the artist's investigation into the origins of humans and the materials they are made of.

The work of **Vera Trachsel**, a young Swiss artist interested in matter as a support for narratives: by disguising and subverting the physical properties of the elements used, the artist creates a conceptual disorientation, making her works mimetic objects charged with symbolic values. This occurs in *Luna tra gli alberi* (2023), a fragment of upside-down landscape made from poor, easily salvaged materials (such as wood and foam rubber) which, despite its simplicity, stands out for its visual strength and its ability to relate to space.

The extent to which sculptural material can become an instrument of interaction between artist and spectator is demonstrated by the work of **Luca Frei**. His works explore various ways of relating to the public with the intention of stimulating novel thought processes. Not surprisingly, they are often presented as devices that invite the viewer to active participation. The artist explores themes such as the passage of time, the body and the relationship between human beings and nature through creations in which the extreme abstraction of matter allows the expressive potential of the work to be kept as open as possible. On exhibit is *Untitled* (2008), an almost three-metre high iron structure representing a highly stylised man-tree with limb-branches sprouting from the central trunk and seeming to want to move in the surrounding space, underlining how the balance between the individual and the environment is something precarious but essential.

The relationship that the work manages to establish with the viewer is also fundamental for **Alberto Garutti**. The works of the Italian artist, linked to the conceptual instances, stimulate reflection, triggering participation and dialogue mechanisms on several levels: characterised by a strong narrative component, they involve the viewer, becoming the tangible imprint of the profound relationship that Garutti manages to create with the individual and the community. Allusive yet spontaneous, contemplative yet full of poetic content is the sculpture *Sehnsucht* (2016), consisting of two porcelain vases with complementary shapes that the artist has placed next to each other without letting them touch. The vessels are close and yet distant, eager to meet and yet irretrievably separated. Garutti charges their distance with meaning: the work is the void, that which is not there, it is the absence of matter.

Thus, the art of shaping opens up to the immaterial. The concept of the work in its physical entity, its density and consistency is overcome to approach the idea of the immaterial. Embodying this idea of sculpture well are the works of **Paolo Scirpa**, an artist who has developed his entire research around the investigation of space in relation to light. His *Pozzo XI. Espansione+traslazione cilindrica* (1981), in the exhibit, uses a system of mirrors and neon lights to suggest the perception of illusory, fictitious depths, in which the boundary between the real and the unreal is abolished. Light and space become intangible and spectacular protagonists of a work where the observer's gaze is lost in the void, in evanescence, in infinity.

The theme of the immateriality of art is explored in a small "exhibition within the exhibition", which presents an evocative experimental journey centred on noise. On the one hand, the project seeks to highlight how noise, in itself devoid of consistency, can be used as a physical and structural element in our everyday life, and on the other hand, as a sort of conceptual reversal, to demonstrate how art itself can take shape in the absence of matter. Alongside the early 20th century manifestos of Futurist music by **Francesco Balilla Pratella** we find the inventions of **Luigi Russolo**, of whom an excerpt from the intonarumori score entitled "Awakening of a City" (1914) is also exhibited, in which the artist proposes a new sound palette composed of the infinite noises of everyday life. Reviving the total openness to the auditory perception of the world are the musical works of the 1990s by **John Cage**, a person who revolutionised the concept of listening by considering noise, like the futurists, not as disturbance but as a real sound with an autonomous value. Noise becomes sound matter, art becomes intangible.

Artphilein, a bookshop and publishing house specialising in contemporary photography and independent publishing, curated a section of the exhibit showcasing a selection of photography books and artist's books on the exploration of unusual and border lands. The material was displayed within the *Cubitus* installation created in 2005 by Luca Frei, which reproduces the Bibliothèque des Enfants of the Centre George Pompidou from the early 1980s.

The exhibit will be complemented by a rich programme of side events, including lectures, book presentations, concerts and a selection of art titles.

The exhibited artists are:

Tonatiuh Ambrosetti e Vera Trachsel - Galleria Daniele Agostini

Tony Cragg e Alberto Garutti - Buchmann Lugano

Luca Frei - Studio Dabbeni

Matteo Pugliese - Imago Art Gallery

Flavio Paolucci e Paolo Scirpa - KROMYA Art Gallery

Joël Andrianomearisoa, Rangga Aputra, Ruben Pang e Ronald Ventura - Primo Marella Gallery

Francesco Balilla Pratella, Luigi Russolo e John Cage - Galleria Allegra Ravizza

Bruno Munari - Repetto Gallery

The exhibition will be open, with free admission, on the following days and times:

Wednesday May 17 at 6:00 p.m. - Inauguration open to the public

Thursday May 18, Friday May 19 and Saturday May 20 12:00 noon - 7 p.m.

Sunday May 21 12 noon-5 p.m.

Asilo Ciani

Viale Carlo Cattaneo

6900 Lugano

Parking nearby

Parking Piazza Castello – Viale Carlo Cattaneo 5, Lugano

Parking Balestra – Via G.B. Pioda 9, Lugano

For further information

Lugano Gallery Association (GAL)

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