

MY SCULPTURES *

My sculptures are my voice, my thought, my most authentic “action,” not my words or my discourses on art. Those are only inner matters, unconfessed and incommunicable for me by any means other than the one that suits me best, by nature.

And how can I speak of principles, of the ideals to which I aspire, when they are constantly subject to a continuous betrayal that distorts them as soon as they try to take concrete form?

I say this because every artist – if he is at all in good faith – strives for the absolute, whatever may be his measure and his limit which he must make an effort to know.

I have also chosen this craft so as not to be subject to the accelerated pace of our time, but the farther I get along in years at this pace, the more I sense that I must inexorably become accustomed to it.

There is always something ancient in the hands of men who seek a form, and I do not know if greater pride should be felt by the sculptor for the perpetuation in time, with water and clay, of an aspiration as remote as the first men, or for the search for new paths for that aspiration. In other words, to be the continuer of an old tradition, or the seeker of a new one. But perhaps the truth lies in the fact that the authentic tradition is simply a continuous chain of revolutionaries.

Too many people in the world today reject “style” or even the aspiration to achieve it. So is style no longer the most faithful countenance of an era?

And is it not discomfiting for us to observe, day after day, the impossible coexistence of too many different modes of expression?

The youngest art, today, is just restlessness, precariousness, insecurity, fear and anguish of the present and the future, while I, instead, for our serenity would like it to still adapt, and at length, for the whole century, to the wisdom of Braque when he says “I like the rule that corrects emotion.”

It seems to me that the most successful and loftiest epochs and works have been born under this sign, and I speak of both those ancient and those modern.

If I could only discover the secret of the perfect form one day – closed or open, it matters not – and recognize everything in it: heart and reason.

And to be able, in the end, to deliver to people a work that can be seen to be new, i.e. just finished, and not to begin, with my own hands, out of archaeological narcissism or masochism, to unfinish it or destroy it. Let me make it clear that when I say “finished” I mean “done,” not “polished.”

But how can I do this if I have seen my “characters” (if I may be allowed to call them that) in fantasy, in reading or in the street *always and only* for an instant, and if as an obvious result the way of conveying them always suits itself in me, I believe, to this fleeting impression?

Their dimension, therefore, cannot help but be allusive.

Perhaps in so doing I am romantically unable to escape from the fatal spell of the things I know I shall never see again in that particular guise, that particular moment.

Why do I force myself to desire that my sculptures not be “statues” but only ineffable “presences”?

* In: AA.VV. (MARIO DE MICHELI, GIUSEPPE MARCHIORI, BERNARD DORIVAL, GIOVANNI CARANDENTE, MARIO NEGRI, MASSIMO CARRÀ, ENRICO CRISPOLTI, SILLA ZAMBONI), *Storia della scultura*, X. *La scultura del Novecento*, introductory essay by MARIO DE MICHELI, Fratelli Fabbri Editori, Milano, pp. 256-258.

Why do I need to bind them to this stable condition of “sculptures” almost as if to give them that weight they do not have, trying to make them into a base that is also sculpture? These bases, then, are nothing but an introduction, an anchor to hang on to what would tend to dematerialize itself.

I would like to make sculptures that arise like a flower on high, at the top of a slender stem.

And like a flower they should have great formal development, but also a weight that moves in the wind.

Why do I have moments of joy only when I recognize in a sculpture the equivalent of my states of mind?

From real figures, I want to bring about a story so that they find themselves, in the reality I give them, as they “were” in fantasy, in memory, and I want this “memory” to become their ideal atmosphere, their vital space.

And to repeat, still and always, that uninterrupted ancient human discourse that for me is the sole existing path in the destiny of art.

Even abstract art, when it is art, has a human measure. By now this worn out distinction between abstract and figurative, abstract and concrete, seems useless to me. What counts is the quality, the vitality.

There are useless and dead works always and everywhere, whether they belong to the abstract or the figurative genre. What counts is for them to be true, alive, i.e. artistic.

For a sculptor, the center of the research does not consist only in the question of space – which would then only be a problem: it is, I believe for all artists, mainly an attempt to recreate an object that conveys a sensation as close as possible to the emotion felt *for the first time* by the artist himself at the sight of something deeply striking. All the other things, the more or less theoretical dilemmas, are nothing but the means to achieve this end: just like clay, plaster and water for shaping, or any other thing that may be needed in order to be able to work.

Seen as a “monument” I believe that sculpture, today, is no longer a plausible reality.

Undoubtedly something will be born, one day, that the men of today and tomorrow will recognize as their own “monuments.” The desperate and constant act of research rewards the genuine artist much more than the pride he may derive from the always hypothetical certainty of having completed a work and having revealed, through it, any given truth.