

Far from being just a tribute from a member of the Belluno Rotary Club's section to his brother Rotary Club of Spittal this exhibition is above all a call to those cultural values belonging to the Veneto Region and the Carintian land whose roots go back to the same sources, namely to the Roman and the Christian cultures. The presence of Franco Fiabane in Austria is the proof of a tradition of exchange that, occurring among different vicissitudes, facilitated and urged the human and cultural growth of populations which were so close but so frequently keep apart as a result of events exceeding their will.

The interpretation of Franco Fiabane's art requires careful consideration and particular attention. Indeed, it is the result of different cultural aspects melted in a singular aesthetic solution. It is fully expressed in several technical and material selections, all positive in consideration of the execution and of the aesthetical effect. Franco Fiabane himself professes his opinion about the impossibility to be free from the influences of the experiences of our predecessors ("You must be someone's son"). The paternities he denounces are mostly connected with the reception of the basic justifications characterizing it: a more or less conscious appeal to the greek ideal of a symbiosis of beauty and goodness, the sense of order and proportion and finally the connection to an objectivity made bright and noble through which is a realisation of Platonic forms. There are indeed some difficulties with going back to the origin of his aesthetic inspiration. His inspiration, more than his critical drawing, is occasionally drawn from different sources. For example, from the first humanist leap of Nicola Pisano, the modulation of light and shade in Donatello, the purity of the female form of Francesco Laurana, and from the "licentia nella regola" ("the poetic licence"), that is the spring from which bloomed Michelangelo's creative imagination.

Fiabane feels the power of this cultural heritage. He penetrates and distills its essence and contemporaneously he interpretes this heritage with a new spirit but he is not free from the culture of our own century, therefore he can not help but feel its influence and vitality. I think that this is the "dilemma" that Fiabane faces, uncertain of the path to take or to follow. It is the same dilemma which overcame the artists Messina and El Greco. In the face of artistic waves of the avant-garde, often being themselves of great value, it is quite difficult to be faithful to traditions, even if they are full of cultural value, and to guard against unsound influences or contamination. But sometimes, such contamination is fortunate if it serves to give a touch of modernity and autonomy as it happened in the art of Arturo Martini, in which we find not only classical forms, but where we find a metaphysical synthesis of forms, and the indulgence of abstract evasions. This is why we appreciate the "contaminations" that are sometimes present in Fiabane's work remembering the advice of Constantin Brancusi and Henry Moore. Only if we consider these cultural origins can we find the key to fully comprehend the art of Fiabane and his themes centred on the study of the human figure (primarily the female form) and on the study of animals (horses, bulls) bound to the daily human experience.

As we research these classical origins, we find a subtle and elegant realisation: the delicate danseuses (with some vague reminiscences of Donatello) on whose faces appear the enigmatic mystery of the eternal feminine, or in the nudity of the "bagnanti" ("bathers") placed in a serene refinement, not for the sensual gratification of pleasure, but for a pure contemplation of beauty, where the erotic is moderated in order to purify an indefinite and non-contradictory sense of chastity. The ennoblement of the form, continuously derived from the best classical tradition echoes and an actual vision of reality is revealed likewise, in his small bronze statues, where the theme of youthful representation is depicted gracefully without sugary

sentimentality, but often in a virile style, and with a subtle sense of humour. There are three examples we can note in which Fiabane has been influenced by the classical models but has gone beyond the classical aesthetic. In "Risveglio del mattino" ("Morning reawakening"), where the composition defines an harmonic balance between full and empty spaces; this is the moment between waking and sleeping, between the reality and the dream. In "Angoscia" ("Anguish"), there is a harmonic weaving of the limbs with an uneasiness of the soul. Finally in the "Famiglia" ("Family"), where there is a vague recollection of Moore's works, but devoid of obsequious imitation.

There are only a few intense examples of realism. Significant among these, are the sculptures of "Chernobyl", where the tragedy of physical and moral decay is expressed in all of its full power or as in "San Francesco" ("Saint Francis") where the voluntary renouncement of wordly goods is fully expressed as an essential pre-condition of the acquisition of spiritual values. In "Torsi" ("Torsoes"), there is a pale echo of Canova's grace and in concert with Michelangelo's force that comes to light, and is expressed clearly in the classical sense of aesthetic perfection, but that never indulges in the excesses of cold smoothness like in finished statues of wood or marble. A classical sense lives in the cycle of "Tori" ("Bulls") and "Cavalli" ("Horses"). It appears that in this cycle there is a latent symbolism: the force and strength of the bulls, and an almost airy elegance of the horses. Deserving particular attention is the "Cavallo" ("Horse") sculpted in ash wood (1986), one of the sculptures that demonstrates the fully-realized artistic engagement, where the tension between the vital impulse and the fleeting dynamic humanizes the material and transcends it.

This is a brief exposition of the artistic journey of Franco Fiabane that has certainly not come to an end. He is fully conscious of the difficulties of research and aesthetical expression, where the path is tortuous, as we hear him express in an interview he allowed us several years ago: "My first

experiences were achieved in stone and marble. To prove myself, almost as a dare, I began working with wood, drawn by the risk it has. Then I was captivated by its charm.

I have no preferences, in the medium I use. I love stone because it offers more opportunity for final realization. In spite of its hardness, you can bend it to your will more than wood. Indeed, wood, even if more maleable obliges you to modify your course suddenly, and to renew yourself during the execution. This requires a greater creative personal involvement. For bronze art the matter is different. It is a transference from clay. In fact I use it for smaller sculptures, where the graceful forms prevail. For me they are like sonnets for the poet. My works are born almost by sketches. I love also, almost as a diversion, to produce single drawings with sculptural themes that are meant to stand alone. They are also influenced by the classical and in classicism there is balance and harmony and finally perfection.

I think my work belongs to figurative art. But I don't hide the necessity to experiment with other artistic solutions to attend desired ends. It's true that my research, often, leads me to try new ways and solutions. I do not deny that there is in me an anxiety I don't want to suppress, and I think it can be identified with that indispensable dialectic that characterizes human life and which is the key of any renewal and any evolution. The man who considers himself "arrived" stops and remains in that place. And in that precise moment perhaps he renounces his human essence."

Mario Morales