

“I try to express movement in progress
not with regard to a minimum parcelled element,
but with regard to the abstract whole...
Today I feel a huge and majestic
movement of collapse.”
(Arnaldo Pomodoro, 1971)

Arnaldo Pomodoro **“A Hundredth of a Second”**

Opening: 1 December 2016 at 18:00
from 2 December to 4 February 2017

On the occasion of the major retrospective celebrating Arnaldo Pomodoro’s ninetieth birthday, sponsored by City of Milan-Culture and curated by Ada Masoero in collaboration with Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro, Fondazione Marconi will pay tribute to this influential twentieth-century figure with a rerun of the exhibition *A Hundredth of a Second*.

The exhibition, with its focus on Pomodoro’s research into the movement of sculptural masses, was originally held at Studio Marconi in 1971 and includes a selection of works created between 1966 and 1971 (large drawings, studies, sculptures in steel and fibreglass).

“Arnaldo Pomodoro’s most insistent metaphor has been to break the shell or skin of things in order to reach a fragile and vulnerable marrow”, wrote Sam Hunter in 1974, fully grasping the essence of the artistic quest Pomodoro commenced in the Sixties. Indeed, “to discover what is in a form, which on the surface seems so perfect and absolute” was Pomodoro’s mission statement to the US critic in an interview that same year.

The entire essence of Arnaldo Pomodoro’s art lies in the image of a perfect and coherent form that has been split open; it is his personal metaphor in the dialogue between external and internal and is almost always present in his works; it is a dialectic that holds multiple meanings.

By destroying traditional forms, Arnaldo Pomodoro expresses a freedom from any restrictions; bringing the energy of matter to the surface means stripping the geometric shape of its physical immobility and challenging ideological stability, thus proposing a new type of monument.

Finally, freeing sculpture from gravitational weightiness means it can acquire its own dynamic and be transformed into “sculpture in motion”.

“The erosions and explosions in his forms have never already happened or been concluded but are seen at the moment of their inexorable becoming. Pomodoro’s sculpture is always an ongoing process.”

(D. Porzio, 1976)

And it is movement that Pomodoro refers to in the catalogue accompanying the 1971 exhibition when he says: “Today I feel a huge and majestic movement of collapse.”

In the short text in which he speaks of his art, he claims to have reached the highest awareness of his mental processes regarding spheroids and cylinders, and to be now ready to give precedence to the significance of the movement of sculptural masses, adding that this is not a semantic or literary meaning but a kind of ironic and original vision capable of emphasising the imbalance between nature and vision, and between established order and unpredictable invention.

Herein lies the huge and majestic “movement of collapse” that emanates from the precarious severed columns depicted in large drawings, or executed in shiny reflective bronze.

On the one hand, breaking the forms allows the artist to discover their “mysterious and pure” internal foment, and so respond to an otherwise unsatisfied need to discover. On the other, the mirror-like surface of the works allows all that surrounds the sculpture to be perceived, so that it becomes an integral part.

“I think the reflections of light are very important. During the day, in sunlight or shade, the sculptures truly change. The mirror-like effects include what is all around you, the viewer... This makes the sculpture alive, a part of us, of nature, in whatever place it is.” (A. Pomodoro, 1974)

Marco Valsecchi described the works on display in an article in the *Giorno* newspaper on 17 June 1971, some days after the exhibition opening: "... columns corroded and then split lengthwise, as though struck by lightning, divided into two to reveal their recesses and internal joints. Another is cut horizontally into two pieces and about to collapse, with half the column already off balance." He continues: "Standing in front of this column cleanly cut in half, you feel the shock of its imminent collapse: the top is about to slip to the ground and break into fragments with a great roar; we catch it at that extreme moment – at exactly that a hundredth of a second – before its path to ruin. Which, in fact, will not happen."

At a distance of forty-five years that very same "movement of collapse", caught for a hundredth of a second in the "monumentally immobile" volume of sculptural mass, is still present before us. A poetic invention that is still alive, surprising and exciting, one that subverts all established order and, against all the laws of statics, allows us to feel the suspension of the moment, a becoming that will never take place.

Biographical notes

Born in Montefeltro in 1926, Arnaldo Pomodoro's childhood and schooling took place in Pesaro.

In 1954 he moved to Milan. His work in the Fifties took the form of high reliefs from which a completely original "writing" emerges, unprecedented in sculpture. In the early Sixties he turned to sculpture in the round, later devoting his work to large forms. He has received numerous awards for his sculpture: São Paulo (1963), Venice (1964), Pittsburgh (1967), the Praemium Imperiale Tokyo (1990), and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Sculpture Center (2008). In 1992, he was awarded an honorary BA degree from Dublin University and, in 2001, one in Building and Architectural Engineering from the University of Ancona.

Pomodoro has held numerous exhibitions: at the Rotonda della Besana, Milan (1974), the Fortezza Belvedere, Florence (1984), the Palais-Royal Gardens, Paris (2002), Lugano city centre (2004), Paestum city walls (2005), and the Fortress of Priamar, Savona (2007).

In 2008, the Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro presented an important anthology of his work at its premises, showing a representative selection of the artist's monumental sculptures from the Seventies to the present day. In 2011, the Marlborough Chelsea Gallery, New York showed his most recent works.

There have also been many travelling exhibitions at museums in the US, Europe, Australia and Japan.

In 2010, the *Grande Portale Marco Polo*, a 12-metre-high and 10-metre-wide bronze sculpture was exhibited in front of the Italian Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo.

Pomodoro's works are located in various places in Italy and around the world (Milan, Copenhagen, Brisbane, Los Angeles, Darmstadt, Rome), in the Pepsi Cola park at Purchase, NY; Trinity College, Dublin; Cortile della Pigna at the Vatican Museums; the United Nations square, New York; UNESCO headquarters, Paris; the Storm King Art Center in Mountainville, NY; and in major public collections. His environment works include the 50-metre-long concrete relief *Moto terreno solare* at the Simposia Minoa, Marsala; the new "Weapon Room" at the Poldi Pezzoli Museum in Milan (a combination of stage design, architecture and sculpture); and *Carapace*, the winery designed for the Castelbuono Bevagna estate, commissioned by the Lunelli family, which opened in June 2012.

Pomodoro has taught in the art departments of the American universities of Stanford, Berkeley and Mills College.

He has also created stage designs in the form of "spectacular machines" for major Italian theatrical occasions. In 2007, he created the sets and costumes for the opera *Teneke* by Fabio Vacchi, staged at Milan's Scala theatre, directed by Ermanno Olmi and conducted by Roberto Abbado, and in December 2009, for the double opera *Cavalleria rusticana/Sarka*, presented at La Fenice theatre, Venice, directed by Ermanno Olmi and conducted by Bruno Bartoletti.

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Duration of the exhibition: 2 November 2016 - 4 February 2017

Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10-13, 15-19

Free entry

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