

Brief and unorthodox biography of Evaristo Bellotti

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To those who take a special interest in archaeology and philology I propose the following exercise: identify the artist and the import of his work from what others have written of him. Looking back over the bibliography of Evaristo Bellotti, the following words crop up again and again: sculpture, fragment, time, body, vestige.

Some clearly define certain clusters of meaning: marble, white, vessel, water, labyrinth...

The first text written about Bellotti dates back to the beginning of the 80s, because it was about then that his sculptures began to appear in exhibitions, offering up their body of marble in the midst of the maelstrom of the Madrid Movida. Painting was making a come-back and an era was dawning in which everything seemed absolutely modern.

As the decade progressed, sculpture would begin a public renewal but Bellotti's sculptures appeared then as a sort of scouting party. The first writings about his work introduced a vocabulary characterised by its immersion in the classical world: mythology, archaeology, memory, time, cities and temples. Bellotti came along at that time with a solid intellectual background and a craft: he worked the marble; he thought of Greece.

His interest in all things classical and Mediterranean gave rise to a discourse which was both reserved and intent on identifying certain key points where the triumphant forms of classicism could meet with vernacular ancestral traditions. His was a model, in other words, of romanisation and syncretism of sculpture. In the course of this process Bellotti took himself to the great metropolises: first that of modernity, New York, and later, finally, Rome.

As a Romanised citizen on the periphery of the Empire, he was interested in the baroque of his native Andalusia. His sculpture turned to wood and plaster of Paris. It transfigured itself into salomonic columns, pasos, cradles, concretions of curves, mysteries trapped in glass boxes. Throughout the nineties his preoccupations turned to a certain ritual and processional dimension. Throughout that decade there were also chance encounters with pieces of wood which could come from any source, and which became primitive Venuses, kings, moons, magic flutes, or boats.

His desire for finding unexpected twists in the marble never abated; he continued to seek out metaphor and render it organic; always returning to the material: white and water, marble and lime.

In 2001 he took stock with a big retrospective which served to find coherence in offerings of seemingly disparate materials, cosmogonies, and bodies. Later we would see the explosion of colour in his sculptures; vibrant acrylics on carved branches, everyday objects hidden in coloured plaster, rendered strange beings or coloured points of reference in a white universe.

Both metaphor and the myth of the labyrinth are constantly present in Bellotti's work. As with Ariadne, there are two conducting threads in his artistic biography: drawing and the word. With the former, he delights in the pencil and explores the world. His drawing is a formal store and archive. With the latter he threads and weaves his web of thoughts and viewings of things, people and poetry. His published and unpublished texts testify with humour and incisiveness to the complexity of the world.