



GALLERIA CONTINUA | 30 YEARS

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EVERGREEN I

Berlinde De Bruyckere in dialogue with old masters and Salvatore Scarpitta

Opening: Saturday 22nd February 2020, Via del Castello 11, 18.00-00.00
Until 10th May 2020, Monday to Sunday, 10.00-13.00 / 14.00-19.00

Galleria Continua is pleased to announce *Evergreen*, a new annual event that will see a contemporary artist dialogue with the art of the past and, in particular, with ancient masterpieces and a master of twentieth century art.

The artist invited to take part in the first edition of *Evergreen* is Berlinde De Bruyckere. Thanks to the collaboration with the galleries Bacarelli-Botticelli, Robilant Voena and Montrasio Arte, in the rooms of Galleria Continua the Belgian artist's sculptures encounter the paintings of Francesco Botti (Florence, 1645-1711), Piero Dandini (Florence, 1646-1712), Johann Karl Loth (Munich, 1632-Venice, 1698), Onorio Marinari (Florence, 1627-1716), Giuseppe Petrini (Carona, 1677-1755/9) and a body of works from the Sixties by the American artist, Salvatore Scarpitta (New York, 1919-2007).

Strongly influenced by art history and classical mythology, as well as by the daily reality of the breakdown of social structures, Berlinde De Bruyckere creates works which, via their own materiality, invite us to reflect on the human condition. In this exhibition, she presents two sculptures realised between 2019 and 2020, entitled "*Marsyas*". The mythological tale that tells of the torture inflicted by Apollo on Marsyas is a source of inspiration for Berlinde De Bruyckere. Marsyas was a satyr, a kind of genius of the waters, mountains and woods, and a skilled flute player. One day he recklessly dared to challenge Apollo, the god of music, who punished Marsyas for having competed with him by tying him to a tree and skinning him alive. This epic challenge reflects the struggle of the two "spirits" that live within man. The Apollonian one and the Dionysian one. Marsyas is condemned to his sad fate because of the pride that pushes him to subvert the hierarchies that order the relationship between the gods and other living beings; however, through his suffering, he is consigned to the eternity of myth, like a god.

Berlinde De Bruyckere's works explore life and death, Eros and Thanatos, strength and vulnerability, desire and suffering. The sculptural volumes of "*Marsyas*", which take shape from the working of animal skins and wax, allude to the body through its absence. The body in its physicality emerges

impetuously in the paintings that accompany the Belgian artist on this journey. Anatomical accuracy and the tradition of studying the human body from life are a constant in Piero Dandini's work, here present with a virile nude, alluding iconographically to the god, Vulcan. Giuseppe Antonio Pedrini's interest in describing the internal movements of his characters - often portraying just a single figure - is well represented by *"The astronomer"*, the canvas on display in San Gimignano. The man is portrayed as he contemplates the celestial vault during an eclipse; the sun's rays, attenuated by the presence of the moon, diffuse a dim light that caresses and gilds the clouds. Onorio Marinari rigorously pursued his inclination for the study of reality that emerges here in the expressive and sentimental tone of the *"Magdalene"*, illuminated by a diaphanous sidereal light.

If Berlinde De Bruyckere's work is a metaphor for the human condition and vehicle for communicating the suffering of living beings, Salvatore Scarpitta's bandages can be read in a dimension of humanity, of mending, of care. Breaking the classic rectangular structural schema, Scarpitta's works, created in the 60s with the bandaging technique, present themselves in the immobility that precedes destruction; between the bandages there is an empty space that implies a conflict between the resistance of the material and the strength of its creator, something seems to emerge or reveal itself between the cracks, like a wound.

Scarpitta invites us not to dwell only on the external aspect of his works, but to observe, scrutinise and seek in them "the sense of universal unity". He believes in the process of transmuting physicality into spirit, this is what he pursues in his art. The sleds created by the American artist evoke a silent journey, the journey of the spirit towards new destinations; they represent the spiritual energy of the origins, when each individual considered his life a troubled journey in search of the absolute: *"A sled is in the memory of every man"*, declared the artist. *"I worked at my sleds in solitude, but I endeavoured to instil a profound social awareness into them: I wanted them to exude a sense of chorality and civilisation"*.