

THE WORKS AND THE ARTISTS

Mikayel Ohanjanyan presented “**Materialità dell’invisibile**”. Chronologically, such work is the artist’s last in the series “Prospettive Introversive”. The idea was prompted by the will to complete the empty space of an earlier work called “Prospettiva Introversa # 7” in terms of form and matter. The aim was to give a material form to the invisible and highlight some of its conceptual and aesthetic dimensions. The project reads as a polyhedral work: on one side, it portrays an empty space in terms of form and matter, and, on the other side, and at the same time, it questions the matter, which, compressed by steel cables, opens up new perspectives that intersect at the boundary of the matter and in the void in the middle of the sculpture. The aesthetics of the work, marble and steel cables, is a symbolic look at the centuries-old local business (the marble block, the sledging system), placing emphasis on the connections of marble and the relationship between man and his territory: the marble block does not hide its “fragility” and, half static, half dynamic, half full and half empty, half visible and half invisible, it creates relations that endlessly shape the landscape into new perspectives, not just physical but psychic and sensory ones too.

With her “**Frappa**”, **Francesca Pasquali** chose to pull out and assemble details from an earlier work, also called “Frappa”, made of coloured neoprene, an industrial insulating material. The work is made of a sensuous, tactile, soft but very stiff and perfectly structured material. Once assembled, the material naturally creates interesting volumes that make it three-dimensional and almost alive, as if livened up by its own kinematics. The underlying idea is also a challenge, which is about recreating such liveliness through a powerful contact between the stiffness of marble, a noble stone, and the voluptuousness and harmony of the plastic *frappe*. Thus assembled, the sculpture will be brought to life by the sinuous folds and the chiaroscuro of the marble material. This work also adds a contemporary twist to the classic bas-relief, thus combining tradition with innovation.

In “**Back To Basic**”, **Massimiliano Pelletti** wonders about a peculiar subject: *Is nature self-sufficient, or does it need an author?* This is the question that prompts his sculpture, which actually takes inspiration from the origins of the material it is made of, marble. The artist added to his classically-inspired head (as the most traditional

sculpture in the area) the contemporary touch of a jugged finish, then treated it with acids to simulate the wear and tear that only time and weather may leave, through the natural passing of time. Such wear can be found on very ancient marble, the outer shell of the mountains that have given so much to the region. This work is a tribute: a monument to the local culture and to that marble that, altered and worn out by time, holds in that wealth that has become the medium of artistic expression, all over the world. A worn-out marble head that also mulls over an extremely important contemporary issue: can a machine reproduce what nature created?

Filippo Ciavoli came up with “**Corallo**”, inspired by the attempt to bring together the Award’s subjects, namely the quest for a “real image” that could briefly but exhaustively sum up such dualisms as sea versus mountains, manual skills versus technological advancement, which are specific to the distinctive nature and culture of the Apuan Alps and Versilia, and make them interact with each other.

ARTISTS’ BIOGRAPHIES

Francesca Pasquali: Born in Bologna in 1980. In 2006, she graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna. She lives and works in Bologna.

During her formative years at the Academy, she experimented with different arts, from casting to engraving, to photography, and even design. Brief formative experiences that can now be found again in the complex DNA of the artist’s work. Her works and massive installations invade space and call visitors to take part in and physically feel the vibration that is inherent in the material, which, from being an inert material, redeems its essence and turns into a living organism. Nature and artifice.

Mikayel Ohanjanyan: Born in Yerevan, Armenia, in 1976, where he attended the High School of Art from 1991 to 2001, then the Academy of Fine Arts. In 2000, he moved to Italy, where he attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence, where he still lives and works.

“Dare corpo all’ineffabile”, *giving substance to the ineffable*, is the plan behind all of Mikayel Ohanjanyan’s plastic works. His sculptures play with contrasts of opposing factors, rigour and randomness, in a perfectly transparent space, where the matter takes on the overflowing substance of light, the principle of the invisible revealing itself and the visible reflecting it and being transformed by its own perception.”

Massimiliano Pelletti: He was born in 1975 in Pietrasanta, where he lives and works. He studied at the School of Art Stagio Stagi in Pietrasanta and has a degree in Literature and Philosophy from the University of Pisa.

His works have featured in plenty of solo and collective exhibitions, in public areas and art galleries. They are now in public and private collections.

Filippo Ciavoli: he was born in 1977 in Pietrasanta, where he lives and works. He got a diploma in Sculpture from the Academy of Fine Arts of Carrara and is one of artist Igor Mitoraj's pupils; he has also worked for such artists as Giò Pomodoro, Bruto Pomodoro and Andy Goldsworthy. His works have featured in plenty of exhibitions, in public areas and art galleries. They are now in public and private collections.

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THE HISTORY AND THE PROJECTS

On 18th February 1564, Michelangelo Buonarroti died in his home in Rome, aged 89. One of the most important and troubled episodes of his life is commemorated 450 years after his death: his

unaccomplished dream to dig and take free, unending supplies of statuary marble from Monte Altissimo.

Commissioned to make the façade of the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence, bowing to the will of Leo X (Giovanni dei Medici), in 1518 Michelangelo began to build a road up to the marble seams on Monte Altissimo. Inspired by an intuition that was as brilliant as he was able to reveal the figures hidden in the marble blocks, Michelangelo guessed the potentials and quality of the marble encased in Monte Altissimo, a statuary marble that was even finer and more precious than marble from Carrara: *“di grana unita, omogenea, cristallina, e ricorda lo zucchero”* (with an even, uniform, crystalline texture, and it looks like sugar). It is here that Michelangelo wants to dig and bring other people to dig. The mountain, a hugely vast marble seam, was *“ripieno di marmi in tutte le parti che ve n'è da cavare fino al giorno del Giudizio”* (full to the brim with marble, so plentiful it could be dug out till the Day of Judgement)

In starting up his most ambitious feat, and aware of the great treasure trove hidden in the mountain, Michelangelo had asked the Vestry Board of Santa Maria del Fiore and the Consoli dell'Arte del Lana (the Wool Guild), and went to great pains to obtain, to be left to take free supplies of marble from Monte Altissimo for the rest of his life, once such quarries had been opened. Regrettably, on 20th February 1520, a “brief” from Pope Leo X relieved Michelangelo of the task of making the façade of the Church of San Lorenzo and the running of the new quarries. For the artist, then nearly forty-five years and a shrewd businessman, this was a great disappointment.

But Michelangelo's unaccomplished dream had begun to take shape. In the nearly five hundred years that stand between the laying of the first stone of the road to Monte Altissimo, the marble seam of Seravezza has added lots of remarkable pages to world's history, art and architecture. Henraux SpA, currently the owner of Monte Altissimo, and Fondazione Henraux wish to commemorate and briefly go over the most prominent events that have occurred in this precious, most excellent place. Such events are invariably linked with the greatest names of history and art, through to this day and age.

The quarries on Monte Altissimo were reached by the road that was completed in 1567 on the initiative of Cosimo I dei Medici, who succeeded where the divine Michelangelo had failed, starting off the quarrying of that white marble that *“...producono colonne alte più di 50 cubiti”* (... produce pillars over 50 cubits high). Of that marble, which Michelangelo already dreamt of for the façade of the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence, the first block was carried to the seashore in 1569, amidst the cheers of the people of Seravezza, who, in the cart descending down to the valley, saw the beginning of a substantial business for the community. It was Giambologna who, from that block of statuary marble, made a statue of the Victory, known as “Fiorenza”, now at the Bargello.

The efforts made by Michelangelo and Cosimo I were followed by those of Francesco I dei Medici. The quarries of Seravezza were a veritable treasure trove. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the quarries on Monte Altissimo were often deserted for long stretches of time, but Jean Baptiste Alexandre Henraux's arrival in Versilia in 1820 marked the start of a golden age for them. In Napoleon's France, Henraux was *Soprintendente Regio alla scelta e acquisto dei marmi bianchi e*

statuari di Carrara per i monumenti pubblici, the King's Superintendent for the selection and purchase of white and statuary Carrara marble for public monuments. That year, as he visited Michelangelo's quarries, Henraux linked his name to the last two hundred years in the history of Monte Altissimo, and, as the shrewd businessman that he was, he gave a huge boost to the development of the marble seams of Seravezza.

Lots of important works have been made with marble from Monte Altissimo: since the age of Cosimo and Francesco dei Medici, plenty of pages have been added to the history of art and architecture by the works made with materials from those quarries. In 1821, Monsieur Henraux embraced extremely prestigious orders, for example in 1845 when the Tsar of Russia ordered large amounts of marble to build St Isaac's Cathedral in St Petersburg. Auguste Rodin too was called to Querceta by Henraux, who supplied him with blocks of statuary marble.

Monte Altissimo was and is an important partner to man's genius that builds beauty. It is the birthplace of masterpieces of sculpture by contemporary artists, such as Henry Moore, Hans Jean Arp, Joan Mirò, Antoine Poncet, Jacques Lipchitz, Rosalda Giraldi, Isamu Noguchi.

Plenty of great works have been sculpted at Henraux's studios, such as the polychrome floor of St Peter's Basilica, the rebuilding of the Abbatial Church of Montecassino, or, more recently, the Grand Mosque for Sheik Zayed Bin Sultan al Nayhan II in Abu Dhabi, the Exxon Mobile Campus in Houston (aka Delta project), and, in the United States, the Devon Energy World Center, San Francisco's One Market Plaza, to mention just a few.

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