

Nanni Valentini: il canto della terra/ Nanni Valentini: the song of the Earth

curated by Paolo Campiglio

Ambrosetti Arte Contemporanea Foundation - Palazzolo sull'Oglio (BS)

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The **Ambrosetti Arte Contemporanea Foundation**, in co-operation with the **Nanni Valentini Archive**, presents the retrospective **Nanni Valentini: il canto della terra/Nanni Valentini: the song of the Earth** curated by **Paolo Campiglio**.

On display there are about **50 works: drawings, sculptures and never seen before ceramic installations** which illustrate his artistic career from the beginning of the 1950s to the last works of the 1980s.

The thorough anthological exhibition presents the intense activity as a sculptor of Nanni Valentini (Sant'Angelo in Vado, 1932 - Vimercate, 1985), an artist of great intellectual and artistic talent.

The exhibition is made with the patronage of the Lombardy Region, Department of Lombardy Cultures, Identities and Autonomies, the Province of Brescia, Department of Cultural Heritage and Activities for the Improvement of the Local Identities, Cultures and Languages, and the Council of Palazzolo sull'Oglio, Department of Culture.

The display is organized according to the typical phases of the master's research and is divided into four main periods of time: the beginnings, from 1955 to 1958, when the artist started working in Milan and got into contact with the research of Lucio Fontana (with whom he co-operates, among other things, for a monumental work in ceramic at Faenza between 1959 and 1960); the drawings and sculptures of the 1960s, linked to the research of the end of the decade which were the prelude to the turning point of the 1970s; the drawings and sculptures of the 1970s, which took him to interpret the space as landscape in a symbiotic research with the archetypes of the Earth and of the world; finally the work from the 1980s, where the research on the archetypes and the anthropological models of Western civilization is emphasized in a singular sculptural hypothesis in-between immanence and transcendence of matter.

To the young period belong some vases, engravings and plates often made by using the technique of the engobe, a coating made of a thin earth layer applied on partially dry clay: Valentini thus transforms the surface of a ceramic piece in a field where sandstone can express itself as raw "material".

Liked to the concept of the house as an abode for man in an anthropological way are, instead, the series of ceramic pieces dedicated to the House such as the well-known 'Case di Barcellona/Houses of Barcellona': a man's abode is for Valentini like a temple of a pagan deity, the cell that man destined to him. Still linked to this theme, even though in a poetical way, are works like 'Portale/Portal' of 1979, environment installations made up of numerous sandstone slabs, irregular and different in size and mounted on a wall, which remind the viewer of a threshold, an entrance to "another" space.

As for the 1980s the exhibition retraces most of the expository activity of the master and for the first time presents to the public some ceramic installations never been on display after the master's premature death. Among these works there are 'Endimione/Endymion' and 'I volti di Selene/The faces of Selene', where the mythical link appears as an excuse to tell a story made of large fragments which evoke an ancient sacrality.

In addition the exhibition gathers a series of important drawings - some of which have never been on display before -, that trace the whole production of the master, in a constant reference to design and sculpture. In some of the cases the drawing is, in fact, enriched by the sculptural element according to a criteria of circularity of the graphic idea, colour and sculptural fragment, which is part of the artistic investigation of colours and forms.

Educated in a Milan where there were Lucio Fontana, the brothers Giò and Arnaldo Pomodoro and Emilio Scanavino, from the second half of the 1950s Nanni Valentini was acclaimed as a prominent character of superior ceramic, developing a vein which reconnect to the Informal art in the engraved and scratched sign of the ceramics from 1957-'59. During this short but intense period he aligns

himself with the reset of colours and a simplification of forms which characterize the new painting and sculpture research of the 1960s.

During the 1960s the humbleness of the materials, the gradual inclination for installations and the environment, which characterized Valentini's, leads the creative imagination of the sculptor to rethink the origins and fragments: his ceramics, more and more turned to interpret the surrounding space with signs, is enriched by archetypical and anthropological elements, also with references to the landscape.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue curated by Paolo Campiglio, also author of the critical texts, published by the Ambrosetti Arte Contemporanea Foundation in co-operation with Silvana Editoriale and with the contribution of the Banca Popolare di Bergamo non-profit Foundation.

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