

# Claudio Parmiggiani

A cuore aperto (Open-Hearted)

GALLERIA POGGIALI

FLORENCE

**Opening Friday 24.05.2019 at 6:30 p.m.**

**24.05.2019 - 29.10.2019**

**curated by Sergio Risaliti**

**Claudio Parmiggiani** (Luzzara, 1943), one of the leading exponents of international contemporary art, has just had his first exhibition in a North American museum at the Frist Art Museum in Nashville and returned with the project *Prehistory*, currently running at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. In what is his first true solo show in Florence, he will be displaying his works in a specially-conceived project at the Galleria Poggiali, opening on Friday 24 May 2019. Eleven works installed in the two areas of Via della Scala and Via Benedetta, the majority made specifically for this show, along with older works: a bronze heart compressed between two steel tubes lying on the *Divine Comedy*, the wax cast of an ancient statue with a paraffin lamp, a musical instrument such as a harp with butterflies on the strings, a bell strung up like a hanged man, a bookshelf made of ashes.

In the Via Benedetta premises, displayed for the first time since the Venice Biennale of 2015, lonely as an arrow fired against the rear wall, is the huge anchor gripping the bricks with all its strength after having shattered a glass wall.

This is a museum-style exhibition that unfurls like a poetic discourse at times dramatic, at times elegiac, at once lyrical and symbolic. On display will be several works known as 'shadow sculptures' or *Delocazioni* (Displacements): a bookcase of at least three metres, an hourglass and the imprint of a painting. These images have been produced using a highly personal procedure since 1970, when Parmiggiani displayed at the Galleria Civica di Modena a series of imprints of objects created by the depositing of soot on the wall around their contours. Speaking of the works created by Parmiggiani using this "magic" and "poor" procedure, Jean Clair referred to the Christian tradition of the *epigraphé*, underscoring the formal and substantial difference between the line (graphé) that circumscribes and the trace that opens up to the unlimited. The image created on the canvas is not drawn – it is not *sfumato* – and nor is it painted in washes, it is, rather, blown and evaporated to be transformed into shadow, into 'shadow sculpture'.

In these works made of ash, in his plaster casts and lamps that, like dead stars, still illuminate even when the wick is snuffed, Parmiggiani addresses absence – the only possible manifestation of the lost thing or the buried memory – and wrests it from nothingness, releasing it from dissolution and dissipation, making it the subject and substance of a new iconic presence, because absence is the heart of being. "And if the lack of being were the deepest sense of being?" as Massimo Recalcati pondered in an extraordinary essay on Parmiggiani. This is the question opened up by Parmiggiani's work.

For Parmiggiani: “A work should be like a punch in the stomach. Silent but hard, hard but silent, like a fire beneath ashes.” Like the huge bell ‘hanged’ on a beam of the gallery that celebrates in silence all the pain of the world and all the hope of the earth, that summons the people on a day of rejoicing or for an imminent danger. Like the wax cast of a female bust placed close to a paraffin lamp which has begun to melt the features of that face melancholically turned aside, as the flame sings the moth, as the sunbeam melts spring snow, the unbearable pain that turns all desire for life to stone. Renouncing the visual tradition and not turning melancholically to the past of art, Parmiggiani rediscovers in the reality of things the mysterious sense of the beauty of art, the grace that transfigures the things themselves, redeeming them from nothingness. Parmiggiani’s ‘things’ (a bell, a lamp, remains and fragments of the lived world) poetically inhabit the language of art and yield themselves to our perception like poems to be seen with the heart in the eyes; they are iconic presences that we must hearken to with the heart more than with the mind.

The display itinerary indeed begins with a heart clasped between two metallic elements, a sculpture that traverses the gaze to speak directly to the heart. The work we find before us upon crossing the threshold of the gallery is the cast of a heart, like those used by students of medical surgery, made of cast iron and clamped between two metal elements installed between Dante’s *Divine Comedy* on the floor and the ceiling of the gallery. The object is positioned at eye level in the centre of the space. Parmiggiani has chosen to place the real object at the vanishing point of classic perspective, in line with the eyes. Nietzsche wrote: “Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker?” Modernism has chosen darkness, it has taken pleasure in straying through infinite nothingness convinced of its own superhuman power and omniscience.

Can we still define the poetics of this artist as spirituality? Can we still think of him as in contact with the sacred, with the God amidst us? Let us trust to his own words: “What some see as the spiritual in my work I would simply call a conviction that is part of a vision; a mysticism without faith. I do not think of religious art but of a religiosity in art, a religiosity that we appear to have completely lost the meaning of.”

The exhibition closes with *Untitled*, a plaster cast of a classical head with, beside it, a functioning alarm clock set on top of a book, marking out the hours. It too was specially made for this show.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by Sergio Risaliti.

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24 May – 29 October 2019  
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