

CENTER FOR ITALIAN MODERN ART

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Susanna (Susanna), 1943, cast 1946–51. Bronze.

CIMA Presents First U.S. Exhibition of Nude Sculptures by Marino Marini

*Long unseen works highlighted as new scholarship reconsiders artist who was widely acclaimed
and collected by major U.S. museums in the mid-20th century*

Marino Marini: Arcadian Nudes

October 17, 2019 – June 13, 2020

Media Preview : Wednesday, October 16, 10:00am–11 :30am

(New York, NY, July 17, 2019) – For its 2019–2020 season, the Center for Italian Modern Art (CIMA) will present the first U.S. exhibition devoted to the nude sculptures of Marino Marini (1901–1980), among the artists credited with revitalizing Italian figurative sculpture in the 20th century. Opening in CIMA’s luminous SoHo space on October 17, 2019, this focused exhibition includes approximately 30 sculptures created between 1932 and 1949. Seen together, they will illuminate Marini’s creative process as he developed a fresh and Modernist vernacular of the female nude, while looking at precedents in the pre-classical and classical eras. His approach to surface, mass, and form helped to bring a new aesthetic to the very nature of sculpture.

Marino Marini: Arcadian Nudes is curated by Dr. Flavio Fergonzi, Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa, Italy, and will be on view through June 13, 2020.

Dr. Fergonzi notes, “Marini’s exploration of the female nude was both formal and thematic, at once highlighting and eroding classical forms. *Marino Marini: Arcadian Nudes* examines how Marini used the figure of the female nude to explore the history of the nude in modern sculpture from Edgar Degas and Aristide Maillol to Henry Moore.”

CIMA President Laura Mattioli adds, “As an artist Marini takes the point of view of an innocent—an eternal youth who, with fresh eyes, can see the world as a child would. His nudes represent timeless, eternal, women—an arcadian ideal of a harmonious, bountiful nature. These figures represent fertility, beauty, happiness, and motherhood in a broad sense and possess an identity and power that speaks to the ideal of the feminine today. We are grateful to Flavio Fergonzi for this new look at an area of Marini’s work that has not been adequately studied until now.”

Marino Marini: Arcadian Nudes will be the first exhibition in the United States to bring together the greatest examples of the artist’s nudes. Lending institutions include the Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia, Italy; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; and the Cincinnati Art Museum. Four life-size Pomona figures (the goddess of abundance) and three of his Giovinetta (young woman) figures will be presented together with a series of bronze nudes that Marini created during a sojourn in Switzerland. Also on view will be two rarely seen bas-reliefs and three terracotta works. Moreover, maintaining CIMA's practice of featuring work by contemporaneous artists in its exhibitions, *Marino Marini: Arcadian Nudes* will include two paintings by Marini contemporaries—Willem de Kooning and Alberto Giacometti—helping to contextualize the artist’s work in a broader context.



Giovinetta (Young Lady), 1938. Bronze.

Background

Marino Marini completed his formal artistic education at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence in 1917, where he studied painting and sculpture, and later developed friendships with Giorgio de Chirico, Alberto Giacometti, and Henry Moore. After launching his career with sculptures that explicitly referenced pre-classical and Etruscan styles, Marini took up the theme of the female nude, seeking a universal, eternal vision of women. Yet while he continued to find inspiration in prehistoric and antique sources, including ancient matriarchal societies, he approached the female nude with a modernist sensibility.

The sculptures on view in *Marino Marini: Arcadian Nudes* will highlight Marini’s astonishing attention to the details of pose, shape, and modeling. Indeed, like Giorgio Morandi’s treatment of the objects in his still lifes, Marini simultaneously highlights both the continuity of classical forms and the various ways in which they may be undermined by the treatment of their surfaces.

Highlights

The primary themes of the exhibition will be illuminated in CIMA's expansive main gallery, which will be installed with life-size nudes in various materials. These include the bronze *Giovinetta* from 1938, a work in which Marini presents a response to classicizing nudes by artists such as Aristide Maillol (1861–1944). Unlike Maillol's 1922 *Venus without Arms*, which itself is inspired by antiquity, Marini adopts an inexpressive, pre-classical expression in the figure's face, and the surface modeling is replete with cracks and imperfections that recognizes the humanity of the subject. The incipient modernism of the *Giovinetta* is yet more explicit in Marini's great *Pomona* (1945). Here the sculptor achieved a more complex construction of volumes, based on an exquisite balance among the energetic yet highly calculated parts and a monumental dimension that had never before appeared in his work. As in the *Giovinetta* of 1943, also on view here, formal articulation of the body of the *Pomona* depends on the forward movement of the left leg that introduces a more cadenced play between solids and voids.



Pomona (Pomona), 1945. Bronze.

Two sculptures titled *Piccola Pomona*, from 1944, recall the iconic *Venus of Willendorf*, a superbly crafted figurine dating from 28,000–25,000 B.C.E., a copy of which, owned by Marini, is on view in the exhibition. With its clusters of rounded shapes and its anatomical exaggeration, it is widely considered to be a fertility figure.

The year 1942 marked a rupture in Marini's work on female nudes. In December, the upheavals of the war precipitated both his move to Tenero, Switzerland, and a new phase of experimentation. While the typology of his figures remained the same, their poses and expressive code were developed within a more dramatic syntax. As seen in a three-quarter-size bronze, *Figura seduta* (*Seated Figure*), dating from 1944, surfaces appeared to be more deeply gouged, endowing the sculpture with a distressed quality. These and other nudes dating from the wartime and post-war years may be seen in relation to European Expressionist sculptors, primarily French sculptor Germaine Richier, with whom the Italian artist spent time during his Swiss exile.

Finally, Willem de Kooning's *Woman*, from ca. 1952–1953, installed in the main gallery, and Alberto Giacometti's *Petit Nu*, 1961/1964, in the south gallery, show how these artists wrestled with some of the same issues of figuration and abstraction.



Figura seduta (Seated Figure), 1944. Bronze.

Publication

As is its custom, CIMA will produce a full-color catalogue shortly after the exhibition opens. This will serve as a record of the show, and will feature an introduction by Professor Fergonzi and a biographical essay by CIMA's fall fellows Claudia Daniotti and Nicol Maria Mocchi.

Public Programs

A series of public and educational programs will be presented in conjunction with *Marino Marini: Arcadian Nudes*, offering visitors alternative paths to understanding the Italian artist's approach to the female form. To date they include:

October 16, 2019

“Marino Marini: Sculptural Representation of the Nude”

Curator Talk with Dr. Flavio Fergonzi

November 7, 2019

“Patricia Cronin and the Lure of Antiquity”

Artist Patricia Cronin and Vivien Greene, Guggenheim Museum Senior Curator, 19th- and Early 20th-Century Art, will discuss Cronin's work as it relates to *Marino Marini: Arcadian Nudes* and explore topics including feminism, public art, and antique sources. The program is sponsored by CIMA and Civitella Ranieri Foundation.

December 3, 2019

A special event will mark the 100th anniversary of the Bauhaus with Barry Bergdoll, Meyer Schapiro Professor of Art History in the Department of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University and curator in the Department of Architecture and Design at The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

February 11, 2020

A conversation on Marino Marini and ancient art with Ann Kuttner, Associate Professor of History of Art, University of Pennsylvania, and Clemente Marconi, James R. McCredie New York University Professor in the History of Greek Art and Archaeology; University Professor; Director, IFA Excavations at Selinunte, New York University.

About CIMA

Founded in 2013, CIMA is a public non-profit dedicated to presenting modern and contemporary Italian art to international audiences. Through critically acclaimed exhibitions—many of them bringing work to U.S. audiences for the first time—along with a wide variety of public programs and substantial support for new scholarship awarded through its international fellowship program, CIMA situates Italian modern art in an expansive historic and cultural context, illuminating its continuing relevance to contemporary culture and serving as an incubator of curatorial ideas for larger cultural institutions.

CIMA works to add new voices to scholarship on modern Italian art with annual fellowships that open fresh perspectives and new avenues of research. The four international fellows selected by CIMA for this year will investigate a variety of innovative projects related to Marini's work, sharing their findings with the public through guided visits to the exhibition and in related programs.

CIMA provides a distinctive new model for the display and viewing of art, one that brings together and serves both the public and scholars. A visit begins with a complimentary espresso, followed by an informal exhibition tour with one of the resident fellows. Visitors are welcome to linger for additional looking and conversation.

2019–2020 Fellows

This year's fellows include four young scholars who will pursue research that they will present at the *Marino Marini: Nudes* Study Days, a special culminating event held in the spring, in addition to guiding tours at CIMA, contributing to scholarship for the exhibition catalogue, and participating in public programming. CIMA will once again award a Travel Fellowship for scholars outside of Italy who wish to pursue studies in Italy, and is participating in an affiliated Fellowship in collaboration with the Civitella Ranieri Foundation, an artist residency program located in a 15th-century castle in Umbria, Italy.

Access

CIMA is open by appointment on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. On these days, visitors may view the exhibition independently, during open hours, 2–6pm. Signature guided tours of the exhibition, led by CIMA's fellows, are offered on Fridays and Saturdays at 11am and 2pm. All visits—both tours and open hours—require pre-registration online or by phone. CIMA is wheelchair accessible and available for group tours and member-only appointments Monday through Wednesday. Members may also visit for free during public hours or tours. Admission during open hours is \$10, while for a tour it is \$15, free for students (with a valid ID) and CIMA members. For information and reservations, visit <http://www.italianmodernart.org/> or +1 646 370 3596.

Media Contacts

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Images Captions:

Susanna (Susanna), 1943, cast 1946–51

Bronze

28 7/8 x 21 1/8 x 10 5/8 in. , 68 lb

(73.3 x 53.7 x 27 cm, 30.8 kg)

Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Photography by Lee Stalworth. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Giovinetta (Young Lady), 1938

Bronze

53 5/32 x 16 15/16 x 14 9/16 in.

(152 x 43 x 37 cm)

Fondazione Marino Marini - Pistoia

Pomona (Pomona), 1945

Bronze

63 3/4 x 26 x 20 7/8 in.

(162 x 66 x 53 cm)

Fondazione Marino Marini - Pistoia

Figura seduta (Seated Figure), 1944

Bronze

23 7/16 x 10 3/4 x 12 13/16 in.

(59.6 x 27.3 x 32.6 cm)

Fondazione Marino Marini - Pistoia