MARINO MARINI
STUDY DAYS
Thursday, April 30, 2020

CIMA – Center for Italian Modern Art
421 Broome Street, 4th floor, NYC

Michele Amedei • Olivia Armandroff • Marta Colombo • Claudia Daniotti • Flavio Fergonzi • Mohammadreza Mirzaei • Nicol Mocchi • Giorgio Motisi • Chiara Pazzaglia • Gianmarco Russo • Robert Slikfin

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10 am – 10.30am
Marino Marini exhibition viewing and registration

Welcome remarks by Laura Mattioli (CIMA President)

10.30 – 11.20am
Flavio Fergonzi (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa)
Marino Marini and the Interpretation of his Sculptures through Photography

How does one photograph a sculpture by Marino Marini? From what angle? With what lighting, natural or artificial? With what background? By privileging the synthesis of its volumes or the richness of the chiaroscuro of its surfaces? By focusing on the whole figure or instead isolating oneself on particularities? These questions regard not only the use of photography with Marino Marini’s sculptures; they also regard, most importantly, how Marini’s sculptures have been reproduced in the various publications dedicated to him. The photographic interpretation of a sculpture, to all its effects, is also its first critical interpretation. This paper proposes to analyze the different ways in which the works of Marino Marini were photographed and reproduced, in reviews and books, from 1930 to 1950. This analysis will be done in comparison with the contemporary photographic interpretations of two other modern Italian sculptors, Arturo Martini, and Giacomo Manzù.


11.30am – 12.30pm
Marino Marini and the Fascination for Antiquity (Chair: Gianmarco Russo)
Followed by Q&A

Claudia Daniotti (CIMA Fellow)
Reclaiming a Past: Marino Marini and the (Non)-Classical Tradition

So strongly rooted into the cultural and visual tradition of his home country, Marino Marini’s artistic production is the result of an uninterrupted dialogue with the art of the past, spanning
from archaic Greece to Renaissance Italy, from imperial Rome to nineteenth-century European sculpture. In this vast repository of models that Marini drew upon, ancient art holds a significant place; rather than focusing, however, on the Greek and Roman artworks that had fueled artistic imagination for centuries, from the 1920s Marini showed an interest in ancient civilisations belonging outside the established canon of classical antiquity, most notably those of ancient Etruria and Egypt. This appropriation is usually understood in connection to the widespread coeval fascination for archaic and pre-classical forms and as part of the Etruscan revival so proudly pursued by artists such as Arturo Martini and Massimo Campigli; yet, little attention has been given to the momentous time at which Marini’s interest in those artefacts developed, a time of archaeological discoveries, flourishing scholarly literature and rearrangement of key museum collections, which Marini had direct access to. By placing Marini’s interest in Etruscan and Egyptian artworks within the framework of the early twentieth-century cultural interest surrounding those civilizations, my paper will provide a richer understanding of Marini’s sculpture, locating his work more accurately on the map of the reception of antiquity in modern Italian art.

Claudia Daniotti is an art historian and researcher specializing in Italian Renaissance art, with an emphasis on the classical tradition and the transmission of visual motifs from antiquity to the present times. She holds a PhD from The Warburg Institute, London, and a BA (Hons) and MA in History of Art from the Ca’ Foscari University, Venice. She was a Visiting and Associated Lecturer in Renaissance and Baroque to Neoclassical Art at Buckingham and Bath Spa Universities (2016–2019), a Teaching Assistant at the Warburg Institute (2014), and worked for three years at the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art as an Education and Exhibition Assistant (2008–2011). Claudia has published extensively in the fields of the classical tradition and fourteenth- to eighteenth-century art history, and her first monograph on the reception of the myth of Alexander the Great in Renaissance Italian art will be published in 2020.

Giorgio Motisi (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa)

*Masks and Faces: Marino’s Dialogue with Antiquity in Female Nudes and Portraits*

In a so-far-ignored text, the painter Gabriele Mucchi recalls Marino’s relationship with a Fine Arts student named Sistina. According to Mucchi, this girl “posed for some versions of the *Pomona*” during the 1930s and “stayed with Marino until he abandoned her for a girl who oddly resembled her: Mercedes” (G. Mucchi, *Le occasioni perdute*, 1994). This sentence helps to better understand the so-called ‘portrait’ *Sistina* (1935–36). This terracotta head is very similar to those of some female nudes of the same years and cannot be considered a ‘portrait’ in the strict sense of the word. It is, more likely, a part of a full-length figure, detached only at a later time. Sistina is the model, but she is not portrayed. The episode leads to reconsider the sculptor’s approach in the rendering of the facial features in his works of the 1930s. The purpose of this presentation is precisely to examine the conception of resemblance and personal identity, in the faces of Marino’s female nudes on the one hand, and in his portraits on the other. Firstly, the paper examines how this difference is reflected in the artist’s dialogue with the ancient sources. In his full-length figures, Marino refers mainly to Cycladic Art and the faces of pre-classical Greece, employed as inexpressive ‘masks’ useful to bring out the vital sensuality of the nude bodies. Contrariwise, the portraits seem rather linked to Etruscan, Roman, Egyptian, and Renaissance models, examples of strong individual characterization. Secondly, the presentation aims to analyze the surface treatment in the two distinct genres. The scratches on the female nudes provide new intense humanity and pictorial allure to the plastic construction of volumes.
Conversely, the scraping interventions on the portraits are employed in order to avoid excessive realism and to accomplish an elegant archaeological effect. Marino was like an imaginative archaeologist. Through two opposite ways, he created his fascinating characters, ancient yet modern.

Giorgio Motisi is in his final year of MA degree in History of Art both at the Scuola Normale Superiore and at the University of Pisa. Over the past five years he has been studying under the supervision of Prof. Flavio Fergonzi and in 2018 he earned his BA degree *cum laude*, discussing a thesis on the Marino’s portraits. Giorgio’s research focuses on Italian art in the first half of the twentieth century, with special attention to the reception of the ancient art and to the portraiture genre. In 2018 he carried out an internship at the Marino Marini Foundation (Pistoia). He is a contributor to *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Treccani), with entries on Filippo De Pisis, Ernesto Treccani and Italo Valenti (expected 2020). In addition, he has recently written an article for the academic journal “Annali della Normale” on the reception of fifteenth-century portraiture in the production of Italian sculptors and medalists in the twentieth century (expected 2020).

**12.30pm – 2.00pm: lunch break**

**2pm – 3pm**

**Representing the Female Nude in the Twentieth Century** (Chair: Nicol Maria Mocchi)

**Gianmarco Russo** (CIMA Fellow)

*Balancing Form and Surface: Marino Marini’s Female Nudes 1938–42, 1942–45*

In 1939, in one of his most known statements, Marino Marini juxtaposed life-size female nudes with portraiture. Compared to portraiture, the sculptor wrote, “the statue requires a vaster research into forms, lines, masses. My women, whom some find clumsy, are an answer to this concern.” “Nevertheless, this search for volumes,” Marino continued, “is not the unique purpose of the sculptor, who must never forget that what touches most in a sculpture is always its poetry.” My paper elaborates on Marino Marini’s female nudes from 1938 to 1945 in light of the relationship between form and ‘poetry’ or, in other words, between plastic construction of volumes, on one hand, and expressive power of surfaces, on the other. Firstly, it discusses the fracture between form and modeling, volumes and profiles, plastic development and surface definition, achieved by Marino in the female nudes and the *Pomona* up to his exile in Tenero, at the end of 1942. Secondly, it offers an examination of Marino’s Swiss period, showing how at that moment the sculptor pursued form and surface at a unique time. Investigating on such a wide range of issues encourages a reconsideration of Marino’s female nudes as a whole and, at the same time, highlights the artist’s variants, thereby tracing a specific trend of evolution.

Gianmarco Russo is a PhD candidate in Art History at the Scuola Normale Superiore (Pisa). He is currently completing his doctoral dissertation on Alvise Vivarini, with special attention to nineteenth- and twentieth-century readings of Renaissance art. He is preparing Lazzaro Bastiani’s first catalogue raisonné. Gianmarco’s research focuses on fifteenth-century painting in Venice and Italian modern sculpture, addressing both connoisseurship and criticism issues. He has published articles in leading academic journals on Roberto Longhi, Giacomo Manzù, Adriano Cecioni, Lazzaro Bastiani, Giovanni Bellini, and the Vivarinis. For the Marino Marini exhibition held in Pistoia and Venice in 2017 and 2018, respectively, Gianmarco delved into the artist’s female nudes through a systematic analysis of Marini’s stylistic evolution and a fresh study of archival documentation. Gianmarco’s research at CIMA aims to show that Marini’s sculpture may
be better comprised by regarding it as a struggle between ‘composition’ and ‘poetry.’ Studying the female figures created between 1938 and 1945, he seeks to demonstrate that Marini’s idea of plastic construction of volumes on one hand, and of expressive power of surfaces on the other, is deeply rooted in the figurative debate on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century sculpture sparked among contemporary artists, critics, collectors, and museum curators.

**Olivia Armandroff (University of Delaware)**

*Sculptors, Printers, and Painters Looking to the Circus, Horses, and More: The Parallel Lives of Marino Marini and Alexander Calder*

two first encountered one another in 1950, on Marini’s first visit to America, when he visited Alexander and Louisa Calder’s home in Connecticut. After this first meeting, the two artists would interact again that year, at the Venice Biennale, and Alexander Calder’s archive includes postcards Marini exchanged with him in the early years of the decade. Their social interactions don’t come as a surprise, as both artists were represented by the dealer Curt Valentin. As a result, both artists were collected by the same patrons and displayed in the same spaces, as in Peggy Guggenheim’s collection and that of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., owner of Fallingwater. Despite the fact that the two artists’ interactions were seemingly circumscribed to the early 1950s and that they resided on different continents, the similarities in their oeuvres suggests they have a longer and deeper connection. If they were not influenced by one-another’s works, they were at least responding to their contemporary world in similar ways. Both Marini and Calder were highly experimental, producing a range of media, including sculptures, paintings, and prints. Their sculptures evidence their mastery of metalsmithing and their prints, especially their lithographs, which might reveal the closest affinities, depart from their largely monochrome sculptural output to experiment with looser applications of color. Secondly, both Marini and Calder demonstrate common investments in certain subjects, especially that of the circus — including acrobats and jugglers for Marini and the space itself for Calder — and of equestrian themes. Although narratives have so frequently focused on Marini as a sculptor looking backward, fascinated by the antique, and on Calder as an avant-garde innovator, breaking with traditional definitions of form, the similarities between the two artists demonstrate how both were men reflecting on their contemporary era.

Olivia Armandroff is pursuing her master’s degree in the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture. Her focus is on American art of the early-twentieth century, and she is currently working on a thesis focused on the artistic alliances and personal collection of the New York City salon hostess Muriel Draper. She has researched the dissemination of imagery in print media, the projection of a consciously styled self through visual objects, instances of collaborative production, and the revival of historic images in modern and contemporary art. Before coming to Winterthur, she earned her bachelor’s degree in the History of Art and History at Yale University. She has been responsible for independently curating exhibitions at the Yale University Art Gallery, Yale’s Sterling Library, and the Delaware Art Museum and conducted collections and exhibition research as the John Wilmerding Intern in American Art at the National Gallery of Art.

**Chiara Pazzaglia (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa)**

*From Pomona to Graces: Reshaping Female Nudity in Marino’s Reliefs*
In the early 1930s, monumental sculptors were commissioned to create reliefs to be fitted into architecture. To the eyes of Marcello Piacentini, the leading voice of the stile littorio, the constraints inherent to relief would lead to an ideal synergy between artists and architects. Marino was already acclaimed for his free-standing sculptures when he first presented reliefs at the two major exhibitions curated by Mario Sironi in the early 1930s (the 1932 Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista, and the 1933 Milan Triennale). For an artist inclined to sculpture in-the-round, thinking ‘in relief’ involved different problems. This paper aims to investigate the complex interaction between Marino’s Pomona, on the one hand, and the female nudes in his reliefs, on the other. In 1939, Marino admitted that his main concern in the full-length figure was to analyze “the natural play of volumes” in space. Thus, transferring that figure to a surface forced him to rethink its sculptural significance. Useful suggestions could be found in Auguste Rodin’s Conversations with Paul Gsell (in Marino’s library), according to which the surface should be considered as the extremity of a volume, and the form should be seen in thickness. Bearing in mind the sculptural issues illustrated so far, I consider some examples in Marino’s public commissions in the 1930s, showing his attempts to combine the free-standing Pomona with a fixed point of view. Subsequently, I discuss different cases after his expressionistic turnout in the 1940s, starting from the variations on the theme of Three Graces. This myth was at the core of Marino’s interests in the war years, since in 1942 he acquired the popular Piero Ducati’s Pittura etrusca-italo-greca e romana, containing a reproduction of Pompei’s Three Graces fresco. Therefore, this group of works helps to define his new pictorial conception of female figures in relief.

Chiara Pazzaglia is a MA student both at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, and at the University of Pisa. Under the supervision of Prof. Flavio Fergonzi, her research is currently concerned with visual ideology in fascist headquarters (‘Case del fascio’), with a particular focus on the political use of image in monumental sculpture and painting. In 2019 she earned her bachelor’s degree with first-class honours in Cultural Heritage Sciences at the University of Pisa. Chiara wrote an article on the topic of her dissertation (Marino Marini and monumental sculpture in the Thirties: the Five Reliefs for Palazzo dell’Arengario in Milan) for the international art journal Studi di scultura (in press). She is also a contributor for the Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani published by Treccani, with entries on Paul Troubetzkoy, Antonio Ugo, and Vincenzo Vela (forthcoming). Her main fields of interest include art criticism, art patronage and history of sculpture and painting between late nineteenth and twentieth century.

3pm – 3.40pm
Marini and the Twentieth-Century International Art Scene (Chair: Claudia Daniotti)

Nicol Maria Mocchi (CIMA Fellow)
“A Nordic Mystery.” Marino Marini in Switzerland (Winter 1942–Spring 1946)

This paper will focus on Marino Marini’s self-imposed retreat to Switzerland (his wife’s native country) in December 1942 to escape the bombings in Milan during the Second World War, to which he returned in the spring of 1946 resuming his professorship at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts. These are particularly fruitful and experimental years for Marino Marini — but also the darkest and least explored — which influenced his most peculiar artworks, significantly entitled Archangels, Miracles, and Pomonas, marked by disproportionate shapes and corroded surfaces, and strongly inspired by a “nordic mystery,” towards which he felt instinctively attracted. Against the backdrop of the dramatic war years, my paper intends to reassess Marino Marini’s work in
light of the broader emerging Swiss art scene of that time, including international artists (e.g. Germaine Richier, Otto Bünninger, Fritz Wotruba, Hermann Haller, Alberto Giacometti), museum directors, art collectors, and critics, who variously contributed to the widespread knowledge of his oeuvre.

Nicol Maria Mocchi is an Italian art historian specialized in modern and contemporary art. She obtained her Ph.D in 2014 from the University of Udine with a thesis entitled *Fonti visive internazionali per gli artisti italiani negli anni del Simbolismo*. Since 2010, she has collaborated with Milan’s Superintendence of Fine Arts, and with the Archivio dell’Arte Metafisica. Her main research interests are the connections and exchanges between diverse visual cultures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with an emphasis on Swiss-German, Anglo-American and Italian artists and movements. She is currently fellow at the Center for Italian Modern Art working on the reception, visual success and critical fortunes of Marino Marini’s oeuvre in Switzerland during World War II (1942-46). She has recently published a book entitled *La cultura dei fratelli de Chirico agli albori dell’arte metafisica* (Milan, 2017).

Michele Amedei (CIMA Fellow)

*Celebrating “humility, awareness and sorrow”: Marino Marini in New York, February–April 1950*

The success achieved by Marino Marini at the Buchholz Gallery of New York in 1948, gave him the opportunity to expand his relationships with U.S. artists as well as art collectors and directors/curators of museums like the MoMA. When Marini visited New York between February and mid-April 1950 on the occasion of a new show of his works organized by Curt Valentin at the Buchholz Gallery, Alfred Hamilton Barr, Jr., director of the MoMA, introduced him to influential families in New York such as the Rockefellers, as well as a group of artists of different origins and cultures who Marini befriended. The group included the architect Wallace Harrison, Max Beckmann, and Alexander Calder. The aim of this talk is to explore the journey of Marino in the US investigating his life in New York, as well as the role played by friends such as Valentin and Barr as mediators between the sculptor and the large artistic community of the city. The latter included artists such as, among others, Jacques Lipchitz, who Marini met during his stay in New York. During the same period, Lipchitz participated in important events and exhibitions, e.g., the *Annual exhibition of Contemporary American sculpture, watercolours and drawing*, organized at the Whitney Museum of American Art between April and May 1950.

Michele Amedei received his Ph.D from the University of Florence, Pisa and Siena. In September and October of 2017, he additionally received a bimonthly grant from the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, Washington, D.C. to support his Ph.D research about the presence of U.S painters and sculptors in Florence in the first half of the nineteenth century. Most recently, Michele has directed his attention towards the connections between U.S. artists and the Florence Academy of Fine Arts in the first half of the twentieth century. He is also collaborating on the organization of an exhibition dedicated to the Romantic painter Giuseppe Bezzuoli, scheduled to open at the Galleria degli Uffizi in 2020. At CIMA, Michele is studying Marino Marini’s connections with a group of American artists, art dealers and collectors including Joseph H. Hirshhorn, Curt Valentin, Alfred Hamilton Barr, Irving Penn, and Alexander Calder, whom the sculptor befriended between 1948 and the 1960s.
4.00pm – 4.40pm: coffee break

4pm – 4.40pm
Marini’s Reception and Legacy (Chair: Michele Amedei)

Mohammadreza Mirzaei (UC, Santa Barbara)

Marino Marini and Iranian Modernism: A Study of the Works of Parviz Tanavoli and Bahman Mohassess in the 1960s and 1970s

Several Iranian artists studied in Italy in the 1950s, and after returning to Iran, formed a massive rupture in Iranian art. These artists find specific points of reference in Italian art, one of which is Marino Marini, who was fundamental in the practice of two of the most prominent Iranian artists of the time: Parviz Tanavoli and Bahman Mohassess. Tanavoli becomes Marini's pupil at the Brera Academy, and his early works demonstrate an active link with his master’s works. He decides to study an archaic sculptural language, by selecting visual themes like a reclining man, or animals such as the deer and ibex. Tanavoli’s paintings during this time, like Farhad’s Lover (Shirin) and the Arab (1965), are not unlike Marini’s. They seem to make a relationship with his sculptural research or to be a study for future sculptures. However, Mohassess is so impressed with Marini that he even recreates one of Marini’s riders for his first exhibition in Tehran. He then continues this conversation in his sculptures in the 1970s. Although it is clear that Mohassess admired Marini, in his rider titled Untitled (1965), he disempowers Marini’s favorite subject: masks are placed on the face of both the rider and the horse, while the rider has his arms and legs severed. As Enrico Crispolti claims, Mohassess's participation in European modernism is dialectical. This somehow justifies his respect for Marini from Mohassess, as he dealt with the dialectics between past and present, abstraction and figuration. This paper studies different examples of Tanavoli and Mohassess’ works and places them alongside the practice of Marini, to explore the formation of two distinct voices in modern Iranian art that can be accurately identified here in this encounter with the sculptural language of Marini or in pursuing the dialectical approach to Marini’s favorite subjects.

Mohammadreza Mirzaei is a third-year Ph.D student in the History of Art and Architecture at UC Santa Barbara. Mirzaei is a co-organizer of the colloquium “The Postwar Italian Art Scene in a Global Perspective” at UC Santa Barbara, and a co-editor of Herfeh: Honarmand’s issue no. 51, dedicated to Italian photography. He is also the translator of Stefano Benni’s Grammatica di Dio, from Italian into Persian (Herfeh: Honarmand Publications, 2014). As an art writer, Mirzaei’s writing is published in different magazines, including Herfeh: Honarmand, Kaarnamaa, and Tandis. His current research deals with the adoption of modernism in Iranian art and the relations between the postwar Italian and Iranian art.

Marta Colombo (University of Kent, UK)

Some Reflections on Marino Marini’s Legacy Through the Eyes of His Pupil Alik Cavaliere

This paper assesses Marino Marini’s legacy through the eyes of his disciple and successor as Chair of Sculpture at the Accademia di Brera in Milan, Alik Cavaliere. My investigation
concentrates on Cavaliere’s [mostly] unpublished journals in which the artist reported his thoughts on his relationship with his master and most of their private conversations from 1960s to 1980s. Based on this information, this paper investigates the impact that Marini had on his pupil within the context of their artistic and personal relationship. The analysis focuses on Cavaliere’s reworking of Marini’s concept of ‘the feminine,’ which the journals demonstrate stemmed from an exchange of opinions between the two artists. Exploring Marini’s ambivalent idea of the ‘feminine,’ oscillating between ‘traditional kindness’ and ‘cerebral sharpness,’ I analyze how this affected his poetry and syntax. I argue that the dichotomous character of Marini’s female nudes, seen by critics as struggling between plastic volumes and erotic surfaces, might be traced back to the artist’s ambivalent idea of the ‘feminine’ itself; then I explore how this was assimilated and re-semanticized by Cavaliere in his work. In the second section of my paper, I apply this perspective to the analysis of two works, namely Marini’s *Venere* (1945) and the last work by Cavaliere, *Grande pianta Dafne* (1991). Contextualizing my analysis within the frame of their complex artistic, professional, and personal relationship, I demonstrate how Marini continued to inform Cavaliere’s work for years after his death, and that the idea of the ‘feminine,’ in its ambivalence, was for both artists a subtle and powerful catalyst to address the most crucial contradictions of their respective times.

Marta Colombo is a second-year Ph.D Candidate in History and Philosophy of Art at the University of Kent, UK – her project is funded by CHASE (ARCH). Marta’s research focuses on Italian artist Alik Cavaliere and how artistic ferment in post-War Milan forged creative streams anticipating some of the most significant subsequent artistic trends. Marta is currently working on the first catalogue of Cavaliere’s graphic works. In 2019, she presented her research in a one-day conference at the School of Advanced Studies, London. In 2018, she contributed to the realisation of three catalogues: *AFRO*, edited by Philip Rylands, *Burri. Plastiche*, edited by Bruno Corà and *BOOM. Art and Industry in 1960s Italy*, edited by Flavia Frigeri, all published by Forma Edizioni, Florence. Marta holds an MRes in Curatorial Knowledge from Goldsmiths (Distinction), an MA in Aesthetics (110 cum laude), and a BA in Philosophy (110 cum laude) from the University of Milan.

4.40pm – 5.15pm: afternoon panels Q&A

5.15pm – 6pm: aperitivo reception

6pm – 8pm KEYNOTE LECTURE
Robert Slifkin (NYU)
*Mario Marini and Detrital Monumentalism*

This paper will consider Marini’s nudes alongside a body of sculpture created after the Second World War by artists such Raoul Hague, Jasper Johns, Joan Miro, and David Smith in which pitted and mottled surfaces (often produced through the relatively novel technique of direct metal welding), irregular and coarse patination, and figural fragmentation invested the works with signs of simulated dilapidation. These artists’ works, with their invocations of classical ruination, coupled with occasional allusions to industrial technology, served as strident — if paradoxical — imaginary harbingers of what the current world would like after the next war by evoking signs of destruction and dilapidation that were traditionally associated with the archeological past. This complex temporality in which an array of antiquated pasts contend with
an ever-changing present aligned such practices with the traditional form of the monument and moreover took on a trenchant significance in the years following the Second World War when the menace of nuclear weapons threatened to return civilization to a state of prehistoric barbarism.