

Johannes Wald
mostra personale
curated by Giulia Bortoluzzi

Rita Urso, Milano
28. Nov. 2017 - 16. Feb. 2018





cold veins / warm light
2017
marble plate, HD projection
140 x 93 x 4 cm

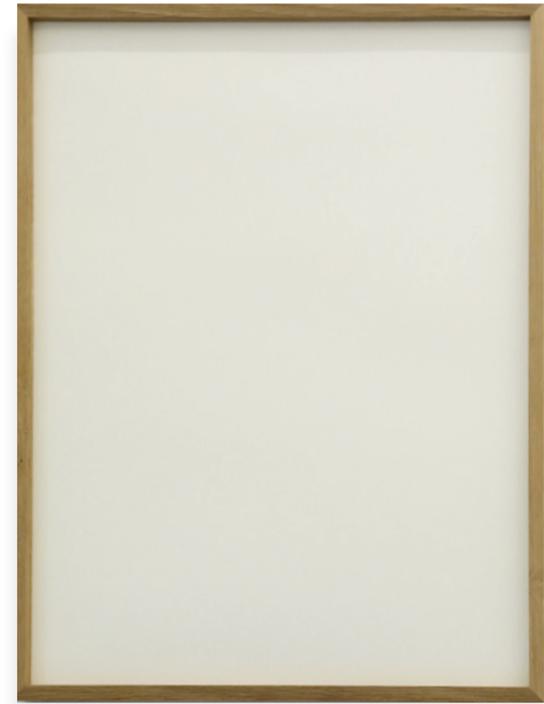


stone with no form
(La nebbia malinconica di Carrara)
2017
one hand full of marble dust
variable dimensions



grace is a volatile matter
2016
bronze
70 x 12 x 16 cm

Grace is a volatile matter



untitled
2017
embossed paper
47,5 x 36,5 cm



giving body to the stone (i sognatori)
2017
marble (heated up to 36,7°C by heating
cables and temperature controllers)
variable dimensions

Giulia Bortoluzzi

Contemporary in capturing a new Decadentism resistant to cultural loss concentrated on the ephemeral, and anachronistic in his approach of condensation and perfection which is heir to classical art and German thought, Johannes Wald's work positions itself in the areas of ambiguity between thought and history. In those folds in time where absences are created that interrupt the linear transmission of knowledge and which continue to explore man in an inexhaustible search for meaning, leading to ever-changing interpretations of the real.

Emblematic of Johannes Wald's artistic approach is the case of the Laocoön, at the heart of the debate among the German art critics of Neoclassicism – from Winckelmann to Lessing, and then Kant, Goethe, and Hegel – and which continues to fascinate and spark debate today. From its first discovery in 1506 on the Esquiline Hill in Rome, where it was found missing its right arm, to later and more recent discoveries¹, the Laocoön group of sculptures remains elusive in its intrinsicality because it inspires continuously new possibilities of understanding inherent to the spirit of the time. If for Winckelmann the sculptural representation of suffering in Laocoön's face was con-

firmation of the essential simplicity of Greek ethics, for Lessing the sculptor had had to reduce the cry to a sob not because a cry was the indication of an ignoble soul, but because it deformed the face in an repugnant manner.

The subject of continuous recoveries, discoveries, integrations, shakeups, retrievals, the marble Laocoön group coincides with its own story to become eponymous of any system of art. Fascinated by the inexhaustibility of this debate and sensitive to the question of the formal irreducibility of the work of art, Johannes Wald explores the limits of representation by maintaining his artistic approach in a state of continuous becoming, suspended in the moment that precedes creation, never definitively complete. His works arise in variations and attempts at answers to the continuous reformulation of questions about the complexity of giving form to abstract notions with a cold material. With emotions and movement, evoking once more the Laocoön theme, sculpture is made manifest in its limitations, leaving nonetheless space for temporary solutions located in the empty zones of history and knowledge – like in the case of the right arm of the statue, which, replaced over time, metaphorically re-discovers that dimension of lightness that marble would seem to preclude by its very nature.

Johannes Wald has chosen sculpture not so much as a formal means of art but as language and tool to reveal – through its gaps, ellipses, and omissions – the process and the transmission of the work's conditions of existence, inside a genealogy of aesthetic canons and a collective memory that defines them. Although the human body has always been a subject of sculpture, revealing the near impossibility of transferring to an intrinsically cold element the inherent beauty of movement or emotional transport, the artist challenges the material with a new language for transmitting human potential to a bronze arm or a block of marble. And he does so not by endowing the expression of an emotion a single code of representation, but rather by opting for structures of multiple, open meanings.

This approach by variations, corrections and attempts which never resolve the meaning of the work provides them work with conceptual clarity, and it is the way in which Johannes Wald emerges as a contemporary narrator in capturing the spirit of the time even while making use of themes from classical aesthetics. By exploring, from the perspective of the present, the meaning of the present's commonplaces, of its terminology and its techniques, the artist manages to subvert them in order to literally reinvent them.

In his mostra personale Johannes Wald presents four different variations on a theme, molding the material and endowing it with some of the ephemeral features of living beings, such as breath, warmth, movement, and speech. Here form is not made manifest as a descriptive canon of the image but as an organic presence, moving one's attention from the potential object to its substance. By molding the material inversely, the sculptural process is reversed, and the rule of transformation overturned, as in the pieces of Carrara marble that follow the rhythm of human breathing or share the body heat of a living being.

¹ For a summary of the continuous rediscoveries of sculpture group, see: S. Settis, "Laocoonte di bronzo, Altri Laocoonti e Ricerche anagra che", in *Laocoonte. Fama e stili*, Donzelli, Rome 1999.



Rita Urso
Via Lazzaro Papi 2
20135 Milan
Italy
+39 02 546 0582
info@artopiagallery.net
www.artopiagallery.net

