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LA TOUCHE SURREALISTE DE CHIRICO | DELVAUX | MATTA

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LA TOUCHE SURREALISTE DE CHIRICO | DELVAUX | MATTA

PARIS

13 OCTOBER – 23 DECEMBER 2024

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary from the Manifesto of Surrealism published in 1924 and the exhibition at Centre Pompidou in Paris, Maggiore g.a.m. presents the show «La Touche Surréaliste: De Chirico | Delvaux | Matta» in its new venue at 208 Boulevard Saint Germain – 75007 Paris. The exhibition discloses the ancestral and instinctive features in the art practice of some among those Surrealists inspired by the primitive cultures, ancient civilization and exotics tribes. The artworks on view will cover different artists and different times from ancient era 'till contemporary art. The exhibition will be extended to the Garden of Palais Royal, 8 Rue de Montpellier - 75001 Paris, thanks to a big installation of Roberto Matta's tribal sculptures which are part of Art Basel Paris Public Program.

In the second Surrealist manifesto, André Breton wrote: 'Surrealism aimed at nothing more than provoking, from an intellectual and moral point of view, a crisis of consciousness of the most general and serious kind, and that the success or failure of this movement can only be judged by whether or not this result is achieved [...] Everything suggests that there is a certain point in the mind where life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the communicable and the incommunicable, the high and the low cease to be perceived contradictorily [...] What could those who still care about their place in the world hope to gain from the surrealist experience?' The exhibition at Galleria d'Arte Maggiore g.a.m. seeks to provide an answer to this question, presenting the work of three artists who, influenced by the primitivism popular in the first half of the 20th century, created works inspired by the ancestral origins of mankind. This is the case with **Paul Delvaux**, represented by the extraordinary painting 'Le Clôître' from 1957, one of the pieces closest in theme and composition to the famous 'Aurore' (1937) from the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, currently on display at the Pompidou. In the case of **Giorgio de Chirico**, his love for the ancients appears through direct references in all his works, but in the magnificent painting 'Gladiators' from 1928, from the Rosenberg collection, the predominant theme is that of ancient Roman gladiators, which was also popular in cinema at the time – remember the film Ben Hur? The Rosenberg collection was recently – from March to May 2024 – the subject of a beautiful exhibition at the Musée Picasso in Paris. The third artist featured deserves special attention. In addition to the works exhibited at the gallery – including some paintings – **Roberto Sebastian Matta's** sculptures will also be on display in a large installation at the Palais Royal gardens as part of **Art Basel Paris | Public Program**. Totem-like sculptures, with clear references to the tribal traditions of exotic civilizations, blend with the legacy of the Etruscans, the most ancient population that inhabited Italy long before the Romans. But let's delve into the three artists and the main works on display, through an unprecedented curatorial presentation by Alessia Calarota.

Paul Delvaux

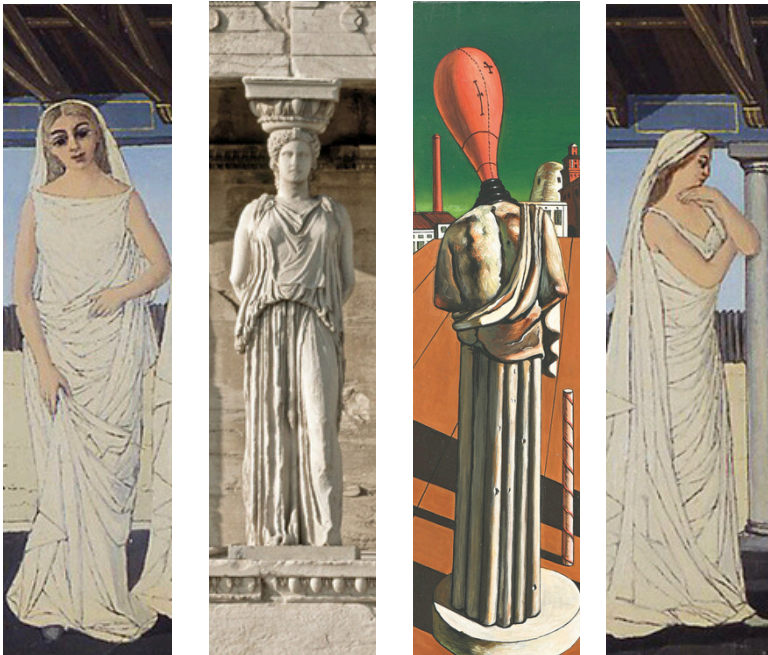


The incredible painting *"Le Clôître"* (1957) includes all the hallmark elements of Paul Delvaux's art and it recalls, for many aspects, one of his iconic painting that is currently on display at the exhibition *"Surréalisme"* at the Pompidou, that is part of the permanent collection of the Peggy Guggenheim Museum in Venice. It is the stunning *"Aurore / The Break of the Day"* (1937), which is probably the most well-known painting by Delvaux. Protagonists in all his canvases, his female figures can undoubtedly be considered as an intrusion of the surrealist unconscious into everyday life. Upon closer observation of the two paintings, the frozen stance of these figures—almost as if sculpted in stone, and in *Le Clôître* they appear as actual sculptures—also reflects their passivity and objectification, as noted in the exhibition catalog at the Pompidou (2024). Furthermore, influenced by Giorgio de Chirico, Delvaux frequently included classicizing details which invite comparison with Greek mythological subjects. Unique to Delvaux is the silent, introspective cast of figures he developed during the mid-1930s and presented throughout his career. His nude or seminude women pose immobile with unfocused gazes, with arms frozen in rhetorical gestures.



Paul Delvaux,
Above:
Le Clôître, 1957
© Maggiore g.a.m.
on the left:
*Aurore / The Break
of the Day* 1937 ©
Peggy Guggenheim
Collection

Using a perspectival distortion to create rapid, plunging movement from foreground to deep background - as seen in both masterpieces - the motif of the mirror, represented in both painting with breasts, appears for the first time in 1936. Here in both painting a new element is introduced: the reflected figure is not present within the scene, but it exists outside the canvas field, making it evident that Delvaux wanted to bring the viewer into the painting: women who can reflect themselves, men who can engage with the image of female breasts.



From left: detail of P. Delvaux, *Le Cloître*; one of the Caryatids from the porch of the Eracheion in Athens; detail from G. de Chirico, *Le Muse Inquietanti*, 1962, oil on canvas, 97 x 66 cm.; detail from P. Delvaux, *Le Cloître*.

The female figure gives the painting a very special atmosphere and, although reduced to the status of a character in her plastic role within the composition, like the other elements of the canvas, she attracts to herself, she becomes the center of the composition, blending in with the architecture of the painting. The eternal feminine is always true. Delvaux said:

«The woman is evidently one of my favorite subjects, not that I haven't painted panels in which she is not portrayed, but she almost always participates in the compositions I made. To me she is a kind of beacon within the theme addressed. First of all, thanks to the harmony of her shapes and colors, for the charm she releases and obviously for her erotic potential».

From G. Carels, C. Van Deun, Paul Delvaux, sa vie, Foundation Paul Delvaux, Bruxelles, 2004

Paul Delvaux (1897 – 1994) officially became part of Surrealism when André Breton and Paul Eluard invited him to exhibit at the Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme (1938) in Paris. Since then his fame quickly increased and since his first major retrospective in 1945 at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, he is one of the few artist, as Picasso or Morandi, to have a museum entirely dedicated to his work (opened in 1982).

Throughout his career he took part in the Venice Biennale (1954) and in many exhibitions around the world, from New York to the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo and Kyoto (1975). He worked on many monumental paintings including "Le Paradis terrestre" at the Palais des Congrès (1959) in Brussels. His works are now in the Collections of some of the most important international museums and Institutions, such as the Guggenheim Museum of New York and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art of New York, the Tate Gallery in London, the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, among others.

Giorgio de Chirico

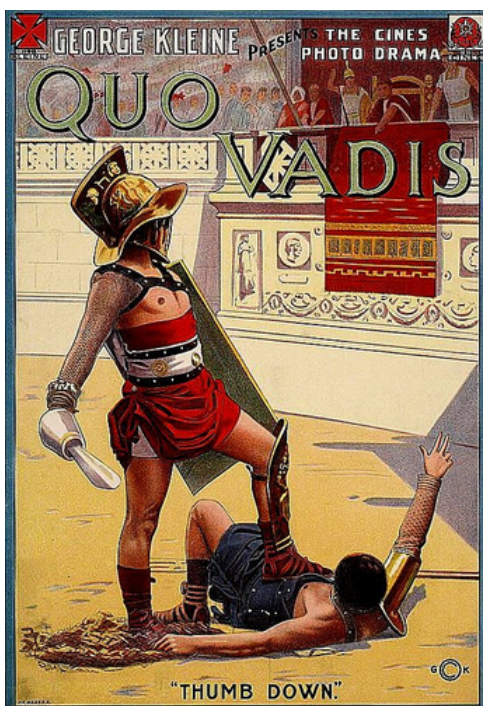
Gladiators

Detail from Giorgio de Chirico, *Gladiators*, 1928, oil on canvas, cm. 92 x 73

Gladiators, the warriors who would fight in Roman arenas, have always been a source of fascination. The hit movie *Gladiator* by director Ridley Scott took the year 2000 by storm. However, this colossal production was not the first to enthrall the public. In 1913 the film *Quo Vadis* depicted the infamous empire of Nero, broadcasting scenes that included gladiators fights; in 1926 another cinematographic film hit the screens: *The Last Days of Pompeii* incorporated in its narrative scenes of gladiators in the arena.

The popularity of this theme in the mass culture at the beginning of XX Century could explain the lack of credibility, the artificial and grotesque nature of Giorgio de Chirico's warriors, father of Metaphysical painting. As written by Giovanni Casini in the catalog for the exhibition at the Musée Picasso on the Rosenberg Collection: "in the context of his particular relationship with antiquity and his novel *Hebdomeros*, published in 1929, (...) there is very little Antiquity in De Chirico's gladiators, and they are rather a satire of contemporaneity".

Between 1927 and 1929, de Chirico painted sixty-one iterations of the same theme: the Gladiators.



From the left: posters for *Quo Vadis* (1913),



Picture of the exhibition at Musée Picasso in Paris in 2024

Some of them ended up in the famous **Hall des Gladiateurs** inside **Leonce Rosenberg's** apartment in Paris – more than an apartment, a grandiose and complex artistic endeavour, decorated by some of the most popular painters of the time such as Savinio, Picabia, Léger, Herbin, Metzinger, Valmier, Severini, Ernst and de Chirico himself. A show **at Musée Picasso in 2024** in Paris presents very well the theme of *gladiators*. In fact in this main-theme De Chirico focused on the powerful effect of these variations on the warrior nude. On the surface, they evoke the classical, virile grandeur of

the time. Yet the fallen, limp bodies of these gladiators are the opposite of the academic representation of the splendid male nude.

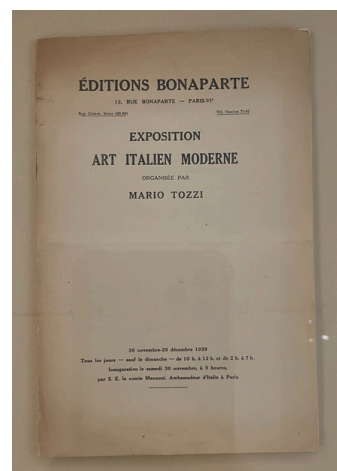
The paintings de Chirico produced portray Gladiators during their schooling, fighting among themselves or with beasts. Some of them are set in open spaces, reminiscent of Roman arenas, others constrict the warriors' figures in small, closed rooms, creating an asphyxiating effect.

The study and the sight of Roman sculptures and mosaics depicting gladiators, warriors and boxers surely inspired much of the iconography of this series of paintings.

Maggiore g.a.m. presents an indisputable masterpiece from this series dated 1928. Coming from the Rosenberg's collection, this oil on canvas boasts an illustrious provenance.

On the right: Book of the exhibition "Art Italien Moderne" at the Rosenberg Gallery in Paris in 1929

Details from the *Gladiators* mosaic at Galleria Borghese, Rome, c. 320



Roberto Sebastian Matta

ART BASEL PARIS | PUBLIC PROGRAM |
JARDIN DU PALAIS ROYAL

On the occasion of **Art Basel Paris** and the 100th anniversary from the Manifesto of Surrealism published in 1924, Maggiore g.a.m. art gallery is glad to take part in the *Public Program* with a scenographic installation of **7 bronze sculptures** by Roberto Sebastian Matta (Santiago de Chile 1911 - Civitavecchia 2002) in the **Garden of Palais Royal**. Realized in the 1990s, they will lead the public into a timeless space inhabited by archaic idols, contemporary tribal totems that seem emerging from ancient and mythological civilizations in an imaginary world. In these contemporary totems Matta combined different identities and legacies starting from Inca, Aztec and Latin American roots, to the indigenous American culture, and the Mediterranean and Etruscan heritage experienced while living in Italy. As an immigrant who lived in many countries from Chile to France, from the United States to Italy, Matta had an original vision that enriched his art through the different cultures that he was able to integrate with in a new Mediterranean language. Being born in Chile and travelling through Mexico with Robert Motherwell in 1941 - 1942 were the keys to bring to the tribal iconography, full of totemic images and ceremonial stylization of his native culture. Writing about Matta in 1963, Italo Calvino recognized: «the renewal of a narrative by images, or an epic, which recalls the graphic marks of pre-Columbian codexes». If it is true that this totemic personages inhabit Matta's drawings and paintings since the 1940s, it is in sculptures that they acquire their own life «combining the prehistoric, the totemic and the science-fiction», as Calvino said.



Erreros Natura,
1991, bronze
cm 165 x 50 x 36
© Maggiore g.a.m.



Mater Nostrum,
1993, bronze cm.
151 x 43 x 26 ©
Maggiore g.a.m.

Matta's figures are images of magmatic deepness, hailing back to geological ancient epochs and earthly mythological religions. Inspired by the totemic idol with serpents' eyes derived from Inca or Aztec culture, after moving to Tarquinia, Italy in 1967, he was then fascinated by the natural deities of the Etruscans, who settled in that area. This new incitement turned into an unending quest for the roots of the history of mankind, from the Mediterranean Sea to new continents, which he then blended with his previous studies of Oceanic and primitive art such as the African one, greatly in vogue among the leading artists of the avant-garde. The exhibited works could dialogue with each other since all the three artists shared the visionary of the creative gesture and the social dimension of their work. In 2015 on the occasion of the Esposizione Internazionale di Arte - La Biennale di Venezia, Galleria d'Arte Maggiore g.a.m. focused on the

sculptures by Matta, that were installed in the Garden of Palazzo Soranzo Cappello in Venice (F. Gualdoni, A. Calarota, Matta. Sculpture, Galleria d'Arte Maggiore g.a.m. - Silvana Editoriale, 2015). In 2019 ACP Palazzo Franchetti by Fondazione Calarota hosted the exhibition *The 20th Century at Palazzo Franchetti*, also featuring Matta's sculptures.

It is remarkable that many among the shows dedicated to Matta's sculptures took place in France starting from the 1960s and that in many museums his sculptures are preserved as the one at the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.

In the gallery exhibition, alongside the sculptures, paintings that highlight the surrealist, tribal, and material essence of his work will be presented.

In 2013 our former chairman Franco Calarota realized Matta's dream to see his works exhibited together with the ones of his sons: Gordon Matta Clark, leading exponent of the contemporary American art, and Pablo Echaurren. This exhibition, realized with Galleria d'Arte Maggiore g.a.m. and curated by Danilo Eccher titled **Matta: Roberto Sebastian Matta, Gordon Matta-Clark, Pablo Echaurren** (catalogue Galleria d'Arte Maggiore g.a.m., Silvana Editoriale, 2013), was hosted on the occasion of the 55. Esposizione Internazionale di Arte - La Biennale di Venezia at Fondazione Querini Stampalia.



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LE COIN ITALIEN MORANDI | MELOTTI

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Giorgio Morandi

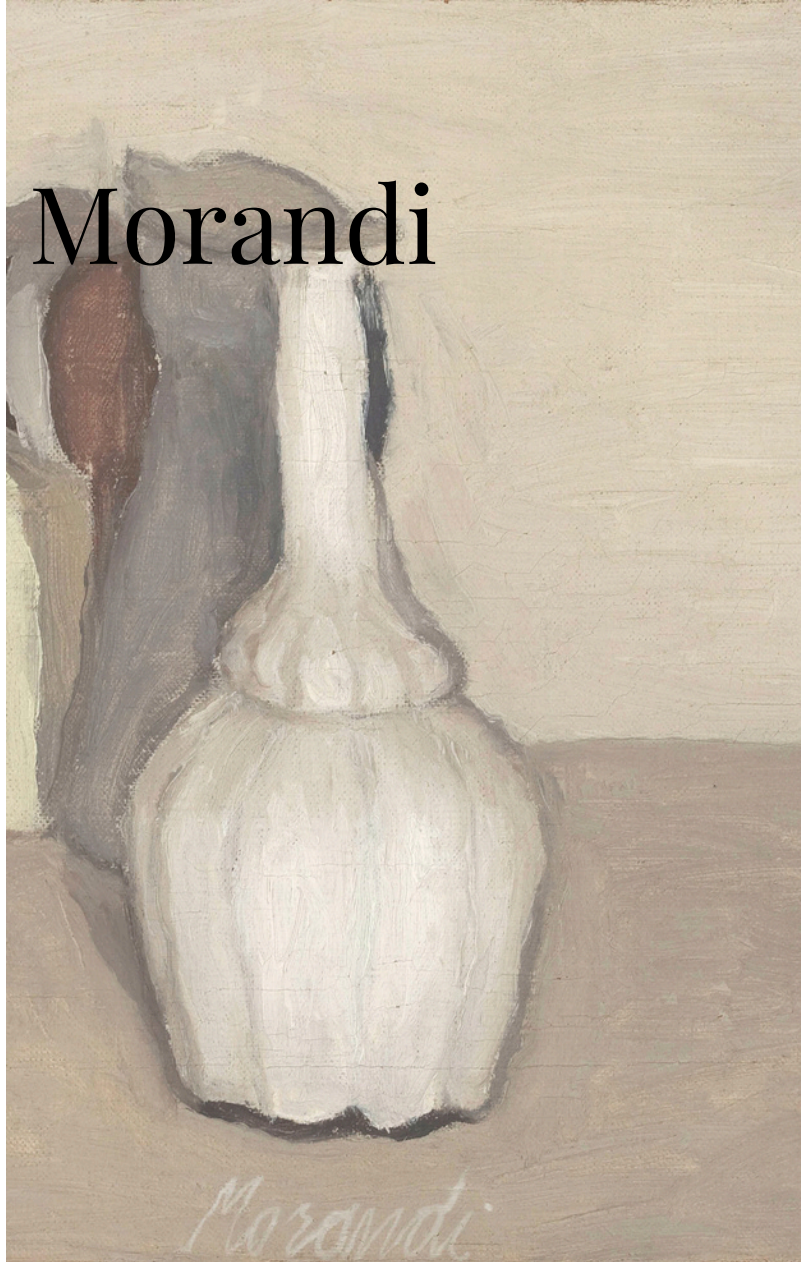
Following the show *Gio Ponti: la casa all'italiana*. *Giorgio Morandi, Massimo Campigli, Fausto Melotti* exhibited in our new exhibition venue in Paris last Spring, Galleria d'Arte Maggiore is delighted to present a very important selection of Giorgio Morandi's oils, including a magnificent "**Still Life**" (1948) and one among the most important still lifes ("*Still Life*", 1941) with a very strong exhibition history - including the Royal Academy in London - and provenance from Francesco Arcangeli, a well-known art historian and a friend of Giorgio Morandi.

From the catalogue published by Skira of the exhibition: **Silenzi. Giorgio Morandi** co-curated by **Franco Calarota** and **Daniela Ferretti** at **Museum of Palazzo Fortuny** in Venice in 2010-2011:

As Francesco Poli recalls, Giorgio Morandi's work has today become an «*icon of our artistic culture*».

Many exhibitions have been organised in the most important museums of the world and many words have been said on his artworks.

Lamberto Vitali mentioned Morandi felt the necessity of «living for a long time facing the motifs of his paintings, in order to become familiar with them, meditate on them» before reproducing on the canvas the «immutability of motifs that doesn't ever coincide with a monotony of the effects».



Giorgio Morandi,
Still Life, 1948
© Maggiore g.a.m.

Arnaldo Beccaria, author in 1939 of the first monograph dedicated to Morandi, narrates the ascetic preparation of each work «made of hungers, silences, mortifications of colour» where «art is the expression of the moral dress of the artist» and of those «notes of colours that always compose themselves in the artwork's silence; and that silence is lightened by an intense and secret music» that envelops the work in «an absolute order» where everything is «equalled, following an inborn calculation, which is very acute and infallible, a sublime equation» where colours burn «as an intense and unconsummated sacrificed to silence».

Giorgio Morandi



Giorgio Morandi,
Still Life, 1948
© Maggiore g.a.m.

Whereas for Francesco Arcangeli silence must be researched in what Morandi decides not to represent in his work, as it is the case for the human body that the master «seems to render, maybe unconsciously, through his silence, the supreme homage to a humanist that is desperate to see an image of man that is for now un-returnable».

Roberto Longhi suggests looking for silence in the harmony and balance of those objects which in their appearance hide a more profound reality.

But it is Castor Seibel that highlights how Morandi's painting expresses «*what words can't ever tell, that is a pictorial poem that exteriorises the elusive*». And he underlines as silence is evident to one's eyes in the master's works when he claims that «*Morandi is capable of metamorphose silence, absence of sound, in a visual phenomenon: the light of silence*».

Since before its foundation in 1978, **Galleria d'Arte Maggiore g.a.m.** has established a strong relationship with **Giorgio Morandi's** art, becoming the **most** relevant landmark on Morandi's work on the market and also participating into the cultural promotion of his art, through the collaborations with the major Museums and Institutions around the world, among them: Tate Modern (London, 2000), Musée d'Art Modern de la Ville de Paris (2001), Metropolitan Museum (New York, 2008), Museum of Palazzo Fortuny (Venice, 2010-2011), Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art (London, 2013).

Fausto Melotti

Painter, draftsman, poet, musician: much more than just an artist, **Fausto Melotti** (Rovereto 1901 – Milan 1986) was defined as a galaxy. A lover of ceramics, from which he took his first steps, following in the footsteps of Fontana and Leoncillo, Melotti is known for his lively and euphoric sculptures in brass. It is through this material that he engages in contortions and flights, like the free movement of spheres supported by chains in *Pendolo* (1959-60), where Melotti stages a play of oscillations and symmetries, of playful irregularities as in *Trofeo di caccia II* (1961), arousing pleasure and amusement. His ensembles tell stories and fables, legends and dreamlike myths, in which the nameless and faceless protagonists, as presented



Fausto Melotti
Pendolo, 1959-6
Trofeo di caccia II, 1961
Senza titolo, 1961
© Maggiore g.a.m.



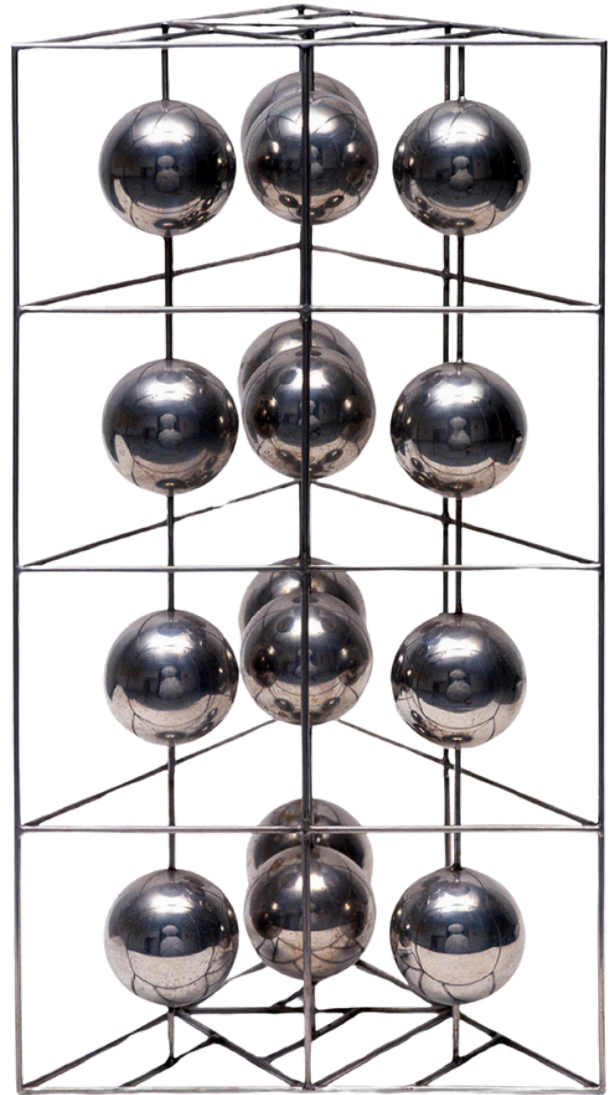
in *Senza titolo* (1960), define an extravagant and fanciful universe. A world often symbolic, entirely determined by graphic and linear counterpoint, devoid of thickness and weight, exalting the dimension of dream and narrative. Beyond the *teatrini* scripted by Melotti himself, the audience is required to participate in constructing their own narrative through the association of individual sculptures and in their interpretation. In this airy and marvellous void of brass, as well as in the metaphysical sparkle of ceramics, as proposed in *Cerchi* (1960 ca., in the picture on the left),



Fausto Melotti

the individual sculptures move, seeming to free themselves from a concrete existence, dominated by gravity, to enter a plastic world that tends towards the immaterial and becomes musical. The philosophy of the immaterial and the musical implies a precise belief, that of the *spiritual in art*, dear to Kandinsky. In his sculptures, in fact, one perceives a center, an "interior" space that, as he himself maintains, believes that «*art is arrived at through art, the fruit of personal intuition: therefore all our effort consists in teaching the little heroism of thinking with one's own brain*» (Quadrante no. 14-15, June-July 1934). His entire production, from the early drawings of 1925 to the sculptures of the Eighties, makes it evident that, as **Germano Celant** writes: «*his abstract art must be assumed in a spiritualistic and metaphysical perspective, with references to the symbolism of the sacred and the magical. And although it appears irreverent from a figurative point of view, it always admits at the origin the spirit or the word, the sound or the breath with which the universe was built*».

The need for an inner feeling, to go to the origin of oneself and of the world, is not dictated solely by the artist's Catholic culture, by music, poetry, and lightness, but also by his degree in electronic engineering, as if sculpture should reflect an atomic or at least microscopic dimension, traversed by a flood of



particles as in the case of *Scultura 21/A* (1970, in the picture above), the first realizations of which date back to 1935.

Since the 1970s, his works have been part of or regularly exhibited in museums around the world, including the **MoMA** and the **Guggenheim** in New York, demonstrating the importance also acknowledged in 1986 by the Golden Lion for the memory of La **Biennale** di **Venezia**.