

# Antonio Paolucci, Director Vatican Museum

## **Sculptures inhabited by the spirit of Prometheus**

"Anna Chromy detests immobility as symbol of death", once wrote about her Philippe Cruysmans, art critic for the "Figaro".

What am I searching in my sculptures? Transform into a dance the face of / each loss / its emptiness".

With these words, the artist herself explain the reasons of her creativity. Only movement stylized in rhythm and aestheticallyshaped (bence, dance) can fill the void, soothe anguish, give temporary answers to the enigma of the present. All this is however insufficient to fully delve into her sculptures.

Anna Chromy's sculptures are inhabited by the spirit of Prometheus. In a literal sense, since Proteus was the god of metamorphosis and wonder, of inconstancy and ubiquitousness. Just as Proteus could turn into fire or lion, into a cloud or a sound, so are Anna Chromy sculptures reality and myth, vision and premonition, sumptuously dazzling dominion of visible realty and transfigured memory of distant ages. It's important to underline that the mutations take place in sudden concomitance, they cross the same work, compelling the spectator to adopt multiple, contrasting and, in a certain sense, even ambiguous mental and sentimental approaches.

It's impossible to keep still (mentally and psychologically, I mean) in front of one of Anna Chromy's sculptures nor think about only one thing at the time.

This – one is tempted to say – is surrealism. Of course, it is, if we want to use terms of 20th century art history. It would be quite trite to reduce Anna Chromy to one of Salvador Dali's version or Leonor Fini's. For those scholars of ancient art history like me, her surrealism has deeper roots and more complex cultural motivations. I find it impossible to ignore the fact that Anna Chromy was born in Bohemia, that she is a daughter of central Europe and has lived in the magic triangle Vienna-Prague-Salzburg. Nor can I forget that she lives in Tuscany and that Pietrasanta is her present home; Pietrasanta with its beautiful shell-shaped square, art foundries inhabited by genius and mystery, much to Benvenuto Cellini's tastes.

All this is not devoid of meaning. Looking at Anna Chromy's sculptures, it's almost inevitable to think about the Mannerist artist of the late 16th century (Spranger and Arcinboldi), or Bernardo

Buontalenti's magic grotesque, or about the incredible Austrian and Bohemian Baroque hyperboles rather than Dali. I've never been able to gaze at her bronzes without thinking that technical perfection, accomplished craftsmanship, "artificio", as 16th century theorist would have put it, are a sort of religion for our refined sculptress. For her, just as for the Mannerist "virtuoso", skills, knowledge and techniques are not mere instruments to achieve an end, but are a result in themselves.

In front of the sculptures on display in the fascinating scenario of Place Vendôme in the months of May and June 2005, it's reasonable to think about the origins of contemporary art springing from our ancient Europe, where everything is held together and everything one way or another, sooner or later, comes back.

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