



Piotr Szubert

A few comments on Bronisław Krzysztof's sculptures.

The most fascinating aspect of Bronisław Krzysztof's work is the depth of the auto reflection of an artist who is fully conscious, like many before him, of the same dilemma: how to conquer his hard materials, how to revive them, how to make them speak. As the artist is faithful to traditional techniques some might perceive him as a traditionalist, but only those who do not look closely enough at his sculptures. Although this perception, without disrespect to admirers of modernity, is not in itself harmful, however it does not fit Krzysztof's work. He searches all the time, he constantly engages in discussion about contemporary sculpture, through his works he asks the question: what is sculpture, what are its boundaries? This is exactly what I believe is the most important feature of his art. What one can see is almost like a vivisection – the mass of the sculpture opens up to reveal its interior, it is not closed, it does not cover its welds and coarseness, it shows the process in which it was made, at the same time demonstrates the multiple potential of the ways in which it could continue outside its shape in the space surrounding it. Thanks to these efforts the final form of the sculpture is created in the observer's imagination, in an immaterial continuum, in some kind of an invisible drawing created by imagination. This 'drawing' can gather movement through certain "retro visions" present in some of Krzysztof's works, but also colours, thanks to the use of various materials with different textures and shades.

It is really difficult not to quote Medardo Rosso at this point: 'It is not true, that sculpture is condemned to create only beautiful forms isolated in space, closed in defined, strong and certain lines; imprisoned in a motionless profile, broken off from the very core of the turmoil of common life [...] Like painting, sculpture can also vibrate with thousands of broken lines, become increasingly or decreasingly alive with violent clashes of shadow and light, mysteriously become enclosed in warm and cold colours'<sup>1</sup>. Rosso's aspirations were partially continued by Umberto Boccioni, who called for 'opening of the mass and filling it with space'<sup>2</sup>. Even though a futuristic rebellion led this artist to abandon the human figure in favour of abstract experiments, it is impossible not to mention his space cutting 'daggers' in the context of Krzysztof's art.

The avant-garde experiments from the beginning of the XX century caused the blurring of sculpture's boundaries. There appeared to be a division, which seems to function to this day, between artists breaking away from the traditional techniques looking for new means of expression and the tendency to search for new meanings, but without losing sight of the past. The obvious defect, I would even say sin, of most studies of XXth century art is to pass over in silence or just perfunctorily mention the second course of the development of sculpture both in the previous and current century. Because it is the existence of this trend which constitutes a fascinating feature and enriches the image of modern art. We are talking here about the tendency represented at the beginning of the XXth century by Charles Despiau, Aristide Maillol and Antoine Bourdelle, as well as those from the middle of the century like Giacomo Manzù and Marino Marini. Each one of these artist was

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extremely individual, it is impossible to pigeonhole them within the limits of one of the 'isms'. What they all had in common however, was the effort they all put into finding the way to reach an understanding with the past in order to present, with the art of the past as a background, the identity of the modern age.

Today their achievements are not well appreciated. It may be because they require knowledge which is not available to many – knowledge of the vital context to understand the dialogue they conduct, the dialogue that continued in their sculptures. An additional difficulty arises in connection with the curse of the digital era. To be able to make up your mind about these artworks one has to see them with one's own eyes – to feel their real scale, texture and material, the aura that surrounds them which cannot be reproduced, all in all everything that is lost even in the best reproduction (I even dare to say that 'the better' the reproduction, the more misleading and further it is from the original).

These comments are also true in relation to Bronisław Krzysztof, in whom I find an heir to the tendency explained above, the artist who follows a similar path, however reaches extremely original solutions. His sculptures are characterized by their own individual deconstruction, the human figure is dismembered, divided into smaller elements, deprived of a head or other limbs<sup>3</sup>. Sometimes it almost seems that the figure is absent and what we are looking at is just a mark, impression, abandoned place in which only the echo of a human individual could be heard<sup>4</sup>. For it is not about portraying the figure as a likeness of a human body, but about penetrating deeper into the spiritual dimension, which is far removed from an objective description. Krzysztof's works appear to take up this eternal motive from a new perspective, a motive that so many artists before him were searching for. They dreamed about liberating themselves from the limits of matter, whose imagination was animated by Pygmalion's dream to breathe new life into their sculptures. The price Krzysztof has to pay to achieve that is a complete deconstruction of his statues, he has to tear them apart, mutilate and dismember their elements which leads, as described by Janina Ładnowska, to a creation of a kind of outer membrane or armour. This procedure can be interpreted as a reflection on the frailty of 'the kingdom limited by skin, in which we perceive ourselves as kings, although we are only prisoners' as Marguerite Yourcenar wrote<sup>5</sup>. But as the price for this destruction of the form the artist achieves an effect, thanks to which the material loses its concreteness – the observer can witness the process of creation of an ephemeral form, where the main foundations are space and light.

In Bronisław Krzysztof's artworks one can see a fascinating dialogue between the artist and eternal sculptural motives, which he interprets in his own, individual way. Walking among the sculptures in his workshop we reflect on the marching figure, which was a challenge for August Rodin, Boccioni, Xawery Dunikowski, Alberto Giacometti; the winged figure and its various 'expressions' from ancient statues to sculptures of angels; the motif of a rider (both the calm and majestic Marc Aurelius from the Capitol, as well as Marino Marini's dramatic rider); the nude, which could be either a manifestation of an ideal beauty or an excuse to reveal the fragility of the human figure; of various types of portraits, which often become masks covering the subject's true nature; of the motif of 'the two figures' (Canova, Rodin, August Zamojski).

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The creative process in Krzysztof, the alchemy that transfers the 'drawing'<sup>6</sup> from imagination into a multi-dimensional form, is accompanied by constant changes, as if he was trying to stop the process of *in statu nascendi*, in the moment when the sculpture's shape is not yet finalised and 'locked' with the inherent risk that it will become boring. The form remains open. Quite often it can be modified by adding or taking off mobile elements, which significantly changes the sculpture's meaning. These elements, seemingly 'pointless', allow a consideration of the boundaries of figuration and abstraction. Where is that border? Is it possible to delineate it? Is there any point in doing so? After all, even the most 'abstract' form bears the mark of a thought and human hand which created it. To remain human it is impossible to run away from anthropo-morphisation – the search for life in an inanimate matter, naming even the most distant stars with human names.

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