

.Time

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This stage of life, or perhaps just of my own, requires us to ponder the time that has past, as well as that which perhaps is yet to come. Sometimes, reflecting on the future of our loved ones - in my case, especially that of my daughter - we feel a knot choking the breath out of us, fruit of an indefinite anguish that reeks of barely-hidden selfishness. I could describe the waiting, the long pauses that endure between periods of malaise as states of fleeting unease - brief yet intense, like gusts of wind blowing through the reeds bordering a pond. The feeling is that of having lost our youth, or perhaps of not having faced it with the right ingenuity. We find ourselves entangled in the period that dominates our adolescent memories, as well as in the long-ago ones of our parents, when they were the same age we are now - with the same interests, the same thoughts that make up our everyday life. Thus, I find myself reminiscing almost tenderly, forgiving any mistakes - theirs mine ours - and hoping at least to let go of any plans or unforeseen events that have already been experienced and spoken of, and previously set aside. A cyclical affair that returns to wane and flare up again like a fire, or to die down like an indolent passion. A seasonal affair which, as I see it, awaits that crucial flash wherein the time becomes right to offer a new chance, a spark of change.

The time of traditional sculpture, even in its more modernised ramifications, came to an end in the late 1960s with the poverista and performative controversy, as the very substrate characterising its shape entered a deadlock, and afterwards with the ideological sacrifice of classical material and the wish to annul language itself. Two decades later, a few artists recognised the urgent need to transform a crisis into a revolution, opening up to multilingualism for a qualitative (rather than theoretical) retrieval of art - in other words, making the most of the medium itself as conjecture of an alphabet rather than of an aesthetical reasoning. This doesn't mean lingering towards blurred and hybrid subcultures, but rather bringing the theme of identity, devoid of any absolute prohibition, to the forefront of the debate. Alongside the speculative renegotiations of the 1970s, we saw the tight defence of certain realist investigations, as well as the development of a classicist counterculture aimed at redefining grammatical canons, thus distorting the past in a sort of delayed departure from the feats of the previous century. This was not the first time that the lure of classicism degenerated from source of inspiration to mechanical repetition, devoid of all value. Indeed, leading some to go down a blind alley wherein reproducibility enlists the model of an elegant yet - in the end - sterile assemblage in its self-sufficient nature.

And this time - which draws ever closer, like a wave breaking on the shoreline of the 20th century - is a waiting period. The perimeter forcing us towards an impasse, in its atrophied gigantism according to which concepts saves the execution, or perhaps the execution costs the same as these concepts, will inevitably break at some point. And we hear a new voice on the edge of this closed boundary: the voice of a need, rather than its fulfilment. I suppose this is why Massimiliano Pelletti began following in the footsteps of his sculptor grandfather - wandering amongst the plaster moulds used to make copies, constructing his own *Sacra Privata*, wherein the ancient Romans would worship at the altar of the Penates and Manes, of heroes and deities. While this philosophical bent that leads the artist to work with antique casts of classical originals - as if the intermediate stage were the skeleton of his modern works - creates a degree of separation, it also

heightens his intention of destroying the old to rebuild the new. When Robert Rauschenberg created his Erased de Kooning Drawing in 1953, by erasing a drawing by one of the fathers of abstract Expressionism, he was driven by celebratory purposes, with the further aim of reviving the “artistic building” whilst, however, ensuring that it rested on a sound foundation. Likewise, Pelletti exercises an inversion of sculptural methods by preparing a replica of the intermediate model and, finally, deconstructing and reassembling it. An interest in natural elements introduces a further principle of uncertainty, straying from a situation characterized by complete control and objectivity. On the other hand, the use of unfinished compounds - themselves characterised by great wear and tear - gives a one-of-a-kind result, impossible to rebuild via technology. De facto interrupting the chain that began with the primeval paradigm and has come down to Pelletti’s studio throughout the centuries.

These actions define the voluntary end to a specific time period. In other words, they reunite the craftsman’s knowledge - by now reduced to secondary attribute - with the awareness of a reform which (also) owes a debt to the outcome which the late 20th-century avant-garde movements brought to the debate on art. The care with which Pelletti chooses his stones (or, more in general, his materials), matching them according to criteria of affinity or contrast, and as an act of total release, clashes with an obligation to alphabetize the images. That is, choosing those which - by virtue of their sound and layers - recall the primary aspects of our culture. This embodies his own personal awareness of the boundaries and openings allowed by the spirit of our era, perhaps forestalling the rephrasing of future canons and structures. We need blank pages from which all signs and characters have been removed. We need their own recent memory.

Old wounds, traumas and scars make up the time that has gone by for us. For example, I led my daughter to believe that the suture lines on my left forearm were the result of a bite from a lion I once came across in the jungle. She believes me because her only pledge is to trust in life... because a hero’s adventures count even disregarding their veracity. Pelletti’s broken, cut-off, lacerated sculptures are not meant to replace the “stumps” that are a result of the breakings, mutilations, burials and unearthings caused by war, art criticism, religion and who knows what else. When Michelangelo declined to restore the Belvedere Torso, and again when Antonio Canova refused to touch the Parthenon marbles, they were admitting the possibility of a novel gaze, intoxicated by an absent beauty - something the primary splendour of which could only be aspired to, something to savour alongside nostalgia and a thrill of envy. Like when we hear people telling of important moments from which we were, perforce, excluded. And yet... and yet this very absence gives rise to a desperate, blinding force that brings us closer to others and their story concerning our innermost perceptions. Pelletti defines the register of his participation in the unfinished details and “worn” aspect of his works, assuming any historic and artistic find to comprise an iconographic quality regardless of a new order of additional meaning.

An object’s importance lies in what it leaves unspoken. Beautiful architectural works whisper and masterpieces speak in undertones, whilst indefinite works shout out with all the shamelessness of their poor results. We perceive art’s responsibility when it admonishes us, tenaciously, via its very presence. Sometimes we forget how being there counts as a thinking exercise built around an experiment, around a chance meeting and everything that follows. Myths tell of our many-faceted lives by summarising an archetype, thus allowing Pelletti to reflect upon our own being there, our own identity which, in spite of its unchangeable

nature, resembles that of our ancestors. Choosing its legends means digging around the roots of episodes that recur from one generation to the next, faithful to a reiterated model despite small variations. A copy of the copy of the copy of the copy - the origin of which is lost in the twists and turns of our minds. Pelletti follows this path to take a leap forward: he uses Jupiter - that is, Zeus, who was once Marduk in Babylon (believed to be an adversary of Tiamat, bride of Aps). And so on and so forth, rebours, until we reach the primordial spark that Mircea Eliade tried to find in his writings. The pretext of a subject is not an exercise in taste or compositional elegance, but rather a reflection on sculpture in general, seen as a reflective part to be crossed over.

We need the right time, and we are circling around it. The ancient Greeks had different words to describe time depending on its quantitative or qualitative nature. Whilst the god Chronos refers to chronological, sequential time, Kairos signifies a favourable time, a moment of epiphany in which a special event occurs. Though at a first glance neither seems to find a place in Pelletti's pantheon, they are actually its ideal embodiment, due to their fundamental nature in each and every creative episode. Despite the lack of iconographic cross-references, they define the author's struggle to attain the right moment wherein each part, each concept, is provided in its ideal, all-encompassing synthesis. Compared to other phases of Pelletti's work, this latest one highlights the attainment of a wilful theoretical cleansing, whilst abandoning any ironic or distracted interlude. All that remains, indeed, is the awareness of being able to pinpoint the precise instant in which each piece of the puzzle is reduced to an eloquent, and thus complementary, nucleus. With balance acting as a *carpe diem* that asks and gives nothing more, meanwhile accepting fate - or destiny - as the last participating element.

The right, favourable time is when that which once was no longer is, and that which will be has not yet come into being: an interlude in which we show who we really are. Likewise, Pelletti creates his sculptures with the intention of combining characteristic verses in a result where each element is part of a single formal entity. Whilst the past few centuries saw sculpture searching for an expansion of meaning in the space surrounding it, here we have returned to the inherent reduction of the speaking object - defying the dynamics that began in the late 1960s, yet with the idea of restoring the work's own space of occurrence. This final stage in history's long journey has by now solved most inherent tensions, and is waiting for the right time to break through renewed exploratory circumstances. This stage of our life is a waiting period, proof of our good faith as we move over the boundaries of a fortress in ruins which, though weakened and tired, is ready for this new time - and indeed, is part of it.