

June 21 through August 24, 2008

GIUSEPPE UNCINI

An exhibition at the ZKM | Museum for Contemporary Art

The idea for this exhibition project in the form of an homage to the life work of the internationally renowned sculptor Giuseppe Uncini, (1929-2008) was jointly conceived by ZKM | Karlsruhe, the MART Rovereto and the Neuen Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, in Graz.

His untimely death just prior to the exhibition opening, was cause for all involved to reflect on the project as a whole: the museums, his collectors and also his family felt the need for a comprehensive exhibition, which would attest to the singular biography and unique artistic achievements of the sculptor.

The new exhibition project was developed in cooperation with the VAF-Foundation, whose collection is located as permanent loan at the MART, and which makes accessible a major part of Uncini's most important works. Furthermore, the documentation of several of Uncini's most recent monumental works was made possible by the support of private as well as public lenders. The cooperation with the Uncini Archive and his wife, Mariolina Uncini, who over the last months had further pursued and supervised the works, has facilitated the realization of an exhibition of incomparable art historical value.

The exhibition, presented in three international museums, seeks to provide a stimulus and to go beyond the national borders of Italy. The exhibition aims at providing an appraisal of that virtuoso of anticipation, who in the 1950s of the previous century managed to evolve his own distinctive style independently of international influences. To this end Uncini exploited materials, such as cement, which at that time were used solely for the construction of houses. The use of what was then seen to be an extraordinary material influenced, above all, artists from "Minimal Art" in the USA and "Arte Povera" in Italy.

Uncini was, without doubt, a pioneer who, above all else, cleared the way for the application of new materials in sculpture. He thereby created a new contrast to classical sculpture. The aesthetics of cement and iron, never before existing was to become the characteristic stamp of his works. By using cement, the Italian artist also went on to revolutionize the technical aspect of sculpture in that he drew on the complex technology of structural engineering: untreated surfaces with the traces and marks of industrial production.

The origin of Uncini's work goes back to the material paintings of the 1950s. The transference of painterly problems having to do with the handling of light and shadows, perception and perspective, onto sculpture is clearly recognizable with Uncini. In his sculpture, the history of shadows in painting (Victor Stoichita: "A Short History of the Shadow", 1997) becomes a theme. Thus Giuseppe Uncini is thus one of the first sculptors to deal with the aspect of shadow as a sculptural problem. With him, shadow becomes a space that exists and does not exist at the same time, a space that is an illusory room, a virtual room that he can make visible only by materializing it. Inspired by this, Uncini recognized that a

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Location

ZKM | Museum of Contemporary Art

Duration

June 21-August 24, 2008

Opening

Fr, June 20, 2008

Time

7 p.m.

Location

ZKM_Foyer

Press conference

Fr, June 20, 2008

Time

11 a.m.

Location

ZKM | Museum of Contemporary Art

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sculpture forms a new space between itself and its environment: an interstice or “interspazio”. And this, too, he materializes sculpturally. Thus, a sculpture arises that comprises positive and negative volumes, space and interstitial space, material and immateriality. This expansion and analysis of sculpture in the passage of the material is the result of splitting the painting into panel and image that led to the destruction of the image and the rescue of the panel.

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Giuseppe Uncini’s sculptures are unique in that he managed to transform untreated and expressionless material into expressive, sculptural structures; and he achieved this without negating the classical sculptural tradition. Thus, only recently did he claim: “In producing art, one must reflect deeply about the material one uses so as to express real meaning. And now, at this age, each day I see myself as being in the spiritual tradition of Giotto”.

Curated by Peter Weibel.
Project direction: Andreas F. Beitin.

In cooperation with Gabriella Belli (Director of MART – Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto) and Christa Steinle (Director of the Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz).

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