

1. Alberto Burri (Città di Castello 1915 – Nice 1995)

Mould, 1951

Acrylic, oil, varnish, white of pumice zinc, and polyvinyl acetate glue on canvas
62,5 x 55 cm

Merlii Collection, Busto Arsizio

The essential characteristic of each phase in the artist's research is the use of materials taken from real life, which indeed often give their name to his series of works: *Tars*, *Moulds*, *Sacks*, *Woods*, *Irons*, *Plastics*, *Cracks*, *Cellotex*. In his works, the rich and existential physical expressivity of the rough materials (with the addition of chromatic interventions) is transformed through a complex and refined formal and spatial process in order to provide his compositions with high pictorial quality and refined balances. In *Moulds* (1950-51), the mixture made out of pumice, varnish, and acrylic colours gains a fascinating vitality thanks to the unexpected and mysterious organic efflorescence.

2. Antonio Canova (Possagno 1757- Venice 1822)

Bozzetto

FMCV, Correr Museum

Antonio Canova is the most important sculptor of Neoclassicism. His works made out of Carrara marble are a symbol of the cold and greatly refined sculptural perfection of idealized human figures: balanced harmony, absolute control over volumetric development, meticulous attention for details, transformation of the physical reality of matter into a pure, weightless shape. In order to discover the very essential vital flame of his creative intuitions, we must observe his marvellous clay *bozzetti*, characterized by the invention's lively immediacy, which is empowered by the same speed of execution and lack of worries about refinement. The confrontation and observation of the dialogue between the *bozzetti* and the finished works in the museum of Possagno are the best way to understand the multifaceted complexity of the Canovian genius.

3. Asger Jorn (Verujun 1914 - Aarhus 1973)

Burning problem, 1972

White Carrara marble

47 x 28 x 25 cm

Private collection, Milan

Jorn, an important personality of the CoBrA group and among the founders of the Situationist International, is a political revolutionary and defender of a materialistic art that was based on absolute expressive freedom and inspired by the imaginative, immediate creativity of children and outcasts and by the mythical sparks of Nordic primitivism. His deeply experimental research is characterized by a physical and highly tactile painting derived from a very violent and lively expressionist power. As a sculptor, he works with pottery (in Albisola) and with other materials such as, in the last years, marble. He uses a process involving direct cuts on it that create figures of fantastic archaic suggestion.

4. Giorgio De Chirico (Volos 1888 – Rome 1978)

Piazza of Italy, 1916

Oil on canvas

55 x 65 cm

Private collection

According to the artist's report, metaphysical painting arose from a kind of illumination during an autumn afternoon in 1910 in the Florentine piazza of Santa Croce (for this see Francesco Poli's essay published in the first part of this volume). The theme of '*Piazze of Italy*' depends also on another piazza: Piazza Carlo Alberto in Turin, which is evoked here by the 'black silhouette' of Charles Albert's equestrian statue in the centre of the picture. This quotation is also a tribute to Nietzsche's madness and genius. As a matter of fact, one of the results of the psychological disease of the German philosopher, who everyday saw this statue from his room's window, was that he believed himself '*to be Charles Albert's son, that is, Victor Emmanuel II, and on January 6, 1889, he writes to Jacob Burckhardt: "I rented a small student room in front of Palazzo Carignano, in which I was born as Victor Emmanuel" ...*' (Paolo Baldacci, *De Chirico 1888-1919 La Metafisica*, Leonardo Arte, Milano, 1997 p. 95). The very philosophy of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer initiated metaphysical poetics: putting together elements in an enigmatic way, breaking logical connections between things and giving birth to new, deep revelations. The same repetition of the theme was reinterpreted in the following years in the light of the Nietzschean theory of the eternal return.

'Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were the first to teach me life's non-sense and how such non-sense could be transformed into art, or rather be the internal skeleton of a truly new, free, and deep art. New good creators are those who overcame philosophy. They came back here. They stop by the rectangles of their canvases and walls because they overcame the contemplation of the infinite. The horrifying vacuum they discovered is the same senseless and calm beauty of matter.' (Giorgio De Chirico, *Noi Metafisici*, 1919)