

VINCENZO ROMANELLI

Animal Sculpture





THE ROMANELLI FAMILY

For over nearly two centuries, the Romanelli family has made its mark on Florence's art scene and heritage. It is Florence's oldest surviving family of artists, with six sculptors spanning six generations down the male line. Collectively their artworks stand in many piazzas, churches, museums and private households, not only in Italy but also throughout Europe and beyond.

VINCENZO ROMANELLI: THE SIXTH GENERATION

Vincenzo Romanelli represents the sixth generation to pass through the doors of the family's historical Florentine atelier and gallery and embark on a career as a sculptor. By doing so, he is continuing a family tradition that spans nearly two centuries. Whilst the atelier and gallery has provided him with the tools to carve a career path in the art world, it has been with time, dedication and talent that sculpting has flourished into a way of life. This year marks the ten year anniversary of sculpting for Vincenzo, who feels a close affinity to his relatives and has been greatly inspired by working amongst their pieces, using techniques and original tools passed down from generation to generation. Florence too, of course, has been a constant source of inspiration. Vincenzo describes it as a museo a cielo aperto: an open air museum.



MASTERING THE TECHNIQUES

In 2006, Vincenzo Romanelli decided to turn his hands seriously to pursuing a career in sculpture and enrolled in classes at Charles H. Cecil, a well-known fine arts school based above the family gallery. Here he undertook formal training, sculpting from life human figures and mastering the sight-size technique. While progressing with his own sculpture, he continued to help in the family gallery.

After consolidating his skills in his home city, Vincenzo sought an outside experience in the art world, and with a British grandmother, England was the natural choice. From 2010 to 2012, he worked for a British fine arts foundry, where he acquired knowledge of casting in the lost wax method.

As is rarely the case with other contemporary artists, Vincenzo is well versed in all phases of his chosen artistic path, and is personally involved at every stage of every piece he creates, from clay modelling, to creating the negative mould, to working the wax, chiselling the metal and creating the patina.

Vincenzo's sculptures are cast principally in bronze as limited editions, signed, dated and numbered. Vincenzo recently embarked on carving his sculptures in marble, which his grandfather always insisted was essential to being able to call oneself a sculptor. Romano differentiated between modelling and sculpting, the latter involving the carving of hard material such as stone or marble.

THE TUSCAN INFLUENCE

Starting initially with human portraiture, Vincenzo was drawn more to animals, finding them more captivating with their varying forms, behaviour and features. The choice to specialise exclusively in animals is also undoubtedly a consequence of an upbringing in the Tuscan countryside, surrounded by the local wildlife, notably the resident wild boar. For Vincenzo there is something particularly emotional about seeing an animal in the wild, in its natural environment. Having the opportunity to encapsulate and immortalize a wild animal through the manipulation of clay, gives Vincenzo a strong sense of purpose for his chosen craft.

THE EYES HAVE IT

With each piece Vincenzo aspires to connect his audience to his chosen subject matter, whether it be a domestic or wild animal. For Vincenzo, the eyes are the centrepieces of his work, through which he can portray and transmit a feeling and breathe life into his chosen subject matters. In nature the meeting of eyes provides the opportunity to read an animal's emotion and reaction to the human presence, providing the means to establish a form of non-verbal communication and interaction. Vincenzo's love and respect for nature and wild environments underpin his work; he has a natural empathy with animals and a perceptive eye for capturing expression and detail.





STUDIOS

Vincenzo has established his permanent studio in the family's atelier and gallery, Borgo San Frediano, Florence. However, he works principally from life so he spends a great deal of time sculpting in the outdoors, observing his subject matter in their natural habitat. It is in the light of the studio where he can finely tune his creations. Vincenzo spends extensive periods during the winter months in the Alps studying the wildlife, producing studies of the resident chamois and the Ibex buck.











“Vincenzo has a great admiration for the work of his predecessors and he is eager to do justice to them. Vincenzo knows that like a racehorse although bloodlines may count for a great deal, they render little without training and results.”

















FAMILY HISTORY

STUDIO GALLERIA ROMANELLI

Since its creation in 1860, the gallery has housed the Romanelli family's vast collection of original bronzes and plasters created over six generations, a sight to behold. It first took on its function as a sculpture atelier in 1829, when the great Italian sculptor Lorenzo Bartolini (1777-1850) acquired the building, a former church, and transformed it into his studio. Bartolini invited many apprentices to study under him at his studio, one such pupil was a young man named Pasquale Romanelli (1812 – 1887) who, under Bartolini's guidance, excelled to become his most gifted apprentice.

PASQUALE

Pasquale Romanelli took over the reins of the atelier upon Bartolini's death, and entrusted to him was the task of completing several great monuments, commissions left unfinished by Bartolini. Amongst them was the immense allegorical marble monument dedicated to Prince Nicolai Demidoff. Pasquale went on to achieve international recognition with his own marble statues, many of which he exhibited internationally. In 1851 at the Universal Exhibition Paris, Pasquale exhibited Genius of Italy and Italy Deluded, which was also shown in New York in 1854. He became highly sought after for public and private commissions, one of his most important commissions was to create a bust of Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria. In 1860 he founded the Romanelli Gallery to showcase his creations. As Bartolini had done for him, Pasquale imparted his knowledge upon his son Raffaello to whom the running of the gallery eventually passed.



Foto Archivio Storico Alinari

RAFFAELLO

Raffaello Romanelli (1856-1928) became a famed portraitist of his era, receiving important public and private commissions both nationally and internationally. Raffaello studied under his father and August Rivalta. One of his most prominent portraits is the bronze bust of Benvenuto Cellini which sits on Ponte Vecchio in Florence. He had the privilege of sculpting many important figures of his day, including the Pope Benedict XI and Tsar Alexander II. Raffaello was invited to exhibit in all the major international exhibitions of his day. In 1888 he exhibited Jacob & Rachel in Paris. The following year he won the Grand Prix at the St Louis Exhibition with Christ and the blind man. Raffaello was nominated by the Florence Academy of Fine arts as an honorary academic.

ROMANO

Romano Romanelli (1882-1962) inherited his father's skills but, due to circumstances in Europe at the time, he served for many years intermittently in the Italian navy. Romano's extensive travels greatly enriched his work. In 1907, he created his first important work, Hercules struggling with the lion, which was presented at the Biennale in Venice in 1910, then also at the Quadriennale in Rome in 1911. This piece now stands in the centre of the Piazza Ognissanti in Florence.

Romano then moved to Paris where he studied in various studios, notably that of Auguste Rodin where he encountered and was influenced by fellow sculptors Antoine Bourdelle and Aristide Maillol. During this time, he made friends with the painter Maurice Dennis, who would later along with the sculptor Paul Landowski nominate him to become a member of L'Institut de France and L'Academie des Beaux Arts. The awakening of Brunilde based on Isadora Duncan was one of his key pieces to emerge from this time and was exhibited at the Salon d'Automne. Romano became an honorary academic by the Florence Academy of Fine arts.

TO THE PRESENT DAY

Romano passed on his passion to his son Raffaello Romanelli who became an art collector and dealer, keeping the family name and business going. In turn, he equipped his son Folco Romanelli with the essentials to pursue the age-old family tradition. To the present day, the Sculpture Atelier and the gallery Studio Galleria Romanelli still remain in the hands of the Romanelli Family, carrying on the same tradition in the same sculpture atelier founded by Lorenzo Bartolini. It is the oldest of its kind in Europe and the family's sculpting legacy now rests in the hands of the youngest generation; brothers: Raffaello and Vincenzo.





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