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The National College of Art and Design

Marino Marini

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Susanne Wolf

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Table of Contents

List	of Illustrations	Р	3
Introduction		Р	11
Chapt	er		
I	Marini's Influences and Philosopy	Р	18
	Horse and Rider		
	Pomonas		
	Dancers, Jugglers and Acrobats		
	Portraits		
II	Painting	Р	79
	Drawing and Graphic Work	Р	87
III	Conclusion	Р	96
Biogr	aphical Notes	Р	100
Bibli	ography	Р	104

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List of Illustrations

Human Headed Cinerary Urn

1.

c. 675 - 650 B.C. Terracotta, height 25 1/2" Etruscan
2. Sarcophagus from Cerveteri c. 520 B.C. Terracotta, length 6'7" Etruscan
3. Two Dancers (detail of a wall-painting) c. 480 - 470 B.C. Tomb of the Lioness, Tarquinia

Etruscan

Greek

- 4. The People Marino Marini
 31

 1929 Terracotta 26 x 42 7/8 x 17 1/2 in
 31
- 5. <u>Poseidon</u> c. 460 - 450 B.C. Bronze, height 6'10"

3

		Page
6.	Dionysus	33
	c. 438 - 432 B.C.	
	Marble, over lifesize	
	Greek	
7.	Equestrian Monument of Gattamelata Donatello	41
	1445 - 50	
	bronze c. ll' x l3'	
8.	Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius	41
	161 - 180 A.D.	
	bronze, over lifesize	
9.	Equestrian Monument of Colleoni Andrea del Verrocch	
	c. 1483 - 88	42
	bronze, height c. 13'	
		11 -7
.0.	<u>Rider</u> 1936 Marino Marini	43
	bronze, 160 x 204 cm	
		44
11.	Gentleman on Horseback 1937 Marino Marini	44
	bronze, h. 155 cm	
		he
12.	The Pilgrim 1939 Marino Marini	45
	bronze, height 68 in. x 16 x 48 in.	

13.	<u>Rider</u> 1947 M. Marini	46
	bronze, height 40 1/4 in.	
14.	Rider 1947, bronze, height 101 x 64 cm	47
15.	Rider 1947 bronze, height 160 cm	47
16.	Horse and Rider 1949 bronze, height 71"	48
17.	Horse and Rider 1952 - 53 bronze, height 82"	48
18.	Composition 1955 bronze, 130 x 18 cm	49
19.	Idea for the Rider 1955 bronze 56 x 24 x 33 cm	50
20.	Miracle 1954 bronze, height 135 cm	51
21.	Idea for the Rider 1956 polychrome wood	52
	28 1/4 x 36 1/2 x 89 1/5 cm	
22.	Composition of Elements 1964 - 65 bronze 3'3" x 9'3" x 4'5"	52
	The same of the second second	

23. <u>Young Girl</u> 1938 bronze, height 150 cm 56

5

Page

		Page
24.	Pomona	57
	1941 bronze, height 63 in.	
25.	<u>Pomona</u> 1945 bronze, 160 x 52 x 52 cm	58
26.	Pomona 1945 stone, height 173 cm	59
27.	Pomona 1972 stone, 175 x 94 x 75 cm	60
28.	Dancer 1964 polychrome plaster, height 36 1/2 in.	63
29.	Dancer 1959 polychrome plaster, height 63 1/2 in.	63
29.	Dancer 1999 polyenrome probler, nergne 00 1/2 1.	
30.	Juggler 1954 bronze, height 65"	63
		C li
31.	Dancer 1953 polychrome plaster	64
	61 x 12 1/2 x 13 1/2 in.	
32.	Dancer 1953 bronze, height 178 cm	65
33.	Jugglers 1953 polychrome bronze, height 52 cm	65
34.	Trajan c. 100 A.D., Roman	72
	Marble, lifesize	
	harbie, income	

		Page
35.	Portrait of Mme Etienne Grandjean	72
	1945 polychrome plaster, height 34 cm	
36.	Portrait of Germaine Richier	72
	1945 bronze, height 33 cm	
37.	Romantic Portrait 1945 plaster, height 38 cm	72
38.	Portrait of Guidilla Campigli	73
	1943 plaster, 12 5/8 in.	
39.	Portrait of Maria Pedrazzini	73
	1943 polychrome plaster 13 3/4 in.	
40.	Portrait of Igor Stravinsky	74
	1951 bronze, height 31 cm	
41.	Portrait of Marc Chagall	75
	1962 bronze, height 11 1/2 in.	
42.	Portrait of Henry Miller	76
	1961 plaster, height 25 cm	
43.	Portrait of Oskar Kokoschka	77
	1978 bronze, height 13 in.	

		Page
44.	Portrait of Lucy Lambert	78
	1954 bronze, height 15 3/4 in.	
45.	<u>Gisella</u> 1923 oil on canvas	83
46.	Red Horse 1962 oil on canvas 78 x 55 in.	84
47.	Representation in Green	84
	1958 oil on canvas 47 l/4 x 39 3/8 in.	
48.	Pomona Composition	85
	1961 oil on canvas 63 x 39 3/8 in.	
49.	Juggler 1958 oil on canvas 59 x 47 3/4 in.	85
50.	Black Miracle	86
	1969 paper remounted on canvas 50 3/8 x 33 3/4 in.	
51.	Miracle	89
	1956 Tempera on paper, 32 7/8 x 24 3/8 in.	
52.	Warrior	90
	1969 pen and ink drawing 3 1/2 x 6 1/4 in.	
53.	Horse and Juggler 1949 India Ink drawing	91

		Page
54.	Acrobat and Horse 1948 India ink drawing	92
55.	The Builders 1915 Etching, 4 x 5 in.	93
56.	<u>Summer</u> 1916 Etching, 9 1/2 x 6 3/4 in.	93
57.	<u>Rider</u> 1952 Etching, 14 x 11 7/8 in.	93
58.	<u>Rider</u> 1952 Etching, 14 x 11 in.	93
59.	<u>Seated Figure</u> 1942 lithograph, 15 3/8 x 9 7/8 in.	94
60.	Waiting 1965 lithograph, 29 x 18 cm	94
61.	Miracle 1965 lithograph, 30 1/4 x 21 3/4 cm.	94
62.	Acrobat 1969 lithograph Colours: grey ground, black line,	95
	red triangle, brown spot	

- 63. <u>In Secret</u> 1969 lithograph 95 Colours: black and blue grey ground, pale blue line, blue spots
- 64. <u>The Pomona of Marino Marini</u> Poster of Galleria degli Uffizi Florence, 28th April 1974

103

Page

Introduction

Marino Marini has been exposed to almost all movements in 20th century art. Yet, he is one of the few artists who has occupied an individualistic position and who has developped a very personal style.

Naturally he approached various subjects and ideas that his contemporaries were dealing with, but did not find them relevant for his own ideas and his personal way of relating to his surroundings.

This stability in style can be recognized more in relation to his sculptures than his paintings, as the latter seem to show a more experimental approach, where various elements of impressionism and expressionism can be traced.

Marini is mainly known as a sculptor, but his paintings should not be ignored as they are of equal importance. He always develops his ideas in painting first and then translates them into a three dimensional work. Therefore sculpture and painting are interrelated for him. Both art forms run parallel and cross each other in various ways. As Michaelangelo mentioned: "Painting and sculputre are one and the same thing; and for them to be so considered, every painter should sculpt as much as he paints and likewise, every sculptor should paint as much as he sculpts...".

This applies to Marini in a certain aspect, if we look at the enormous amount of sculptures and paintings that have been created throughout his life.

Marini is mostly mentioned in connection with sculpture, and this is mainly due to the fact that his century has been so rich with brilliant painters, but so poor with good sculptors.

During his period at the "Florence Accademia di Belle Arti", Marini concentrated basically on painting, drawing and graphic work, with little or no interest in sculpture. It was only later when he left the Accademia that he started to develop an interest in the three-dimensional art form. This was due to various influences from outside and connections with other artists. This does not imply that this increasing interest subordinated his painting, the opposite is true. Both art forms remained of equal importance until the end, but Marini started to develop a major interest which asked for more attention to sculpture.

The major source in his work became ancient Etruscan civilization. His particular interest in this culture was the connection with the Italian past. The Etruscan civilization had been concentrated in the area in which Marini grew up; Tuscany.

The statues discovered in their ancient graves, that have survived for centuries, and are marked by time, made an immense impression on Marini.

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This particular time aspect became an essential concept throughout his entire work, which brings us to the symbolic connection; Marini aimed to express the timelessness, the true existence of man, and the root of creation in his work.

He expressed these elements through only four major subjects: "The Horse and Rider", "Pomonas", "Dancers and Jugglers" and Portraits. These subjects appear in both his painting and his sculptures. Interesting is the numerous amount of work that has been created in relation to these particular series. Being devoted to such a limited amount of subjects would suggest the danger of a certain repetitiveness, but there is no such indication. Every single work is individual and more of a development than a copy or a total change, of the preceding work.

In these four subjects Marini stressed his re-use of the ancient cultural aspects. And we can discover these, as a red line running through his work.

In his Horse and Rider series he emphasized the ancient relationship of man with the animals, he also concentrated on the animal instincts in man and the basic roots of existence.

During the thirty years of concentrating on the subject, the relationship between man and horse changed from a basic relaxed riding into a dynamic struggling. Marini's Pomonas are, on the

contrary, very passive and relaxed. They express the beginning of creation and the direct bound with the earth.

His Dancers and Jugglers arose from a special interest in the ancient festivals, the true enjoyment that has been part of any culture. Movement and tension are very important in these series.

Portraiture has been Marini's major interest, as it requires a high level of skill and a certain understanding of psychology to achieve the true character and expression of the model.

In all these subjects Marini adopted various other sources of interest, like the ancient Greek and Roman statues which he referred back to in his nudes. Also the Monuments of the Renaissance had a certain importance for his horses and Riders, however the main source remained the Etruscans who were the epitome of his concerns.

The first time I came in contact with Marini's work was in 1984, during an exhibition in Mannheim, Germany.² This show included sculptures of Horses and Riders, Pomonas, Dancers and Portraits, varying in size and material. Also there were drawings and paintings relating to the same subject.

My first interest was in the combination of the three art forms: how they related to each other, and how they stood in connection with the particular subjects. For me, this was an encouragement

and an important point of inspiration, as at this time I had to deal with this as a major problem in my own work.

How to accomplish a coherence and a connection between sculpture, painting and print was especially difficult to achieve. So at this particular time, Marini's exhibition was of great importance to me, and clarified various aspects in relation to combining different art forms. This was not only due to the presence of sculptures and paintings in one room, but also to the way colour was used in the actual figures. Rather than in a realistic way, Marini used colour to accentuate and to indicate certain directions of movement.

This movement is very much related to space. Marini does not express the movement as such, but rather a tension that indicates the initiation of a movement. This is very effective as it gives the impression that the figure is about to fall down or start to walk. The sculpture is slightly leaning forward, which is emphasized by the direction of the modelled texture and the application of colour. Colour is applied in brush strokes that indicate the actual forward direction.

Marini's use of colour and texture was a new aspect to me. Very different also was the fact that he engraved and tackled his bronze - and plastercasts, with line, or gave them a chipped and crumbled effect. This gave his sculptures an ancient character, and suggested that time had left its marks on the figure.

As my major interest in Art History is in the beginning of the Egyptian and Greek civilizations, I saw an opportunity to compare and discuss Marini's work in relation to this ancient background.

His work created a certain curiosity in me: about his influences, starting points and symbolism, and this is where I want to put the main emphasis in this thesis.

As my major interest is in his three-dimensional work, I mainly want to concentrate on that item. But then again, everything mentioned in connection with his thoughts and theories, applies also to his paintings and drawings. They were the starting points for his sculptures and therefore dealt with the same subjects and sources of inspiration.

I also should mention that Marini has to be seen as an artist who explored and discovered various aspects to do with the ancient Etruscans, Greeks and Romans and found his major interest in relation to their art and philosophy. However this does not suggest that his work should be classified as a replica or a copy. Marini achieved a definite modern interpretation based on these ancient subjects. He translated these visual interests into a new era of sculpture which still shows connections with a time centuries ago which should not be forgotten. This time was the beginning of our existence and Marini wants to concentrate on it and to remind us of this.

Footnotes

l Franco Russoli - P. 25 <u>Marino Marini</u> <u>Paintings and Drawings</u>

2 Marino Marini - An exhibition of paintings, drawings and sculptures 14. June ´84 - 19 August ´84 Mannheim, Moltkestr. 9, Germany I Marini's Influences and Philosophy

Like most Italian artists, Marini has been concentrating on the historical and cultural background of his country. Citing Kosuth: "...the best contemporary Italian art has always indexed 1 itself to its own history and culture."

Marini's sculptures deal exclusively with the figure in various situations. This is the only form in which he can express his feelings and emotions. His concepts can only be expressed through the figure: the true and pure existence of life, the emphasis of the beginning of humanity, and the importance of the basic instincts in man.

This does not imply that all this comes through in each individual sculpture, but in general it pervades his work.

Marini's figures are always nudes. This emphasizes their fundamental purity and the basic nature of existence. In the early stage, Marini's work was quite realistic and static. Though then he was already involved in symbolism, he used it to reflect his surroundings and reality. Later this grew into a more critical viewpoint of the real. He wanted to express the problems of man in western civilization, the war inside man dealing with his instincts and surroundings. His work tried to express the total truth that is hidden in man, his instincts and his basic roots of existence.

This is an element which brings us to one of the major sources of his inspiration: the Etruscans.

To clarify the thought of "basic existence", some essential points in relation to the Etruscans should therefore be mentioned.

Marini grew up in Tuscany, the country of the "Tusci" or "Etrusci", where the Etruscans settled during the 8th century. Many archaeological traces of their existence have been made in this particular area. Marini witnessed many of them during his youth, and became therefore very interested in their cultural background and art. His interest was mainly concentrated on the funerary chambers and the statues. These graves, depending on the status of the deceased, were built in the form of a room identical to the former housing the person used to live in. The walls of these chambers were painted and their imagery told the person's basic life story. Furthermore, the room contained an urn with the remains of the deceased, and various gifts and equipment for use in the after-life.²

In the early stage of Etruscan civilization, these urns were basically plain vases. Later they developed into incredible sculptures. The lid of the vase grew into the head of the departed and the vessel took up body shapes (pl. 1). Again depending on rank, some urns turned into sarcophagi with a throne on which the full life-size image of the deceased was sculpted (pl. 2).

These figures were modelled in a soft material and painted with bright colours. Bright colours were used in the wall drawings (pl. 3). The expression and movement in these images is amazing.

Today these tombs assumed a different character. Time has lived in them, erosion has taken place through centuries, and what is left is broken statues, partly painted and crumbled.

Looking at Marini's figures, we can discover a connection with these ancient statues that survived for centuries: they have arisen from their graves to take part in the world of today.

In particular, Marini expressed these aspects of erosion, broken and lost parts in his nudes, dancers and Pomonas. Looking at his portraits, we can see them as broken-off heads of statues, faces integrated in stone. He uses a texture, a facial expression, an anonymity that remind one of these discovered graves.

Dino Garrone once said of the smile of the Etruscans: "Look at them, their smile does not recall the crescent-shape smile of mummies, nor has it anything to do with the petrified grin of skulls. It is something alive. It is the initiate's, the magician's smile... something vibrant, something disturbing and terribly impertinent seems to live on the other side of the protecting glass and to defy the curiosity of peering tourists, the furious probing of specialists..." It may be said that Marini captured this smile, this facial expression that appears in these statues, almost exactly, in his figures.

In 1929 Marini created his first work in a direct relation to the Etruscans which he called "Popolo" (= The People) (pl. 4). A similar couple could be found on an ancient tomb. The man is holding the woman, in a particular pose. Shoulder-lines and arms are positioned in a very characteristic way as in these Etruscan sarcophagi. The rough expanded chest and the rough texture were elements that anticipated the style and mode of expression of his future works. In this work, the People, Marini wanted to express a returning to the Etruscan people, a harmony, the true meaning of existence and a simplicity and directness. These aspirations remained of major importance throughout his later work.

In these early years, Marini also became interested in the Greek Archaic and Roman statues. These sculptures also contained the elements of a basic existence: figures that expressed simplicity and anonymity, but at the same time had character in facial and bodily expressions.

Motivated by these ancient works, Marini created various male and female nudes. If we compare p.e. "Poseidon" (pl. 5) and Dionysus (pl. 6) to some of his sculptures of nudes, we can discover a certain uniformity in the postures of the bodies. The relationship to the ancient statues is even reinforced by the fact that occasionally heads and feet have been deliberately left out and the texture has been roughened. These sculptures of Marini's nudes also express a timelessness, an absolute form of existence, and are of a "severe" Greek character. As Franco Russoli comments on Marini's "Personae": "...They are drawn from a milieu that lies outside time, or else from the most distant spheres of culture and figurative imagination and transported into the life of today."

Marini's sculptures express a primitiveness which has been realised in a new idiom of modern sculpture.

Another artist who was particularly interested in ancient cultures and symbolism, was Arturo Martini. He was one of the first artists Marini developed a close contact with. He was a northern Italian and similarly interested in the Etruscan and Greek archaic statues. Martini was a very experimental artist and open to any type of artistic movement. His approach to sculpture was spontaneous. He also practised graphic arts and painting. At a later stage, Martini devoted himself completely to the latter and gave up sculpture. Martini was master of a lot of technical skills. In this respect he was important to Marini. Martini had various connections with other artists to whom he introduced Marini. One of these artists was Rodin, who Marini just met before the sculptor's death. It was a very strange meeting as neither artist spoke the other's language and therefore could not communicate. But anyhow, Rodin made an immense impression on Marini and remained his source of inspiration for quite a while; mainly because Rodin also

referred back to the statues of the antique in his work. The introduction of colour on the bronze cast was also a new aspect to Marini.

In 1929 Martini gave up his post as a teacher at the "Scuola d'Arte di Villa Reale" in Monza and Marini took over. He taught sculpture at the academy until 1940.

During Marini's teaching period, he created many works in relation to his major subjects. He had the opportunity to use the printing facilities of the academy and printed quite an amount of engravings, etchings and lithographs.

During World Ward II, he made an extreme effort to avoid any relation with the fascist movement in Italy. He refused to take part in any representational art form and particularly then he concentrated on anonymous busts, portraits and figures relating to the ancient cultures. Marini always escaped from modern mediocrity and commercialism.

After World War II Marini's concern about the world situation increased. His work started to include this worry and expressed an uprising tragedy and desperation.

He believed that we are living at the edge of destruction and that we approach the end of the world. This aspect is reflected to the utmost in the horse and rider series, and in particular in the "Miracles" and "Warriors". These works of art express a hopelessness, fear, man giving in to overwhelming forces.

With this change in subject we also can discover that there is a more abstract approach in his work. Shapes become more angular, and directonal lines become more emphatic to create a greater tension.

It is interesting to mention Marini's definition of abstraction at this point: "It is only in appearance that simplification leads away from nature. Dissolved, destroyed forms, overthrown bodies, horses are matter once again, the formless transformed. These collapsed masses ask for reorganization, these forms in decay long for revival as solid and whole masses." ⁵

Coming back to Marini's Miracles and Warriors, or his horses and riders in general, we can discover Marini's special way of dealing with space. It appears that he is very conscious of the relationship the actual sculpture has with its surroundings. The horse and rider has a definite fulcrum where the accents are put on. This is mostly where man and animal connect. This central point expands into different directions in space. Especially in his more abstract works this aspect is created with a lot of tension. From this central point everything goes out into Various angles and directions.

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At this point Boccioni has to be mentioned. A connection with Boccioni might seem strange at first as Marini does not obviously show a link with him and Futurism. In fact he rejected the Futurist idea of conveying the dynamism of the figure, and the emphasis that was put on the development of the machine culture. Marini believed in freedom and expression, as seen in ancient cultures. But in connection with the element of space, Marini had one aspect in common with Boccioni. In his "<u>Manifesto technico della scultura futurista</u>", Boccioni said: "A renewal can result only from the creation of a sculpture that spreads out from the centre of its surroundings, for only thus can sculpture develop and radiate out into space; so as to mould it."

This aspect very much applies to Marini's riders. To complete this idea, Marini's own words describe the importance of space as follows: "Each work has its own space, which should neither be conceived as a cage, nor regarded as extending to eternity." ⁷

As I will discuss Marini's individual series of works later in further detail, an explanation of his method of working is of more relevance for now.

Most of Marini's works are sculpted in plaster and bronze. In his earlier work he frequently used wood.

His treatment of the material was quite unique. Plaster was sculpted directly and at a later stage shaped with a chisel and an engraving tool, to achieve the desired result in form and

texture. The bronze cast was treated in exactly the same way. He did not accept the cast as a final stage in sculpture but rather as a starting point. The actual cast had a lifeless character which only became interesting by reshaping it.

Donatello had already used this technique of engraving a bronze cast in the 15th - 16th century. Wood was used by Marini in his earlier works, but as he had to deal with too many accidental results, he dropped the material at a later stage. Though there were some quite satisfactory pieces created in wood he found the splintering a major problem.

For his portraits Marini used mainly clay as he could work quickly and directly with it, and changes and corrections could be made easily. Later they were cast in bronze or made in plaster, which was again shaped in the same way as mentioned before.

His use of materials was very much connected with his message: A directness and spontaneity; ancient and earthbound materials.

After finishing the actual cast and the engraving to acieve the texture, the sculpture was painted. Paint was not used on all his works, but in the majority; especially on his series on dancers and jugglers and the warriors.

Colour has never been used in a realistic manner, but it performed the same function as light, it should be seen as

highlighting certain areas. An accentuation of movement and direction: a stressing of tensions in a piece. It also had the function of pulling a figure together. Especially on works created in wood; the brush-strokes go over cracks and joints to emphasize the element of a whole. Colour is applied on bronze as well as on plaster and has the same function there.

It was not always applied in brush-strokes. Frequently Marini used corrosive dyes and applied the paint in the form of shapes rather than line. His colours are always primary. Very often he used blue, red and black. Marini was the first sculptor who gained success by using colour on three-dimensional works.

Footnotes

1 Ted Castle

"<u>A Bouquet of Mistakes</u>" <u>Flash Art</u> p.p. 54 - 55 108 (Summer 1982)

- 2 This ritual was copied from the Greeks who in turn copied it from the Egyptians. The Etruscans were quite influenced by the Greek Archaic as both civilizations ran parallel in time
- 3 Herbert Read <u>The Complete Works of</u> Patrick Waldberg <u>Marino Marini</u> p. 56 Gi di san Lazzaro
- 4 Franco Russoli <u>Marino Marini</u>, Paintings and Drawings p. 52
- 5 Herbert Read <u>The Complete Works of</u> Patrick Waldberg <u>Marino Marini</u> p. 490 Gi di san Lazzaro
- 6 Eduard Trier <u>The Sculpture of</u> <u>Marino Marini</u> p. X
- 7 Herbert Read <u>The Complete Works of</u> Patrick Waldberg <u>Marino Marini</u> p. 489 Gi di san Lazzaro



1 <u>Human-Headed Cinerary Urn</u> c. 675 - 650 B.C. Terracotta, height 25 1/2"



2 <u>Sarcophagus from Cerveteri</u> c. 520 B.C. Terracotta, length 6'7"





3 Etruscan <u>Two Dancers</u> (detail of a wall painting) c. 480 - 470 B.C. Tomb of the Lionesses, Tarquinia

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4 1929 People Terracotta 26 x 42 7/8 x 17 1/2 in.



5 <u>Poseidon</u> c. 460 - 450 B.C. Bronze, height 6'10"



6 <u>Dionysus</u> c. 438 432 B.C. Marble, over lifesize

Horse and Rider

The exact source for the subject "Horse and Rider" can't be traced exactly. But this theme was a major source of interest, as can't be ignored if we look at the amount of sculptures, paintings and drawings that have been devoted to the subject. The horse and rider has been a major theme throughout history. We could go back as far as the stone age, but in Marini's case it would be more relevant to concentrate on some influences belonging to his direct environment: the Equestrian Monuments in Italy.

These monuments include: Donatello's "Equestrian Monument of Gattamelatta" (pl. 7), erected to commemorate his military achievements; Marcus Aurelius on horseback (pl. 8) or Verrocchio's "Equestrian Monument of Bartolommeo Colleoni in Venice" (pl. 9). These sculptures represent the heroic aspect of the rider and horse, they have a static and impressive character.

How important these sculptures were to Marini is arguable. In the first place, they were mainly of value for their realism; a study for pure form, the relationship between man and horse, and the manner of riding. Apparently the true motivation was an anti-reaction to the subject. He was never fascinated or impressed by these particular monuments as such. As they represented a moment in history, they were temporal, not timeless. Marini was predominantly interested in the converse aspect of timelessness.

On a journey to Bamberg, Germany, Marini saw, for the first time, the "Equestrian Group of the Bamberg Riders". This work of
art made an immense impression on him. It was nothing like the Italian Equestrian monuments, that were in comparison, static and without any emotion, according to Marini. This group of riders in Bamberg were full of energy, so dynamic and expressive. This work of art inspired him to start his first work on this theme, "Cavaliere" (pl.10) which he completed in 1936. During the time he worked on the actual piece, Marini rented a studio, above a riding school where he had the opportunity to observe the horses and riders closely. Like "Cavaliere", most of his work done during this period had quite a realistic and static character. The riders are relaxed, have a typical riding position and dominate the animal. We can recognize the close observation and intense study of the actual subject: how man and animal relate to each other, and how they behave individually. Also Marini studied the movement closely; the stretching muscles of the horse, the balanced position of the rider, are very well observed (pl. 11, 12)

This static and realistic approach changed quite a lot after World War II. This change might have been due to the effect the war had on Marini, combined with the images of peasants fleeing on their horses, which fascinated Marini. The speed, the anxiety and the striking movement of the horses' muscles combined with the changing positions of the riders. During the following years, this movement became a very essential element in his work. The relationship man and horse changed from the former balanced position into a struggling pose. The horse became more powerful, the rider more active. This created a certain tension between the two, an element which was to be stressed more and more in his

future works, and where the symbolic and mythical meaning of the actual subject became of greater importance.

Throughout history man and horse have had a special relationship. The taming of the horse was an important stage in the evolution of human civilization, which does not count any more today in Western society. Similarly the working and military function of the horse has been overtaken by machines. The only aspect that is left in connection with the past is the symbolic meaning, which is an essential element in Marini's sculptures.

If we look at other artists who have dealt with the symbolic aspect of the horse and rider, we should mention Chagall, Picasso and Redon. These artists were mainly interested in the fabulous character of the horse: a wonderful animal belonging to a dream, a vision where the rider was transported into a world of imagination. Or the opposite case is true with Degas, Delacroix, Gericault, who treated the subject more heroically and expressed the horse as a status symbol, the rider as more or less elitist.

Neither of the two versions appealed in particular to Marini's ideas on the subject. He was basically interested in the ancient relationship between man and animal, and this in relation to reality.

The horse is the symbol of virility, speed and controlled strength. It is also the symbol of the animal component in man, and the erotic instincts in man. By riding the horse, man is controlling his instincts. Marini was interested in human

instincts and the roots of existence, which brings us to the red line in his work: it expresses a going back to the very creation of man, going back to the very beginning of life. Marini's later work has to be seen with this idea in mind. As said before, the harmony between horse and rider changed after World Ward II (pl. 13 - 16). The rider is in a more exciting position, his legs and arms are This is gradually stretching out. His body becomes more tense. reinforced in the dynamic and spontaneous character of the modelling. A suggestion of stretching muscles in body and arms and legs is created by the texture in the material. This appears identically in the horse. The animal's legs are slightly placed diagonally, the neck is stretched horizontally. It gives an impression of "ready to move". The whole is intensified by the use of colour. Strokes of primary colour stress the direction and movement of the muscles, (colour is not used in each work, therefore this does not refer to small pieces). These elements create a certain tension, a struggling effect, a situation of stress, which is nevertheless still manageable, for both man and horse. In the late 1950's Marini's horses and riders took on a different or rather a more developped character. The relationship between the two took on a more tragic situation. This happened gradually rather than suddenly. It might have been the reason for the change in title: "the Miracles" and "the Warrior". Why this change in title occurred and why there is a distinction between the two series of work dealing with the same theme is not very clear, although there are a few points which might help to come to a certain understanding.

The starting point and symbolic background of Miracles and Warriors is similar. In both series the horse has turned into a raging animal which seemed uncontrollable by the rider. The man falls backwards and is almost thrown from the animal. His arms and legs are fully extended and he occupies a totally helpless position. The horse's neck is stretched vertically in comparison to the former horizontal position. There is a suggestion of the phallic element; man can't control his instincts any more.

The situation becomes more tragic and disillusioned with each sculpture that follows. The Warrior and Miracles gradually turn into extremely tense works of art.

The horse has reached its most powerful stage. Man has given up, there is a feeling of an uncontrollable situation. The horse and rider go completely against each other in direction. The horse is prancing in an upwards movement, the rider falls backwards and sometimes is thrown off the horse.

This is Marini's interpretation of the world situation today. He believes we are approaching the end. Man has been fighting for survival, like the rider has been trying to keep his balance on the horse, but now the horse has had enough, refuses and takes over power. The symbol for man being destroyed by war or a natural powerful force.

The tragic elements these works express belong to his age; the world around us. This should be presented in modern art today, according to Marini. It is a true reflection and much more

relevant than any heroic element of this particular subject. Coming back to the distinction in title between the Miracles and Warriors, the main difference does not lie in the subject itself, but more or less in the nature of inspiration. To explain this difference in source in detail would involve a very long discussioon as Marini has a very extensive view concerning this subject.

It would be more appropriate to mention some important points which relate to the subject. The title "Miracle" appeared for the first time just after World War II, the title "Warrior" came at a later stage in ca. 1960.

The "Miracle" implied an inner, personal experience that Marini had in relation to a growing anxiety with his surroundings. The "Miracle" has to be seen as an enthusiasm, an ascent felt by Marini during these bad times of war. The certain release a person needs, if he is surrounded by anguish and tragic events, to be able to survive. As the "Miracle" can be seen as a self-generating subject, the "Warrior" is a reflection of the outside. The growing despair, the tragedy, Marini's concern about the worsening of the world sitution; the consequences war had on human beings and the terrible aspect of man losing his basic instincts.

Looking closely at these two series, we can discover a certain difference between them.

First of all, looking at the "Miracle" series, we notice that the work is still treated in quite a figurative way, although

shapes are more angular and treated in a more abstract way, compared to the earlier work.

The aspect of enthusiasm is questionable. These pieces could be interpreted in two different ways. If we still consider them as tragic and disillusioned works, we could see the horse as the vicious, raging animal that symbolises the situation of war and tragedy. The rider who is the opposite pole, could be the symbol of enthusiasm, trying to keep hold on the horse, trying to survive by having a positive attitude. Though in a lot of "Miracle" sculptures the rider remains on the horse, in some works he is very unstable and does not quite keep his position. The other aspect could imply a circus situation; an acrobat on a horse. Also in this relationship of man and animal there is a tension and struggling. The acrobat is moving constantly on the horse into various positions. The horse takes different poses. By moving, both create a similar tension in movements as mentioned above.

Comparing the "Miracles" to the "Warriors", the latter are created in a more abstract way. They are treated in a much rougher texture that expresses destruction and attack. The material, either bronze, plaster or stone, looks beaten, hammered and carved in a very dynamic way. The piece is created in shapes with a lot of variation in directions that implies a chaotic, tense and dramatic atmosphere. These shapes have very sharp edges that seem to cut through space. In these "Warrior" series there is definitely a tragic element, mainly expressed through texture, variation in directions and sharp edges.



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8 <u>Equestrian</u> <u>Statue of</u> <u>Marcus</u> <u>Aurelius</u> 161 - 180 A.D. bronze, over lifesize



9 Andrea del Verrocchio Equestrian Monument <u>of Colleoni</u> c. 1483 - 88 bronze, height c. 13





10 <u>Rider</u> (bronze) 1936 160 x 204 cm



11 Gentleman on Horseback bronze 1937 h. 155 cm

National College of Art and Design



12 The Pilgrim 1939 bronze, h. 68 in. x 16 x 48 3/4 in.



13 <u>Rider</u> 1947 bronze, h. 40 1/4 in.



14 <u>Rider</u> bronze 101 x 64 cm 1947



15 <u>Rider</u> bronze 1947 h. 160 cm





16 <u>Horse and Rider</u> 1949 bronze, h. 71"



17 <u>Horse and Rider</u> 1952 - 53 bronze, h. 82"



18 Composition bronze 1955, 130 x 18 cm



19 Idea for the Rider 1955, bronze, 56 x 24 x 33 cm





21 <u>Idea for the Rider</u> 1956, polychrome wood 28 1/4 x 36 1/2 x 89 1/5 cm



22 Composition of Elements 1964 - 65 bronze 3´3" x 9´3" x 4´5"

Pomonas

Another fundamental concept in Marini's work is created through his use of the form of female nudes. Almost all this sculptures relating to this subject could be called Pomona.

Pomona was a local figure belonging to his area, in Tuscany. She was the Roman Goddess who protected the fruit trees. Therefore she was seen in relation to the seasons and the fertility rites.

Pomona symbolizes motherhood and the life-giving force. She stands for the beginning of life and the creation of man.

This again represents Marini's main concerns which predominated in his horse and rider series. The subjects are also connected, in that Pomona indicates the true form of existence, but this appears in a different way.

She could be seen as the antithesis in Marini's work. Rather than having a dynamic, tense and tragic character, Pomona expresses a relaxation. A calmness after the storm. Pomona contains the pure impression of passivity with her entire body. She is a solid figure clinging to the earth, and almost becomes part of it. she is expressed in weights and volumes resting on each other which even emphasize the idea of belonging to the ground. Her wide hips, firm breasts and powerful joints, indicate her utmost femininity, the representation of motherhood and giving birth, the typical woman that appeared again and again throughout history. Looking at the Greek and Roman statues we can recognize the same stature. Not only the voluminous aspect reminds of these ancient sculptures, but also Pomona's posture. A leg slightly tilted and placed forward, a bending of a knee, the position of arms and head, all are of a classical character. This relation to Greek and Roman forms can also be discovered in the texture. The material, either bronze, plaster or stone, is polished in certain areas to emphasize the softness of volume, in other parts mainly hands and face, this is disturbed by a chipped, "broken off" effect.

Marini puts the main emphasis on hands and feet. They are the most important parts, and as in the old statues, these are the first victims of damage. Very often he exaggerates this aspect by suggesting that arms and head are broken off altogether. Then the figure consists of only a body supported by the legs (pl. 24).

If we compare the texture used in Pomonas to his horses and riders, we can see that the engraving that appears in the horse is not used on Pomonas. These lines are roughly treated and accentuate direction. Whereas in Pomonas the engraving is more related to the effect erosion has on stone (pl. 26).

Also colour is used in the Pomonas. These are primary colours, sometimes they are applied in brush-strokes curved with the direction of the body.

Referring back to Greek Archaic statues one point of similarity with Pomona is the anonymity of facial expression.

Marini was very interested in this aspect as he found this anonymity an essential part of the attraction of these ancient sculptures and he used it in his nudes.

This creates a feeling of a woman left in her entire freedom; she lives in a mysterious life of her own without being interfered with.

Marini saw the female nude as a pure representation of femininity. He does not intend to idealize the female or create an object of desire.

It is more a woman who is bound to earth and symbolizes the beginning of creation.

The development and evolution of types that took place in his horse and rider series is not to be found as such in these female nudes.

These sculptures remained faithful to the same starting points. No development took place to express the tragic world situation; she kept the same consistent role throughout his work. Her development only took place in that a more abstract approach evolved, as we can discover in the later Pomonas. She became more stylized and only the essential volumes were created (pl. 27). These became even more affected and exaggerated in terms of weight.



23 Young Girl bronze 1938, h. 150 cm



24 <u>Pomona</u> 1941 bronze h. 63 in.







27 <u>Pomona</u> 1972 stone, 175 x 94 x 75 cm

Dancers, Jugglers and Acrobats

The term antipole has been mentioned before, to compare horses and riders with Marini's Pomonas and the same applies to the dancers and jugglers in relation to these series of Pomonas.

In this case the earthiness and weight turns into weightlessness; passivity becomes vivacity; volume is expressed in the form of line.

The bodies of the dancers and acrobats express a tension, an expressiveness, a movement ready to happen, which is not present in the Pomonas but is more typical of the horse and rider sculptures.

Here the joyful aspect of life is represented, whereas the riders express the tragic.

In these figures it is not so much the movement itself that Marini tries to capture, it is more a tension, a state of a starting action.

At this point it is of some value to mention the contradiction between the Futurists, as they exactly wanted to achieve movement rather than the tension that Marini aimed for; the tension that is created through movement.

Marini created an enormous amount of sculptures with this theme. Mostly they were sculpted at the same time as his horses and riders. Again a relaxation, a reminder of joy instead of tragedy is present.

The source for the subject is to be found in the ancient celebrations and festivals which always had a great tradition in Italy and still have today. It belongs to human instincts to express himself in the form of dance, it is a projection of the true self being put outward. Movements are expressed naturally and with a certain freedom that is transformed into a rhythm. In the case of the jugglers this movement is controlled and organized. Their bodies express an incredible attention, a concentration and balance. The contrast in male and female figure is interesting. The male jugglers and dancers are thin and much more weightless. They seem to express a freer movement and are less controlled than the females. They are more graceful and much more aware of their movement which seems more frozen and thoughtful. The female figure is more bound to the ground than the male. Compared to the Pomonas, she takes a much more active role which is also emphasized by the colour. Colour is used in a more expressive way on these sculptures, and more frequently, compared to the other series (pl. 28 + 29).



28 <u>Dancer</u> Polychrome plaster 1964 h. 36 l/2 in.





29 <u>Dancer</u> Polychrome plaster 1959 h. 63 1/2 in.

30 <u>Juggler</u> 1954 bronze, height 65"



31 <u>Dancer</u> 1953 Polychrome plaster 61 x 12 1/2 x 13 1/2 in.



Portraits

For Marini portraiture was the most important art form of all and took most of his interest. Only in portraiture did he feel he could express himself fully. It challenged skill and inner emotions to the utmost. It is useful to refer to his own words in this matter as they express this so clearly and intensely: "Looking at a form, a profile, the first thing is its aspect: round elongated. Those are essential elements to be ascertained instantly and to fix in one's brain. Then I enter into the spirit of the person and the difficult thing there is to imagine this physiognomy within the context of mankind, to imagine what it stands for in the eyes of other men, other human personalities. This once done, everything is done. This truth must live in me the whole while the work is in progress until the portrait is finisehd. The result must satisfy me as it concerns vitality of the expressions and the execution of the individual's true and characteristic lines. The task accomplished, the subject once assigned a place in the kingdom of the dead who remain alive, I hand my work over..."

Comparing Marini's approach with that of other artists, we immediately think of Despian who had the same thought about portraiture. His aim also was, not to represent a face, but to discover the soul of a facial expression. His thoughts are different in relation to Giacometti who tried to achieve this same objective and who succeeded, but in another way. Giacometti concentrated on a certain point of interest that he penetrated to the utmost. He was very much a person who used detail rather than trying to achieve an overall impression. Giacometti also dealt with

very few different models. He mostly concentrated on the same models to discover their expressions in detail. By comparison, Marini was more interested in the overall impression of the person and worked with numerous models.

Marini touches the heart of the model. For him it is not sufficient to achieve a likeness, but the head was to be spiritualized. The true soul, the uniquenss and personality have to be read from the finished portrait.

It is his aim to "breathe life into dead matter" and give the sculpture a sense of everlasting and immediate presence.

Exactly here we approach his main sources of interest again; the Etruscan, Roman and Greek statues and portraits, who also "assigned a place in the kingdom of the dead".

These ancient sculptures tracked his attention mainly during World War II. He wanted to avoid anything representational and avoided the fascist movement. He refused to be part of it and create any work of art in relation to fascism.

Especially at this time he decided to refer to the ancient busts and base his portraiture on them to create "unknown" people. These ancient statues gave exactly this anonymous impression that he desired, but at the same time they had character and soul. Also they expressed the timelessness which was an important subject to him.

These busts expressed a history. They were probably Etruscan kings, Greek and Romans of some importance. They lived a life and still survive for us today. They came from a lost far-away civilization and expressed a certain mystery. It was not strange that this mysterious aspect was quite an attraction during the war.

Looking at his portraits from this particular time, they have a strong suggestion in their textural approach: they remind of archaeological discoveries (pl. 36 + 37). Pieces are chipped off, some indicate the disintegration in stone: as though they have eroded with time. He picked up this method again at a later stage.

After the war Marini chose his models when he had the opportunity and didn't have to deal with commissions. The people he mostly wanted to portray were artists, as he found that they had a very special sensibility and a deep imagination which he did not discover as much in other people's facial expression.

This explains why most of his portraits are of artists: Stravinsky (pl. 40), Chagall (pl. 41), Henry Miller (pl. 42), Kokoschka (pl. 43)...

Marini had the most difficulties in portraying women. According to him they tend to hide their true characteristics and personality. They pretend more and therefore it took him so much longer to find their real source of character and soul. This took a lot of effort and time to achieve the true expression of the face.

If we compare Marini's portraits to the faces of his nudes, riders and dancers, we discover a contradiction. All his figures seem to have a mask-like, anonymous facial expression compared to the actual portraits.

This is a deliberate choice. Marini does not want their character shown only in the face, but in the whole body. Their faces should indicate a simplicity of being. They have to be anonymous to imply their basic, simple existence. As in a portrait, the basic existence of a person lies in the inner. It is a re-discovery of the person's root deep buried inside him that has to be expressed. That is the simplicity and basic existence the artist has to deal with in portraiture.

The other point of comparison between portrait and figure has to be found in the term: creating of tension.

In the figures the presence of tension is in the whole expression and posture of the body. Arms, legs and head relate to each other in a manner of line that indicates the beginning of a movement.

This is present in all the figures, also in his Pomonas where we can't talk so much about line, but more about volume and mass. But also these create a tension in relation to each other. And then there is the tension of this heavy nude standing on earth.

These are aspects which we can also discover in Marini's portraits. The lines in the face deal exactly in the same way with

each other. Muscles are stretched, volumes of cheeks rest on other areas. These sculpted lines are even more intensified by engraved lines.

And then, when colour is applied the portrait is highlighted, emphasized and accentuated in certain areas of importance (pl. 44). Also, the colour unifies the portrait.
Footnotes

1. H. Read

The Complete Works

of Marino Marini P. 66

Gi di san Lazzaro

P. Waldberg



34 Roman <u>Trajan</u> c. 100 A.D. Marble lifesize



35 <u>Portrait of</u> <u>Mme Etienne</u> <u>Grandjean</u> 1945 polychrome plaster, h. 34 cm



36 <u>Portrait of</u> <u>Germaine Richier</u> 1945 bronze, h. 33 cm



37 Romantic portrait 1945 plaster h. 38 cm



38 <u>Portrait of Guidilla Campigli</u> 1943 plaster 12 5/8 in.



39 <u>Portrait of</u> <u>Maria</u> <u>Pedrazzini</u> 1943 Polychrome plaster 13 3/4 in.



40 <u>Portrait of Igor Stravinsky</u> 1951 bronze, h. 31 cm



41 <u>Portrait of Marc Chagall</u> 1962 bronze, h. 11 1/2 in.



42 <u>Portrait of Henry Miller</u> 1961 plaster, h. 25 cm



43 Portrait of Oskar Kokoschka 1978 bronze, h. 13 in.



44 Portrait of Lucy Lambert 1954 bronze, h. 15 3/4 in.

II Painting

Horse and Riders, Pomonas, Jugglers and portraits, all these topics also predominate in Marini's painting. More so than in his sculptures, we can discover how unrepresentational his conception of these themes is. In painting Marini reaches the borders of abstraction more frequently, compared to in his sculptures.

As said before, Marini starts his ideas for sculpture in painting. According to Marini: "My first vision is colour, by starting from coulour I reach form: sculpture is the outcome of my inner emotion." ¹ This does not suggest that he copies the sculpture from a painting but the two-dimensional work should rather be seen as a starting point or a reference. Besides that it is a study; a stage where he overcomes problems that might occur in the three-dimensional piece. These are mainly composition problems: thoughts about movements of lines and their relation in space; how the utmost tension is created, etc. Marini's paintings show a strong expressiveness, a dynamic approach, similar in his sculptures. But in his paintings there is a stronger level of experimentation: experimentation in the sense of trying out various aspects and influences. The process is mainly by studying other artists' work thoroughly, using various techniques and images, but always with an eye to his own reality.

As Marini was in close contact with Picasso, Giacometti and Chagall p.e.and as he was exposed to most of the movements in the 20th century, it is not strange that they were of quite some significance.

Coming to the actual paintings themselves we can discover a strong sense of colour which is mostly combined with the use of sketchy lines.

Marini's colour, identically to its use in his three-dimensional work, is without regard for realism. Colour is not essentially used in a naturalistic or spontaneous way but rather as an experimental way of handling various tones in relation to each other. Colour does not derive from nature but from his inner emotions and feelings. He spreads these tones in wide, smooth and saturated surfaces. Very often he works in oil paint on paper, which is later mounted on board or canvas.

In his more figurative work we can see, similar to his sculptures, the aspect of highlighting and accentuation which is expressed in shape rather than line. Looking at more abstract works, colour is handled in shapes and planes that relate to each other in terms of space. Marini's colours are bright, mainly primary. Another important aspect in his painting is the use of line. Line is not descriptive, but it is an expression of a vitality, an indication of the direction of movements. Lines are used in a sketchy manner and vary very much in rhythm.

They very often function as a framework of a figure, a skeleton, and are expressed in a very angular way, especially when we look at paintings of male dancers (pl. 46). In his paintings of Pomonas we also can discover this framework (pl. 48) but line is used there in a way to express volume. They are much more curved. Both, line and colour indicate a suggestion of space.

Colour is used in light and dark planes, these relate to each other in a very spatial way. There is a definite fore- and background. This also appears in the use of line. The figure, expressed in a sketchy framework relates to a background in a sense that there is an indication of a third dimension.

As said before, his sculptures are interrelated with his paintings, and are more or less inseparable from each other. Therefore Marini perceives with a sculptural vision and projects that on a two-dimensional surface. Boccioni, Giacometti p.e. could also be mentioned in this aspect as we also can discover in their paintings a sculptural approach, and likewise sculptures created by Braque and Matisse p.e. indicate a two-dimensional conception.

It has always been a problem, how to categorize paintings by sculptors, as individual works of art.

Definitely they can't just be seen as studies for a three-dimensional piece as they are too well finished and thought out carefully. They have to be looked upon as finished paintings conceived in a three-dimensional way. And also as an attempt, or rather as an aim to cross the traditional border of sculpture and painting.

Footnotes

l H. Read

The Complete Works of

P. Waldberg <u>Marino Marini</u> p. 492

Gi di san Lazzaro



45 <u>Gisella</u> 1923 oil on canvas



- 46 <u>Red Horse</u> 1962 oil on canvas 78 x 55 in.
- 47 <u>Representation in</u> <u>Green</u> 1958 oil on canvas, 47 1/4 x 39 3/8 in.





48 <u>Pomona Composition</u> 1961 oil on canvas, 63 x 39 3/8 in.



49 <u>Juggler</u> 1958 oil on canvas 59 x 47 3/4 in.



50 <u>Black Miracle</u> 1969 Paper remounted on canvas 50 3/8 x 33 3/4 in.

V Drawing and Graphic Work

Besides painting and sculpture, Marini has always worked with a similar intensity on drawings and prints, though occasionally he has stopped printing for several years to devote himself entirely to sculpture and painting.

There is a strong sense of emotion, movement and tragedy in his drawings. And this is expressed only by the essential, by the extreme economy of form. Marini expresses that in abstract linear drawings. The line, as in painting, is not descriptive but more representational. He achieves a vitality with as little means as possible. Again his drawings are sketches for his sculptures and mainly they function to explore the movement and expression of the three-dimensional work. Marini's drawings are not typical sculptor's drawings. Usually sculptors indicate the three-dimensional effect by shading their drawings. Marini used to do this in his early work, but at a later stage his drawings were "reduced" to only line.

His early engravings were very realistic and dealt very much with symbolism. They were sure of composition and line. These engravings were not used for sculptures but stood on their own, or were made for book illustrations (pl. 55 + 56). At a later stage these prints became more experimental and were also a source for his sculptures and paintings.

Frequently, in the 1950's, he used colour, again in an unrealistic manner.

He saw these engravings as pure experiments, and did not put much importance on them as finished works. They were exclusively private works, and were never for sale.

During World War II Marini was living in Switzerland and came in contact with various printers like Salvioni. In that time he created many engravings and became interested in lithographs. Then, he printed stones of Pomonas, horses and riders. These prints were quite realistic, a discovery and study of the subject. Already at that time they were rich in movement and line.

This changed in the 1950's into a more vital approach. Also these lithographs became more abstract and linear and he started to introduce colour. Colour was used in applying abstract shapes combined with line. The use of colour was occasional, mostly with a grey or white background. Identically to sculpture and painting, Marini stressed the same subjects, explored and developped them to the utmost.

When he started his Miracle and Warrior series in the 1960's he made numerous prints on this theme. These prints grew into more abstract compositions of black and white (pl. 60 + 61), sometimes combined with little colour. They also became more dynamic and of a tragic character.



51 <u>Miracle</u> 1956 Tempera on paper 32 7/8 x 24 3/8 in.



52 <u>Warrior</u> 1969 pen and ink drawing 3 1/2 x 6 1/4 in.











56 <u>Summer</u> 1916 Etching 9 1/2 x 6 3/4 in.



57 <u>Rider</u> 1952 Etching 14 x 11 7/8 in.



58 Rider 1952 Etching 14×11 in.



59 <u>Seated Figure</u> 1942 lithograph 15 3/8 x 9 7/8 in.



60 <u>Waiting</u> 1965 lithograph 29 x 18 cm



61 <u>Miracle</u> 1965 lithograph 30 1/4 x 21 3/4 cm



62 <u>Acrobat</u> 1969 lithograph colours: grey ground, black line, red line, red triangle, brown spot

> 63 <u>In Secret</u> 1969 Lithograph Colours: black and blue-grey ground, pale blue line, blue spots



III Conclusion

Looking back on Marini's work overall, the first striking aspect might be his strong concentration on a very few subjects, which occupied his interest throughout his entire life.

Why Marini chose his subjects is not completely clear and can't be exactly understood. It is important that these subjects, Riders, Pomonas, Dancers and Portraits, are the expression of his psychological ideas and his message. They are the result of a mythological reconstruction of the past, and refer back to the early existence of man. The riders stand for the basic instincts in man, the Pomona series for pure femininity and the beginning of life, and the dancers for the ancient element of joy and pleasure that is part of nature in man.

Marini's basic theme was the roots of existence, the perception of a total truth of man's simple and solemn presence of being; the rediscovery of humanity. All these values refer to the human being, therefore Marini could only express his message through the figure. The figure was his central image and the "Fool" for his ideas. The reason for Marini's interest in ancient culture and its philosophy has been mentioned before: the simple fact that he grew up in a country with a strong awareness of its past. This is one important aspect, but if we look at 20th century art, we realize that many other artists from different backgrounds similarly dealt with ancient art and basic existence.

Rodin concentrated on classical sculptures, and expressed the

true existence of man by creating figures integrated with the earth. Every man comes from earth and will return to it.

Picasso dealt with primitive cultures like African. Brancusi was mainly interested in old stone textures, stone carvings and their history. He aimed for stylization and reduction of form to the very essential. Henry Moore was another artist whose work dealt with stone. His source was p.e. Stonehenge and how the stone is integrated with nature, an aspect he wanted to achieve in his work.

Various other artists could be mentioned in this connection, but what was the motif and cause of this arising interest in the antique, throughout the 20th century? One of the important factors was definitely the effect of World War I and World War II: the awareness of destruction, the anti-reaction towards violence and the machine age. In World War II there was the rejection of fascist - and propaganda art. As a result artists dealt with the destruction of mankind, expressing a disillusionment and a fear for the future. There was a reaction towards an increasing materialism and commercialism. All these points have been dealt with in 20th century art.

Therefore it was not strange that interest in the beginning of mankind has grown in this century.

Of course this war was not the only reason for these concerns. The fact that religious and philosophical matters have been constantly questioned this century cannot be ignored either,

especially in Italy where the influence of the Catholic church decreased rapidly. Science came with more convincing explanations of the beginning of the world, and therefore people got a different view on their existence and past. Various thoughts on the beginning of mankind were put forward as new theories.

Besides the religious point there was also a noticeable strong element of disillusionment towards the future. A certain nostalgia and "back to nature" became definite trends that have particularly arisen during the last 30 years.

This does not suggest that we deal with a certain escapism and idealisation in modern art. It should rather be seen as a social criticism in the form of making the viewer aware of the situation in western civilization today and as emphasizing the basic existence that preceded; the cultures that mankind has evolved from; the essential aspects of our roots which seem to be more and more neglected.

Today there is the feeling that there is the destruction of culture. Art reflects that in fearing the end of the world, the last epoch.

Marini sees these aspects as the major concerns for him personally, and of mankind around him. He feels a need to express this situation in his work.

Therefore Marini confronts his audience with these tragedies, but also with instincts, cultural background and the creation of

mankind. He deals with reality, with the most essential elements in life, from its beginning to its end.

Biographical Notes

1901 Marino Marini was born in Pistoia, Italy on 27th February.

- He became a painting student at the "Accademia di Belli Arti" in Florence, where he studied painting and print under Domenico Trentacoste. Meeting with Rodin
- 1927 Created his first sculptures and started his travels in Europe.

He took over Arturo Martini´s post of teaching sculpture at the "Scuola d´Arte di Villa Reale" in Monza where he taught until 1940. Created "Popolo" Continued his travels to Paris, Milano

1932 Various journeys in Europe: mainly Holland, England, Germany and again Paris where he met Laurens, Gonzalez, Kandinsky, De Chirico, Campigli, Magnelli, Braque, Picasso and Tanguy.

1935 His first breakthrough as a sculptor by receiving the prize at the Quadriennial of Rome.

1938 He married Mercedes Pedrazinni (Marina)

1940 Left the college in Monza and became head of sculpture at the "Accademia di Brera" in Milano

Frequent travels to France and Germany

World Ward II: moved to Switzerland (Canton Ticino) visited Zurich and Basel where he met Giacometti, Wotruba and Arp.

- 1946 Returned to Italy and settled permanently in Milano with a summer residence in the Germinia at Forte dei Marmi.
- 1950 Came in contact with Curt Valentin who arranged a Marino Marini exhibition in the Valentin's New York Buchholz Gallery. In new York Marini met Lipchitz, Beckmann and Calder. Change in his work towards a more dynamic and expressive approach.

Returned to Europe, met Henry Moore in London.

- 1950 52 A new exhibition arranged by Curt Valentin toured Europe. Received the Feltrinelli Prize from the Accademia dei Lincei of Rome.
- 1952 Received the Grand Prize at the Venice Biennale.
- 1959 Largest sculpture in bronze "The Horseman" was erected in the Hague.

- 1960 66 Work was shown in innumerable musei, mainly in Germany, Holland and Scandinavia. His most outstanding in that time were:
- 1962 Kunsthaus in Zurich
- 1966 Palazzo Venezia in Rome
- 1973 Donation of a sculpture to the city of Milano.
- 1974 A bronze of his Pomona series received a permanent place in the "Galleria degli Uffizi" in Florence (pl. 64)
- 1978 Exhibited in Tokyo
- 1980 He died 6th August



64 <u>The Pomona of Marino Marini</u> Poster of Galleria degli Uffizi Florence 28. April 1974

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