



## LONDON

### Giorgio Andreotta Calò Sprovieri

Eschewing John Ruskin's famous 19th-century treatise *The Stones of Venice*, contemporary Italian artist Giorgio Andreotta Calò turns instead to the *wood* of Venice. With an interest in the literal foundations of the place, Calò has taken the massive wooden stakes that support the "floating city" as his sculptural starting point. In previous exhibitions of the same series—"La scultura lingua morta" (literally "dead language of sculpture")—he presented these stakes as found objects—they apparently turn up on nearby beaches, rotted and dislodged. Yet here, he has also chosen to cast them in bronze like trees in a fossilized forest, meticulously re-creating the weathered

surfaces of the wood. There is an intriguing pun on materials in play, as well as an investigation into the very nature of sculpture. The works highlight the two principal ways in which sculpture is made—removal or addition of matter—while also interrogating the idea of the readymade. Calò places casts on top of one another—creating a kind of mirroring that one might find in the reflective waters of a Venetian canal. Such an arrangement also mimics stalagmites touching stalactites, suggesting another natural process that marks time. The resulting hourglass silhouettes heighten an almost obsessive insistence on the passing of time and the idea of memorialization.

As a fitting geological companion to the piles that so closely resemble

geological features, Calò presented a series of soil cores taken from boreholes in Venice, each meticulously labeled with the location and time of its collection. The fact that the ground beneath Venice is mainly clay presents another sculptural pun; here, it is dried and cracked into sculptures of sorts, reminiscent of Rachel Whiteread's ghostly plasters. Further playing with the idea of sculpture, Calò encased the cores in stainless steel sleeves, based on the polycarbonate sheaths used in the boring process. In *Untitled* (2015), he took a cast from an apparently real, yet improbably large, mussel shell and incorporated the armatures used in the casting process. The seashell, both a casing for and the creation of a living creature, presents yet another knowing metaphor for

Giorgio Andreotta Calò, installation view of "La scultura lingua morta III," 2015.

sculpture or, more broadly, for man's relation to his built environments and artistic creations. The inclusion of the pins from the lost-wax casting process in the finished work, as in *Clessidra AB (Hourglass)* (2013), further draws attention to the artifice. In a similar reminder of the simulacral status of these objects, some of their parts have been highly polished to reveal a golden surface, which cannot help but recall the interior of the Basilica of San Marco.

Calò has previously worked with performance, and it is interesting to note the insistence on the notion of the performative in these works—



Left: Giorgio Andreotta Calò, *Clessidra (Hourglass)*, 2007–15. Wood and caranto clay, 146.5 x 32 cm. diameter. Right: Giorgio Andreotta Calò, *Medusa*, 2015. Bronze, 86 x 38 cm. diameter. Below: Antoni Tàpies, installation view of “Tàpies: From Within,” 2015.

albeit recorded or frustrated. Trees show (through dendrochronology) their life, now frozen in their trunks, but another distancing process is at work here—the casting of that formerly living material in bronze. *Untitled* (2012), which fittingly bears the shadow of a neighboring tree, was created by exposing photographic paper to its surroundings, which recalls the daguerreotypes that Ruskin made to accompany *The Stones of Venice*. Here, too, we find suggestions of temporality, the elapsing of time, erosion, entropy, decay, and ultimately death—which are such powerful and poignant themes elsewhere in the work. Like an affectionate, if somewhat ghoulish memento of a lost friend, Calò’s work acts like a death mask of Venice.

—Jonathan R. Jones

#### MIAMI

##### Antoni Tàpies

##### Perez Art Museum Miami

“Tàpies: From Within,” the first major survey of Antoni Tàpies’s work since his death in 2012, featured 50 paintings, drawings, and three-dimensional pieces chosen from the artist’s own collection and from the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona. The exhibition began with oil paintings from 1945, from the start of Tàpies’s career. Collage elements in *Fils sobre cartó* (*Threads on Cardboard*) and *Collage del papel de plata* (*Collage of Silver Paper*), both from 1946, demonstrate his interest in building out or on flat canvas—a technique that would develop over time into a hallmark, particularly with the addition of dirt and stones. At times, the moody, dramatic canvases lining the walls had the

effect of focusing attention on the select pieces of sculpture. *Nus marró* (1964), a brown knot, resembled a knotted, greasy rag that one might find discarded on the floor of an auto shop. Suspended in the air from a transparent line, it cast a mesmerizing shadow and felt quite

austere among the richly colored paintings.

The exhibition underlined an intriguing dichotomy between the lushness of certain canvases and the relative sobriety, even asceticism, of the sculptures and assemblages. For example, *Verd-blau palla* (*Green-Blue Straw*, 1968), which combines paint on wood and straw, was quite striking with its blue and green strokes and exuberant scattering of gold-colored straw. By contrast, one couldn’t help but notice how *Cadira i roba* (*Chair and Clothes*), a battered wooden chair draped with worn blankets, towels, and other fabric items, appeared as though someone had thoughtlessly abandoned a pile of soiled laundry.

Tàpies’s fascination with Asian art, Buddhism, Hinduism, and the icon of the cross became evident as the show proceeded. The assemblage *Embolcall* (*Wrapping*, 1994) featured a prominent reed mat that had been wrapped and tied, as though, in the words of one viewer, “there was a body inside.” Two crosses and two closed eyelids further hinted at the mystical. *Atman* was constructed from what appeared to be a section of a wooden shipping crate, onto which a dramatic black altar-like form had been painted; above were the words “Atman,” “Brahman,” and “Purusha” painted in white. In the Upanishads, Atman represents the soul as distinct from the body, mind,

