

Special Guest Kunststart 08

Paola Ricci **Cloud** 05.22 / 05.25 2008

Paola Ricci, the artist presented by the Hofficina d'Arte Gallery in Rome, created "Nuvola" a sculpture of steel wires which can be admired suspended in front of the V.I.P lounge (interposed between glass goblets). A sculpture entwined with passion and the patience of Job.

A recent critic Valerio Dehò, curator of Kunst Merano Arte, carefully describes the poetry of this true artist who during preparatory work showed us a meticulous as well as delicate soul.

The sculpture is formally a delimitation of space. Closing one part of it another stands out. Just as though marking out an area outlines the area left outside it. Certainly, since Boccioni, space has become more and more open and sculpture, thinking of Calder, is light, moved by the slightest wind, the least movement of air. Paola Ricci belongs to this light line of thinking which is greatly represented in Italy by Fausto Melotti, a well-known sculptor from the Trentino, who knew how to create spells and magic with simple wire. But Paola manages even so to go beyond this; not only denying volume in favour of a wider concept of space, but also adding an ethereal element: speaking of air. Observing her works of art, experiencing them as a sensation, before analysis, one realizes that it is the air in their twists, often interposed between light, that remains inside the infinite pathways of metal, thus giving them life.

Cloud- Sculpture Steel wires (interposed between glass goblets) cm 160x300.

Light Sculptures, exhibition Florence 2007

There is a tangible and distinct lightness in Paola Ricci's sculptures and the setting in the Grand Hotel in Florence clearly shows this. The sculpture formally marks off the space. If one part is closed another is revealed, as if an area is bordered off to highlight what remains outside of it. It is a fact that since Boccioni space has become more open and sculpture, take Calder for instance, has become lighter and moves on even the faintest breeze. Paola Ricci belongs to this light movement, which had a great portrayer in Fausto Melotti from the Friuli region, who used simple iron wire to create fascinating magical sculptures. But Paola goes even further not only denying volume to prefer a much wider concept of space but also introducing the most ethereal of elements: air. When we look at her work, we immediately feel, before we study the work itself, and realise that air, often fragmented with light, remains inside the endless twists of metal and brings them to life. Technically speaking her sculptures become installations and create total interaction with their surroundings. The artist creates forms according to the space and they constantly relate to it. This can be clearly seen in the Hotel where the rooms are marked by these seemingly dematerialised sculptures but which, instead, are strongly present in their lightness. It is a sort of paradox because it is their discretion, being aside and blending in with the furnishings, lighting and functions of the hotel that underlines their presence, which is certainly thanks to her skill in installing them. Paola Ricci does not try to force her vision of space but suggests different possibilities. Each proposal highlights whatever is near to it and creates a visual unity that is one of the main features of the work.

We are faced with abstract forms that become light and air and rest on the surroundings. They do not invade the space, rather they underline their use. If on one hand the sculptures have their own distinct autonomy, on the other they exist purely in relationship to where the artist has installed them. This is the important feature, because this way we no longer have a sculpture exhibition in unusual surroundings, like a hotel, rather the entire hotel becomes a sort of large installation for the artist. A brave and knowing choice, which is never simply decorative, given the nature of the works, rather it is this nature that becomes a sort of discovery for the onlooker, a discovery through larger perhaps better known spaces.

After which we can understand why Paola Ricci worked so long on this project: it involved conquering an already clearly defined dimension, because it is clear that the functional spaces buildings like the Hotel are already over-coded with, often, excessive signs. With the artist's understanding of this, she used all her sensibility to take her works with their nature of air and clouds inside closed places, to open them up and free them with a new and original opening. A sort of borderline has been created between the room, the sculptures and the light that redesigns the space. This way the artistic work becomes a marker to highlight the art as it does not want to overlap with space but rather it wants to be set free from it in a clear and unique manner. The result is fascinating and her project has really succeeded, because she has managed to ensure that art does not become trivial outside the normal galleries and museums, and the elegant and beautiful interiors of the Grand Hotel do not become trivial either. This is only possible with refined and sensitive art, light as an idea but stubborn in conquering a space to create life. A slow complex art that makes lightness the destination for reflection and a work of art that wants to take sculpture to an original and without doubt, individual limit.

Valerio Dehò© May 2008