

Bernd Finkeldey

Being

Masaaki Maruyama does build cubic forms, but without rectangulars and planes. They are bent, irregular bodies put in bronze, looking very much different to the spectator from each new angle, and at every change in lighting, as if in continuous motion. In American art terminology, the difference between 'factual' and 'actual fact' is used to account for this phenomenon, meaning one and the same being can change its aspect according to the conditions surrounding it. Of course this applies to any thing or living being; actually this fact is so commonplace that it would go unnoticed if art wouldn't make it visible for us.

Maruyama's works don't adhere to any strictly rational or in any way static geometry; or, to use terms coined by Joseph Beuys: their forms are organic rather than crystalline. When looking at this artist's early works, we quickly realize his intense preoccupation with the traditions of modern European sculpture from Rodin to Matisse, Brancusi, and Marino Marini, artists whose figurative sculptures Maruyama came to know during his study in Italy and before.

(His 1982 "Donna" (1), for instance, has a close affinity to Marini's 'Pomona'.) All of these sculptures aim at something apart from mere depicting; and consequently the bronze figures reproduce (as Martin Heidegger put it) the general being rather than one particular existence.

One important step towards this aim is abstraction: the step from making a copy to making a picture.

More and more, Maruyama has come to reduce and simplify. His "Corpo Sdraiato" (2),

carved in wood in 1986, consists of a lying figure with pelvis, breast and shoulders barely sketched, a half-ball marking the head. 1988's "Corpo Sdraiato" (3) is even more consequently abstract, fragmenting the body, building one figure from several separate forms of varying strength. Here we see, too, the cubes made even and rounded off at the corners that are so typical of Maruyama's recent work.

Things really existing are far, and even so reality is never out of sight. Maruyama doesn't create figurative art, that doesn't refer to anything outside itself. So what he forms are no platonic bodies which exist through pure geometry and mathematical measure but organic forms, close to nature even, maybe even 'human' as their small size does not overwhelm but rather invite, evoking interest in a friendly way.

On their surfaces, we can find carved lines structuring these bodies, creating rhythm, separating, drawing forms within the one form of the whole. Sometimes, too, one part will stand out. These plastic phenomena can be described as a dialectics of a Whole and its Parts, Together and Separate, Togetherness and Singularity. In Maruyama's works of late, we find both many equal forms at once and many different forms at once. Here, one form will stand apart from the rest and makes us think if it can be put back to its place. There, many different forms of equal weight are put together. There again, part of one form is embedded in the whole and stands apart at the same time. The German sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck has defined all art as measure; everything being a matter of measure against measure. This measure, and its relationship to quantity, is the very life of Maruyama's work.

It is organic but not figurative at all; neither descriptive nor depicting or in any way relating a story. The mental quality of its abstraction is something we can share.

What sculptural relationships are depicting here are states of being, bodies and relationships between bodies. Identity becomes visible, as well as difference. Identity, in this body of work, is shown as something individual as well as a matter of co-existing, existing along with others. This may sound like a typical Japanese view, but anyhow these sculptures are much more equivocal than mere sociological models: the relationships made visible in them can be found in architecture, in nature too, as well as in human society.

What Maruyama forms and arranges isn't expressive, let alone importunate, but very sedate; but always highly equivocal, the more the spectator watches on. In a way, one might say this will confirm Heidegger's opinion of art's origin being a thing standing in itself, thus not only belonging to its sphere but also representing it (Heidegger having been very much given to thoughts about man and things and their existence). The work of art discloses its own world. It does not refer to any meaning but represents itself in its own existence, and that's how it fascinates the person watching it. Watching on, the spectator will grasp the real being of the work of art; which is not some meaning made plain but rather immeasurable quality of its meaning; the practical putting-into-motion of the being's truth.



(1) "Donna" = woman Bronze



(2) "Corpo Sdraiato" (Reclining Figure) Wood



(3) "Corpo Sdraiato" (Reclining Figure) Bronze

Notes :

08, 09

(1) „Donna“ = woman

(2) „Corpo Sdraiato“ (Reclining Figure) Wood

3) „Corpo Sdraiato“ (Reclining Figure) Bronze