

S O F F I

Luciano Bartolini

25 Marzo - 7 Maggio 2017

Luciano Bartolini
Fiesole 1948 – Milan 1994

*"Mantenere l'anima aperta all'influsso dell'infinito." L.B.
[Leave your spirit open to the influence of infinity.]*

The city of Florence was his Kunstbegriff, or paradigm of art, and the world was his home. From the start of the 1970s, he made frequent trips to the Far East, especially to Nepal and northern India. Those were the years when Luciano Bartolini made his first works of art: he glued Kleenex to brown paper, joined different types of parchment paper together, laid brushstrokes of Vinavil glue on coarse paper. In the Kleenex series, begun in 1973, the pieces of soft white paper were never really smoothed out. They were most often positioned orthogonally, creating a surface where light created subtle shadows in relief. In the Parchment paper series, the images depend on how the paper was treated: twisted, or checkerboard compositions of squares of different textures that presented a singular variety of chromatic tones. In a certain sense, Bartolini was exploring the figurative idea of Piero Manzoni and his Achromes, but his acquaintance with and comprehension of the work of American minimalists, just emerging at that time, led him to new and original results.

At the end of the 1970s, Bartolini landed on Delos, Santorini and Crete. It was there that, seduced by the myth of Ariadne, he began a series of works focusing on the labyrinth as the central theme. In 1981, he went to Mount Athos. Inspired by the simandron, the instrument used in the monasteries to call the monks to prayer, he produced his Klang series. His works absorbed a reduced symbolism from the confrontation with the Greek myths. From shadows and oneiric fragments, his works now depicted the symbols of a language of forms: a dancer, a simandron, fragments of the letters of the alphabet, etc. Colour, in the form of brilliant enamels and gold leaf, attempted to overcome the background tone. In 1983, a longer stay in Berlin and a monographic exhibition at the Nationalgalerie brought him closer to German Romanticism. Evidence of this influence can be seen in his work, for example Bäume und Bäumchen [Trees and little trees], 1988, and Emblematische Blumen [Emblematic flowers], 1990.

In his last works, Bartolini left the summa of his visual concepts, a personal and artistic testament in the form of small diptychs. The symbols now appear eroded and faded by the wind and the weather. The painted base is materially sound, but appears to be very fragile. The methodical clarity of his first works has been replaced by works that delve into the power of sentiment, the unexpected emotions of a story. Considering the personal destiny Luciano Bartolini, it is appropriate to reflect on the words of T.S. Eliot in The Waste Land: "All these fragments I have shored against my ruins."

Text by Helmut Friedel