

## IMAGES, EMOTIONS

When you have heard a piece of music that moves you to tears, you can never forget it. The artist, in the painful intensity of creation, has struck a chord that reverberates through the silence of time, casting a spell over emotions and imagination. There is nothing that better illustrates the work of the artist Giuseppe Gentili than *Il suonatore di flauto*, sculpted by him in 1987 while he was living and working in Via Monterone, Spoleto. This piece, in steel and iron, constructed using a welding torch, epitomises the creation of poetry out of poverty. *Il Suonatore* was made using poor material, poor tools and with the poorest of subjects, but with an artistic result that is rich in poetry. There is a harmony in the simple lines of the piece that rise together from the base, creating depth, and then vanish into space. The face of the flautist is gazing upwards, pleading to heaven while, at the same time, he is playing his flute so quickly that his fingers have blurred. His clothes, which have an ethereal beauty as if seen in a dream, are made by an artist who suffers always the pain of creation. The image is a fragile one, resting on the finest of filaments, like the centre point of a balance. It would take but little to destroy it. The sculptor Gentili is a great dreamer and every awakening for him is an enormous disappointment. He has the unmistakable genetic make-up of the artist. For this reason, he is a true human being: genuine and therefore vulnerable as sensitive as the sudden fresh wind that warns of storms to come; honest and therefore alone; determined and so the subject of suspicion and hostility. For him, life and art are fundamental, fused in a crucible of fire. They are inseparable and from them come images of iron, whole and fragmented, torn by suffering and yet full of humanity. Every image has a powerful impact, leaving the viewer disturbed and uneasy but spiritually fulfilled. This sense of unease grows with every new image, each one further disturbing the imagination and making it essential to have the dream of a better world. The artistic career of Gentili is strewn with works of art difficult to appreciate and to accept because they tell of things we prefer to ignore. These grow out of his clarity of vision - a vision that others do not want to see. For many art is pleasant but unimportant. For artist, it is the life-blood that runs in his veins. The blood of Gentili boils every time he looks at the face of Christ - man and God, innocent and just, but crucified. In Christ he sees a portrait of man, silent and suffering. How can this be copied? Time after time, from the flame of the welding torch comes a different scarred aspect of an infinite range. Just as in the *Volto della Sindone* from the collection of Mario Battellini and the same as in a sculpture try the same subject it goes to show how a photo can be reproduced by the artist. In the photo, Gentili is gazing at his art in an intensely penetrating religious manner. He appears to be praying devoutly but also begging, forgiveness. The sculpture does not have a conventional symmetry; it is full of holes, gashes and protrusions which, nonetheless, unite to give it form and, paradoxically coming from such restless hands, to inspire serenity. There are different ways to interpret Gentili's work: through his technique, which is very personal and highly sensitive; or through his use of fibrin, which reveals the breadth of his creativity. His technique displays a genius that flows constantly like thoughts through the brain. His use of form creates faces in which the soul of the artist manifests itself in the tension of the straining neck, passes through the throat and leaves through the lips and the eyes. It is a non-violent violence. It is a subdued, suppressed violence that is transformed into a scream or grimace of pain or fear. Yet, at the same time, we see a total acceptance of the human condition. In *L'uomo con la carriola* (1995), the subject carries his weight with proudness and dignity. The wheel runs to one side so all the weight is on the left, while the face looks up but also to one side, which gives force to the line. The hat is worn proudly and covers the sweat from his hard labour and the poverty of his existence. In *L'uomo di Sarajevo*, Gentili cries out in horror; he becomes a warrior himself brandishing a sword and balanced between stopping a battle and encouraging it to take place with honour is a fight for mankind, not that which uses the deceitful language of politics and diplomacy, but that which offers a vision of the divine poetry of creation which calls mankind to live in peace and for peace. It urges him to make peace with the

passions, as it is uncontrolled passion which pushes man and drives him to mad-ness. A peaceful and ordered spirit ensures plurality and enables us to respect each other's values. From this vision, the religious element Genti-li was born. He is not an artist of holy works but a sculptor who considers the religious aspect of art has a relationship with God. An expression of this is the Marquette for the sculpture, La porta del Purgatorio, made for the Biennale Internazionale di Ravenna (1996). The little bronze was a pretext to examine the meaning of the Annunciation, the event which opened the door to redemption. The wooden cross divides the space between the Archangel and the Virgin who is already holding the infant in her arms. At the bottom, there are faces screwing with pain and pleading for salvation. The bronze is on an apparently uniform base from which emerges a design on two levels. The faces at the base are in relief but in a hollowed out section within the bronze, while the two principal figures in the foreground at the Gates of Redemption are in relief on the surface. Its theme is one which seeks to involve and is repeated in a three-dimensional figure of L'angelo also in bronze. The latest work of the artist is a new quest for form which liberates from the raw material, giving it meaning with shapes and symbols: this kind of composition is far removed from his earlier work, which was made from a variety of crude materials, and enters the dynamics of the abstract using bronze. The result is an effective simplification that moves between masses of light and darkness, incorporating the human embrace with its underlying significance of the loneliness and naked-ness of us all. Yet, once again, the poetry of reality falls into the trap of hope, and images rise like vision from the pain of experience. All. Be it, an experience gained by the artist resigning himself to the negative balance sheet of life with bitter recognition.