

"PARLEAU" (THROUGH THE WATER)

Artistic synergies between Lucca and the American West Coast to coincide with the exhibition of the work by SIMON RAAB

Like a pendulum which with each pass marks off a division of time and leaves an imprint of itself in space, so the texts of the writer Giovanna Gemignani (read by the author herself for this performance), the sound of the guitarist Meme Lucarelli, the gestures of the actress Silvia Cosentino, and the graceful steps of the very young and talented dancer Alessia Caló (of the Arabesque Dance School, directed by Claudia Stella), traced the emotional spaces of the artist's work at the presentation of this exhibition. The theme – water – was represented and evoked in unison by the heterogeneous expressive sensibilities of the people interpreting it: an excellent introduction to the atmosphere created by Simon Raab's work.

At Santa Barbara (USA), where he lives and works, Simon Raab makes light the central target of his artistic search, in a creative journey where the dividing lines blur between painting and sculpture, abstract and figurative. Thanks to the commitment of Claudio Poleschi, Lucca is the richer for an exhibition of the work of this artist, born in Toulouse, under the title "*Parleau (Attraverso l'acqua)*".

The artist coined this name, from the French "par l'eau" (through the water) to describe his sophisticated assemblages of metals and paints. The term metaphorically refers to the metamorphic and seductive quality of light seen through a transparent liquid material.

The critic Lucia Majer explains: "*Raab uses this poetic play on words to describe what he does and what we see: a series of reflections and vibrations of colours in continuous movement, which seem to speak, to produce a sound, in the way things seem when we look at running water*".

Raab creates his images in relief in a complex, almost alchemical working process which combines calculation with improvisation. It all begins with an idea, an object or a sensation which will not leave him alone. The artist selects large sheets of aluminium or stainless steel, which form a sort of platform to work on. He then bends the metal, deforms, presses and hammers it, until he has created a polychrome bas-relief richly faceted with curves and dents: a surface which recalls the irregular ripples on the surface of water in movement. The artist then overlays this surface with transparent polymer varnishes which prevent the colours mixing and becoming opaque. He then reworks this translucent surface, layer by layer, keeping the bare, sparkling metal base visible. At the end of a process that started with a smooth sheet of steel or aluminium, it has become a shimmering, many-coloured bas-relief. The colours change rapidly from one moment to the next. The luminosity varies with the viewer's movements and the light source. In this dynamic, objects lose their physicality and apparent weight. All this is due to light and transparency, the real key to achieving this metamorphic effect. (D.P.)