

EXHIBITIONS OF UNSEEN WORKS

by Alfredo Bianchini

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This century has begun with upheavals that, without exaggerating, can be called planetary: environmental calamities, globalized economic and financial disasters, terrorism of all kinds, the tragedy of famine, drugs and progressive unemployment and infinite regional wars. In an age which is therefore very complex and determines fear, uncertainty and increasingly widespread and disturbing unease, we might ask ourselves whether putting energy and resources into an exhibition, indeed two exhibitions, is or is not a kind of escape into time. An escape into the memories of a less anxious past, or an escape into the future so as to forget a reality that per se does not induce optimism leading to action.

Louise Bourgeois responds to us, facing personal fears and the fears of people through art, almost as though the forms of her works were a way of exorcising every fear. Her vast artistic horizon and the complexity of her compositions, of involving rich colour and visual energy, cannot be contained or described in few words, but it can be rightly said that her representations of martyred but powerful females bear witness to the perception of human dramas and fears.

Vedova's art responds to us, and the artist saw, indeed he foresaw, the increasing contradiction, suffering and anxiety in the world, which he monitored "with his antennas" (a typical expression of his), recording in his works – tense to the extreme – the "clash of situations" (the title of one of his series). He responds and reminds us that life is always struggle and conflict and does not admit to giving up; rather it must spur us to fight, above all for ideas.

But perhaps a response may come from the spirit in each of us: reaction to violence and injustice may – actually, must – pass through the specificity and uniqueness of human beings, that is, the intelligence that finds its needed nourishment in culture and in art.

Exactly one year after the inauguration of the robotic museum designed by Renzo Piano at the Magazzino del Sale, the Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova, faithfully adhering to its mission of enhancing and studying Emilio Vedova's work, including dialogue with the great artists of the twentieth century, has installed two contemporaneous exhibitions in the places loved and lived in by the Venetian master: the Magazzino del Sale, which will show Louise Bourgeois's works, and the Studio, not far from the Magazzino, in which Vedova spent many hours working throughout his long life.

Both exhibitions, curated with great expertise and effort by Germano Celant, will show many previously unseen works: Vedova's sculptures in his Studio, where an initial stage of restoration is being co-ordinated by Renzo Piano, with a project by Alessandro Traldi, work direction by Maurizio Milan and interventions by the Iccem company.

Never-before-seen works by a great artist like Louise Bourgeois at the Magazzino del Sale: an architectural installation conceived to host sculptures and drawings will also display – for the most part never shown to the world before – “The Fabric Drawings” collection. It could be said that Vedova's sculptures and Bourgeois's “Fabric Works” each constitute a very special body of work in the complex career of both artists.

I wish to thank all those who have contributed: in New York, the artist Louise Bourgeois and her assistant, Jerry Gorovoy with Wendy Williams; in London, Hauser & Wirth, who have shared our efforts and will host the exhibitions as well; in Venice and Milan, those who have worked to making this great international event a reality, and which opens a dialogue between artists that constitutes one of the important objectives of the Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova.