

Waddington Galleries

PRESS RELEASE

Fausto Melotti

Sculptures and Works on Paper from 1955 to 1983

24 May – 24 June 2006



La rivoluzione dei poveri / The revolution of the poor 1968

Waddington Galleries are pleased to announce the first UK solo exhibition of works by the Italian artist, Fausto Melotti. The exhibition will demonstrate the varied scale and materials used by the artist, from small ceramics to monumental brass sculptures such as 'Kitsch Sunset', 1977 (cat.no.16) which stands over two metres high.

Born in Trento in 1901, Melotti was educated in Florence and went on to complete a degree in electronic engineering in Milan. His academic background together with an interest in mathematics and a formal musical training all had an impact on his work.

In 1928 Melotti studied sculpture at Brera Academy, Milan, alongside Lucio Fontana who became a lifelong friend. Both artists explored ideas of 'anti matter'. While Fontana's spatial investigations led to a piercing of surfaces, Melotti constructed forms around space, contained openings and balanced voids within frameworks.

During the 1930s Melotti was a central figure of the Milanese avant-garde, holding his first solo exhibition in 1935 at Galleria del Milione. His experience of the war years spent in Italy provoked feelings of fatalistic melancholy and led to an intensive production of small works in ceramic. The influence of the war would permeate throughout his later works such as 'Toy for a Dictator's Son', 1979 (cat.no.19). This brass sculpture economically depicts two figures facing each other at opposing ends of a balanced rod. However, the scales of power are not level. One raises a rifle having already taken the lives of five figures frozen mid-fall between two worlds.

In 1961 Melotti was commissioned by the architect Gio Ponti to participate in the trade fair 'Italia 61' for which he created a vast twelve-metre-high wall, made up of 800 unique ceramic tiles of which 'Untitled', 1960 (cat.no.3) is one. By the late 1960s Melotti's transformation of commonplace materials such as plaster and painted fabric allied him to a new generation of Italian artists associated under the heading 'Arte Povera'.

Several of the works in the exhibition have musical terms, 'Three time' 'Quartet' and 'Counterpoint', the compositional art of combining two or more simultaneous melodic lines.

In 'Counterpoint VII', 1971 (cat.no.10) this musical term is given a sculptural dimension. The trajectories within each of the four cubicles are self contained but share an overall harmonic structure. In 'Untitled', 1976 (cat.no.15) a mixture of nature, geometry and music is delicately expressed in brass. The outer structure consists of two branches of regularly spaced circles set like annotated notes on a grid, whilst the inner leaf stems curl into roots of a musical clef.

Melotti died in Milan in 1986 and was posthumously awarded the Golden Lion at the XLII Venice Biennale. Recent major exhibitions have been held at the Institut Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt, 2000, Fondazione Bandera per l'Arte, Busto Arsizio, 2000 and Musée Picasso Antibes, 2003. In 1994 Germano Celant's catalogue raisonne of Melotti's sculptures and reliefs was published by Electa, followed in 2003 by a catalogue raisonne of his ceramic works by Antonella Commellato and Marta Melotti, published by Skira.

A fully illustrated catalogue, with an introduction by Sarah Whitfield, accompanies the exhibition. For further information or images please contact Louise Kybert.