

Paola Grizi

Curated by Sandra Evertson

Photography by Michel Gantner and Giulio Pietromarchi



PAOLA GRIZI lives in the heart of Rome, surrounded by the masterpieces of the classical world. Born into a noble family from the Marche region, she grew up in the evocative places linked to its history. From early childhood she developed a strong artistic sensibility that today is expressed through sculpture, creating works in bronze and terracotta, in different dimensions from small to monumental.

was born and grew up in Rome, in a family with a strong artistic vocation (my paternal grandfather was a painter and sculptor, a granduncle was a ceramist, an aunt is a sculptress). Above all, I owe to this family milieu the development of an early artistic sensibility.

At school I was a capable but shy girl, always placed in the classroom at the last rows of benches because of the height that has always characterized me. I used to play basketball, with great satisfaction in the role of pivot, but I also loved rowing, tennis, skiing and cycling, activities to which I am still dedicated when I have the opportunity. My family, with my two parents and my younger brother Francesco, who also has artistic skills, has a long history (news of the Grizi family dates back to the 12th century), and family history played an important role in this path. I live in Rome in a central district just close to Piazza del Popolo with my husband, Francesco (yes another Francesco!) and our adolescent children Lorenzo and Livia. We all love art and music in our lives.





WHO IS THE READER

Today I am a full-time sculptress, but the process that led me to this profession was neither simple nor straightforward. After graduating in literature, I initially looked for a job linked to my studies, considering art more as a private passion. I soon started a journalistic career (newspapers, radio, local broadcasting) that led me to the publishing sector. For some years I was the director in charge of medical-scientific publications, a job that I was starting to consider as definitive, until, while I was pregnant with my first child Lorenzo, my work came to an abrupt and unexpected halt. In short, I was “induced” to leave my job.

In this difficult situation, being busy taking care of my baby, I did not have the opportunity to look for another job. Encouraged by my husband Francesco, who has always supported my artistic attitude, I dedicated myself to clay modeling. I remember entire days spent in the garden between the care of Lorenzo and the creation of small sculptures. With hindsight, the job misadventure proved to be the great opportunity of my life!

After Lorenzo, Livia was born and, along with my motherhood, a latent creative vein was blossoming in me. I began publishing my works on the web, just to check the effect they aroused in the community. After a while, and to my great surprise, the first proposal for exhibitions started to happen! Since then my commitment has grown exponentially, and in 2007 my private passion has turned into a real profession.

Having grown up in a family with great values and also an aesthetic vision of life began my artistic journey. Without this background it would not have been possible to become an artist; I had the chance to meet special people who all gave an important contribution to my growth: my husband, who has always encouraged me, Professor Salvatore Rizzuti of the Art Academy of Palermo for his artistic skills and, more recently, Gabrielle Rosset of Casart (www.casart.fr) who believed in my art, making it possible to make bronzes. I have also taken part in international artistic experiences, as in the case of two long stays in China, where I worked and met many different artistic visionaries from different cultures, gathered by the use of clay.



MY ART
FOLLOWS THE
EMOTIONAL
INPUTS THAT
FLOW FROM
MY SOUL.

FALLING BOOK

CLAY ACCOMPANIES INSPIRATION,
EVEN IN ITS CHANGES, WHICH WOULD
NOT BE POSSIBLE WITH OTHER,
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sculpt in clay, both for terracotta and bronze production. The choice of this material was almost automatic, as I used it for fun when I was a child, thanks to my sculptress aunt Giovanna. She entertained me and my brother with manual works and gave us the opportunity to get dirty messing freely with clay. Because it is a plastic and ductile material, it adapts perfectly to the way I work.

Terracotta and bronze have two different manufacturing processes, but both start from clay modeling. I often use a favorite tool that in Italian is called “arpa” (harp in English): it allows me to cut the clay in the exact desired thickness. That eases the creation of my books’ shapes, which can be quite challenging.

For the final terracotta, it is necessary to wait for it to dry before putting it in the ceramic kiln.



FAVORITE TOOL



In the case of bronze, the process is longer and more complex and takes place mainly at the foundry. A flexible rubber mold is made from the artist's original clay, to get a positive wax. This material is able to capture every detail. Molten wax is poured into the rubber mold, producing a casting of the original 3-D; this is called a wax pattern. The wax pattern will need some attentive retouching with fire and tools to hand-finish and perfectly match the original sculpture.

The investment shell casting process begins with the wax pattern being dipped into a mixture of silica sand and slurry. Then the ceramic mold with the wax

pattern inside is put into a kiln that produces very high temperatures. Any remaining wax is steamed out to clean the mold of all wax remains. Thus the term "lost wax process."

Remaining is the detailed imprint of the sculpture: the negative. This cavity will be filled with incandescent bronze. Once the bronze cools down, the enclosure is broken, and the work finally emerges! But the process is not finished: once the shapes are perfect, the sculpture will be patinated with fire and chemical pigments that will make the transparent colour effects. This is a delicate phase: the search for the most suitable nuance, in collaboration with the foundry technician, is essential for a successful opera.



In some ways I believe that, even unconsciously, cultural influence is always present. Many of my works, especially manuscripts with emerging faces and hands, are inspired by my love for literature and art. The cultural link is quite evident. My creative style arises from intuition rather than from rationality. I don't make preparatory drawings or sketches, because I wouldn't follow them. Beyond the stylistic labels, I believe that the main connotation of an artistic creation is constituted by its language, more or less communicative and empathic.

Having a predominantly visual memory, inspiration comes to me from various images and experiences: faces encountered in everyday life, internalized works of art, read books, nature walks...with a focus on art, everything revolves around it. These sources of inspiration are then transmitted to matter when my hands shape the clay, guided by a spontaneous and almost unconscious impulse.



CUBIC

My art should share the soul and the essence of who produced it. I just try to make my unconscious emerge with the medium of my art. Looking into the eyes of a person means reading his experience in an intuitive way, perceiving in a single moment his soul. In a similar way that should happen when you look at my sculptures.

This is a type of work that is extremely free and never the same but, precisely because of this, it requires strong self-discipline and determination. It takes place, at least for the most creative part, in solitude, a fact that brings me closer to an existential vision of life. Therefore it must be alternated with other activities, such as sport, which helps to free the mind, and closeness with open-minded people, which allows for comparison and exchange of ideas. Of course, not everyone understands this somewhat original activity, however, this way of experiencing art in everyday life is extremely rewarding for me.

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he creation of my first monumental work in bronze *Looking Ahead* was my greatest artistic challenge, creatively speaking. Despite—or thanks to—the technical difficulties involved, it gave me great joy and satisfaction. Watching the final result was an incredibly powerful emotion, which I think characterizes

this wonderful and eternal material.

Currently I am devoting myself to creating increasingly thin and aerial works, searching for movement and lightness. Right now I'm assembling metal sheets to achieve a new dynamic idea, which I hope to finish soon. Among my future plans there is a solo exhibition in Paris, where the new production of bronzes, made with Casart, will be exhibited.

I also have the idea, still embryonic, to achieve a fusion of the arts together with my husband and my children, all great music players. Francesco and Lorenzo play jazz music with drums and bass and Livia sings. I don't know if they will agree, but I would like to actively involve them in a future exhibition.

What I have deduced is that it is always advisable to follow one's dreams and nurture one's inclinations and talents. At university I thought anxiously about my working career, believing that the goal to be financially independent had to necessarily guide my choices. However, at the very moment when I gave up, I lost my job and I no longer pursued concrete goals, the greatest opportunity happened! I started doing something just for pleasure and everything was ringed with extreme simplicity, as if I were called to do it since the beginning.

Work can be seen as a required effort and sacrifice, but it can also be passion and everyday joy, if carried out with tenacity. I know I was very fortunate in this, but I am trying to convey my experience to my son and my daughter; to teach them to be positive, follow their dreams and believe in themselves.

The role of an artist in society is today less defined than in the past. I believe that making the world a more pleasant place with the presence of great artworks positively influences the individual, and therefore society. Some artists have, above all, the ability to communicate with people through unconventional means that can stimulate both the intellect and the subconscious. Perhaps my most important role is to tickle and sharpen the sensitivity of the human soul.

TRIS



PAOLA

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I AM GLAD THAT MY WORKS DO NOT LEAVE PEOPLE INDIFFERENT.