

Guido Ballo in 'Le origini romagnole di Boccioni e la scultura omaggio di Arnaldo Pomodoro', Gabriele Mazzotta Editore, Milan, 1984

[...] But before dealing with the homage to Brancusi and then with *Wing Beat*, we should also take a look at the development of Pomodoro's signs. Sign was his starting point, before a moment of neo-constructivism that was further to develop into environmental, site-specific projects. The new development in the period that followed *The Wall* lay in the use of signs that tend to rise up out of fissures, nearly as though resulting from forces of compression. In the earlier *Tables*, sign was thrown off by surfaces, and at first was more loose and indeterminate, implying existential values, but then more dense, clear and rigorously scanned as Arnaldo realized that such forms too can express the existential. The obsessive quality of daily life comes to expression through relationships, as here revealed through the multitude of the signs. The subjective quality of individual experience should be seen as a basic theme of Pomodoro's work, from the time of its earliest beginnings, and it mustn't be confused with the rendering of states of mind. It doesn't, moreover, find expression through the vagueness or subtle imprecision of the edges of the signs as such, but through the fact that in all of these tables, spheres and columns—as again with the disks, “rotators,” and spheres—the semantic elements become more pressing and obsessive, precisely by virtue of becoming more tough and clear. “Writing,” here, in these newer works, assumes greater sculptural definition.

It is here that Boccioni's intuitions find further development. Boccioni was concerned with “universal sculptural dynamism,” with “energy,” with “lines of force.” The study of Boccioni's works and theoretical writings then led other artists of the historical avantgardes to expand that concept of energy; both Malevitch and then later Mondrian clearly acknowledge Boccioni's influence. Malevitch saw energy to be emanated from pure surface, without lines of force; his energy was cosmic in nature and resulted from the tensions in surface itself, or from the intensity of limpid color within clear edges. For Mondrian, on the other hand, movement was suggested not only by the energy of surfaces, but also by the encounters of lines at right angles, forming the swastika that indicates origins (even if the lines stretch out to the edges of the painting, almost as though to go beyond it, implying an ideal “continuum”). Arnaldo as well made two additions to Boccionian movement: the tensions within his signs and the way they relate to their hosts—no matter whether flat surfaces, or the fissures and eroded interiors of spheres and columns—become another source of radiant energy, as had taken place in a different way with Malevitch. And in works like *Large Disk* (1972, the City of Milan), this emanation of energy is also accompanied by the rotary movement of true and proper lines of force which depart from the center of the work and then slightly develop toward a spiral while traversing its inclined surfaces. His need to pay tribute to Boccioni with *Wing Beat* is easily understood: Boccioni was one of his true and proper masters.

[...] *Wing Beat* is a point of arrival for the whole of Pomodoro's production of sculptures. Its very dimensions—380 by 380 by 540 cms—indicate a commitment to a new relationship between sculpture and architecture. In any case, it is the largest sculpture, in breadth, which Arnaldo Pomodoro has ever created. The energy, as a sense of vitalism, which the work gives off is the most profound of

its homages to Boccioni. This energy, however, is different from the energy of Boccioni's works, which had various lines of force that tended to turn universal movement into cosmic movement. Here, in *Wing Beat*, there are no true and proper lines of force. At most one could speak of a single point—the point where the sculpture rests on the earth, even if that point is hidden and contains a support—that presents itself as the source of lines that ray out and construe a pyramid. In doing so, their dynamism tends to follow the course of a spiral. But their movement propels them beyond that form and is emphasized by the precision of the position of the wings. Within the rigorous triangular module that guides the composition, they stand at precisely the point that renders the movement that makes them what they are: the beat of a pair of wings. It is here that the architectural element finds expression, since Arnaldo has been able to grasp—with a combination of intuition and intellectual control—the exact relationship that endows the elements of the composition with a sense of potential movement.

It is this precision of internal relationships that makes this work a point of arrival for the whole of Arnaldo's activity as a sculptor, by now at considerable distance from his first seignic works—though still deriving from them—through which he deployed a sense of the indefinite as a way of expressing existential ambiguity. Here, that ambiguity continues to exist, but as a poetic motif that finds its resolution in entirely sculptural terms. It derives from the relationship between the smooth exterior, which reflects and seems to emanate light, and the corroded interior, which is charged with signs that are no less disquieting than sharp and clear. This ambiguity suggests another kind of symbolic movement, in an atmosphere which is also psychic. *Wing Beat*, however, remains at a distance from the dynamism which expresses itself as a slippage or collapse in works such as *Slashed Column* and *Falling Movement*. Rather than a downward fall, *Wing Beat* signals an upward movement, radiant and into flight. This sense of flight is again reminiscent of Brancusi's *Bird in Space*, and as well of the fascination that the Rumanian sculptor exerted on Arnaldo. The difference—aside from their difference as images—lies in the ambiguous relationship between interior and exterior, between essence and existence. Boccioni too is a decisive presence: for the energy given off by the work as a whole, even if not through the use of true and proper lines of force.