



CLEARING

ONE BODY, TWO SOULS

An exhibition of works by

Bruno Gironcoli

April 20 – July 15, 2017

CLEARING is proud to present an exhibition of sculptures by the eminent Austrian sculptor Bruno Gironcoli (1936-2010), the first collaboration between the gallery and the artist's estate, and the inaugural exhibition of CLEARING's new Brussels exhibition space.

In 1977, Bruno Gironcoli became the successor to Fritz Wotruba's position as the head of the School of Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. For the first time, Gironcoli had at his disposition a vast studio and resources. This move would mark a significant transformation in his work to date—away from environmental installations and toward self-contained, monumental altarpieces, eventually leading to the later works exhibited at CLEARING.

Here, Gironcoli's grand, absurd, bulbous and pointy-edged vision truly began to ripen. His hybrid anthropo-mechanical creations are at once body and machine, smooth and monumental, spaceships and weaponry. They are chariots and altars, odes to the post-war human form.

Indeed, Gironcoli's most ardent artistic drive was toward the human body. For him, the body was a bearer of messages.

The constellation of works on view here are neither memorial, nor portrait, nor ode, but relish in their contradictions: we see metal as molded and alive, surfaces as synthetically polished yet violently angular. Seen together, the sculptures simultaneously appear as vessels of human monstrosity and of triumph.

Time too appears unplaceable and cyclical: the forms carry a decidedly futuristic tone but remain intimately centred in the artist's past, as in *Wir Villacher Kinder*, titled after Gironcoli's birthplace. Here, infant bodies pinned to plates are moved through a Fordist production process, continually born and sacrificed. This important work acts as a keystone for the exhibition, not merely due to its formal achievements, but to its deeply personal nature, confronting Gironcoli's early wartime familial traumas as well as those of his generation's.

Each sculpture is painted in silver and gold, perhaps a nod to his beginnings as a goldsmith or the opulence of his adopted city, Vienna, but more likely as a reaction to the weight and value of classical sculpture. From the early 1960s on, Gironcoli experimented extensively with polyester, a cheap and readily available material favoured by he and his contemporaries for its embodiment of the shifting value of human consumption.

It is striking that, throughout his career, Bruno Gironcoli resisted adherence to a specific art movement.

While he is often associated with the Vienna Actionists (and in particular Rudolf Schwarzkogler), Gironcoli always preferred to remain an outsider. In the artist's words:

"The sculptor has no employer; he has to go beyond this paralysing situation; the model and the vacuum of the model become desire and unconsciousness."