

Barry X Ball

Conversation

2013 - 2019

sculpture: translucent pink Iranian onyx

pedestal: white Vietnamese marble, chrome-plated steel and aluminum, stainless steel

sculpture: 16.9 x 26.4 x 13.5 inches (42.9 x 67.1 x 34.3 centimeters)

pedestal assembly: 42.1 x 33.1 x 33.1 inches (107 x 84 x 84 centimeters)

after **Medardo Rosso** (1858 - 1928)

Conversazione in Giardino, 1896

Museo Medardo Rosso, Barzio

In 2013, I was generously granted access to Medardo Rosso sculptures in several Italian public and private collections. Thirty-nine pieces, examples of almost all of Rosso's mature works, were 3-dimensionally scanned. I concurrently took extensive digital photographs of the sculptures. Utilizing those images as references, the scan data was subsequently fastidiously refined at my New York studio. The resultant virtual models are highly-detailed objective "copies" of the Rossos, the most precise digital records of the late artist's works ever produced. My goal from the beginning of this project was to utilize this objective, scientific data as a starting point to create poetic new sculptures – sculptures that retain all the power and mystery of Medardo Rosso's while introducing a panoply of subtle alterations that profoundly transform them and make them decidedly *my* works.

My Medardo Rosso Project debuted in May at Ca' Pesaro International Gallery of Modern Art in Venice as part of the current Venice Biennale. Ca' Pesaro is renowned for its extraordinary collection of Medardo Rossos. The show of my nine Rosso Project sculptures there will run through September 22. A catalog, available here at the gallery, accompanies the exhibition.

My just-completed *Conversation*, in translucent pink Iranian onyx, is inspired by one of Rosso's most abstract sculptures, *Conversazione in Giardino* (Conversation in the Garden) of 1896. My sculpture (carved from a block of translucent pink Iranian onyx) is a considered reversal of the Rosso (modeled in plaster), echoing the classic reductive / additive sculpture fabrication category contrast. To complete the flip, my piece is a "mirror image" of the Rosso.

After scanning, I extensively digitally re-sculpted the Rosso data, then used a sophisticated anthropomorphic robot to mill (cut) my sculpture from the translucent stone. Extensive, painstaking hand carving / surfacing / detailing followed.

Why Medardo Rosso...? I was completely unaware of his work until a few years ago. He was not taught in my college art history classes. I learned of Rosso through my Italian friends and supporters, some of whom were collectors of his work. They thought I would be taken by his sculptures. I was. I subsequently met Danila Marsure, heir to Rosso, and she and my great friend, Laura Mattioli (Founder of CIMA, the Center for Italian Modern Art, in New York), helped me to gain access to all the Rossos that I eventually digitally scanned. By intimately working with the physical sculptures during the scanning process, my knowledge of and fascination with Rosso increased.

I subsequently worked with Laura Mattioli to stage the large 2014 - 2015 Medardo Rosso exhibition at CIMA. I designed the pedestals for this exhibition and helped with its installation and lighting. Through this, my involvement with Rosso further increased.

In all of my Masterpiece sculptures, I see the historical antecedents of my sculptures as unfinished. The Medardo Rossos are extreme examples. The "originals" are effectively in arrested development. We sense that we are witnessing profound, almost in-progress creativity when we view them. The indefinite nature of the Rosso works gave me more freedom to push my response sculptures in new directions. In general, my goal is to take the already mysterious, abstract Medardo Rossos to extreme, enigmatic places. The "hard" forms of my sculptures inspired by Classical, Baroque, and

Renaissance works render my new versions still deeply reminiscent of their sources. In my Medardo Rosso Project works, all realized in luminous translucent stones, their sources are much less evident. In fact, at times my Rosso pieces appear completely non-figurative. By my treatment of their material, by de-materializing the most solidly obdurate of substances (stone), I hope to create petrified clouds – ethereal and radiant, alternating between the indecipherable and recognizable.

The accompanying pedestal assembly was designed and custom fabricated to be integral to the sculpture.