

## Sandro Chia

(Florence, 1946)

According to Sandro Chia, his work is the “pure creation of an image that reflects exclusively on itself.” An autonomous space within which moralism and rigor are replaced by pleasure and artifice, Chia’s art is the expression of a cultural nomadism that ranges from Renaissance Florence to the protagonists of the modern era, such as Chagall and Picasso, arriving at Cézanne and De Chirico. A “castaway” painter, Chia, like other artists brought together by Achille Bonito Oliva in the Transavanguardia movement, is capable of appropriating any number of artistic techniques; he is the author of a rich figurative repertory, within which a predilection for quotation mixes with sometimes irreverent actions engaging the figures in his works, as in *Sinfonia incompiuta (Unfinished Symphony)*, 1980. A passionate reader, the artist’s familiarity with poetry is clear in the titles that characterize many of his works. Chia himself indicates a similarity to the Surrealist method in the intersection of image and word and in the way that both are made to interact in the work. Thus, rather than question the logical sense of a title such as *Bruti protagonisti della fantasia erotica di una scimmia (Ugly Protagonists of the Erotic Fantasy of a Monkey)*, 1979-1980, the work can be approached through an understanding that the pictorial image and text condense different moments of the artist’s creativity.

An atmosphere of solitary research is recognizable in *Figure con bandiera e flauto (Figures with Flag and Flute)*, 1983. Here the composition is almost classically structured, with the symmetrical division of the pictorial space balanced by the figure of a man playing the flute, and another figure holding a flag. Turned toward each other, the two men sit on a pile of ruins and seem to be alone in a now destroyed landscape. Their bodies and clothing are the same color as their surroundings, almost as if a contagious desolation were ready to gain the upper hand on things and humans.

A Michelangelesque torment seems to animate *Untitled*, 1984. This enameled bronze sculpture depicts a crouching man, his head supported gloomily by his arms, which are bent at an angle. The color, applied in non-naturalistic fashion, seems to hold the memory of the indistinct matter from which the artist, with his creative effort and incessant searching, frees the figure in order to return it to the world. (MB)