

TWO SIDES OF A SCULPTURE: A BILATERAL UNIVERSE CAST IN BRONZE

by Osman Can Yerebakan

“I do not remember when I was in one place for more than 3 weeks — I am the ‘Man of the Universe!’” explains Mike Renard, whose determined mobility across the globe is vividly manifested in his three-dimensional work. He finds inspiration in beauty and composure, as well as collapse and despair that prevail our contemporary landscape, in disparate corners of the universe, which the human condition duplicates.” Mobility is equally crucial for viewers of his arresting bronze sculptures, which reveal their complete identities only after a full journey encompasses them. “It is the other side that creates the mystery and intrigue that excites interest, and evokes the answer for what the sculptor wanted to say and express,” he explains. Mike Renard’s hybrids of animals, tools, or crops are otherworldly creations of the familiar, charged with cultural and historic discourses of his subjects orchestrated into single bodies. He concocts beauty with fright, death with greed, or joy with desire, letting narratives bleed into one another and form intertwined tales of the zeitgeist.

Within their dense bronze bodies, they contain the dualities and harmonies embedded in our mundane experiences. His sculptures — either a piggy bank morphing into a skull, with alarming teeth or a nozzle-headed serpent whose intricate scales reminisce textures on soil — find their best embodiment in bronze, a textural medium which helps the artist convey the characteristics of his subjects with equal resilience and grace. “I like to touch bronze and feel the cold and heavy metal,” admits the artist about his physical relationship to this material. Elevating his medium’s tactile density is Mike Renard’s connection to nature, a source which continuously yields stories through its unending wonders and formations. Take, for example, ***CraBird*** (2016), a medley of a bird and crab, two animals of remote worlds — skies and seas — contributing to the immaculate harmony of nature, in which living beings, whether an avian, amphibian or human, survive through interdependency. Nature’s ceaseless marvels allow him to discover uncharted territories of the human, revealing animalistic urges of survival and victory that permeate our consciousness. In ***Don’t Miss*** (2016), an owl, whose cautiously piercing eyes and voluptuously curved beak gleam in bronze, molds into a boxing glove, a symbol of precision, timeliness and gain, in addition to violence. The most lucid juxtaposition of humanity through nature, however, is ***La Piovra*** (2014), an octopus of seven sprawling legs spread out with grace and volume. The Italian title’s dual meaning for octopus and corruption amplifies the work’s homage to Christianity’s “seven deadly sins,” one of which is greed. The octopus’ suffocating tentacles, with suckers masterfully rendered in bronze, carry the horrors and consequences of excess desire for more. Also used in the vernacular to define corruption, cabbage humorously accentuates the sea creature’s head, adding farce and urgency to the artist’s social commentary, while presenting the artist an opportunity to experiment with bronze’s ability to capture fluidity and elegance through the vegetable’s leaves.



La Piovra



Symphony

CraBird



Don’t Miss



Each sculpture’s swift transformation between two subjects — or, what Mike Renard calls “Dual Bilateralism” — stems from his skillful use of sketching, molding and casting, a sequence of processes that blossoms from a moment of inspiration leading to the final bronze sculpture. Whether on a beach in California or his foundry in Ukraine, inspiration finds Mike Renard within his astonishing encounters, either marveling him with wonders of nature or flaws of the humankind. Eventually, seamless transitions across various surfaces encapsulate kinetic incarnations of his ideas that challenge the mediocre, prompting viewers to veer away from their everyday paths to consider alternative perceptions en route to glimpses of how we endure our experiences today.

