

IGOR MITORAJ

between Earth and Sea

Bagno Alpemare, Forte dei Marmi (LU)



Cacciatori di Adriano, 2000, bronze, cm 85x117x54

One of the main events of this year's Versilia Summer will be the exhibition of the marvellous sculptures by artist **Igor Mitoraj**. These bronze masterpieces will be located in the unique pine forest of Bagno Alpemare in Forte dei Marmi, owned by the tenor Andrea Bocelli and his family. The project was realised by the **Contini Art Gallery** in Venice and Cortina d'Ampezzo, in collaboration with the Atelier Mitoraj and curated by **Alberto Bartalini**.

Surrounded by the scents and the colors of this incredible location, embedded between the background of the Apuan Alps and the Ligurian Sea, these bronze masterpieces bear witness to the profound relationship between Art and Nature, which has distinguished the tradition and the history of Versilia for centuries.

The gentleness of *Luci di Nara Pietrificata*'s features shows us all of Mitoraj's sensitivity. This is one of the last monumental sculptures realised by the artist, presenting a fragmented visage, perfect in its imperfections, like a survivor of a past which we still recognize as our own.

The indelible marks of time are also reflected on the powerful torsos, characterized by an heroic physicality and loaded with explicit classical connotations. As in the case of *Aphrodisios*, who, although mutilated, proudly holds his shield.

In this exhibition, we also find Mitoraj's beloved theme of the wrapped figures, which has been revisited by the artist in many different variations, such as the magnificent bronze sculpture with black patina, *Cacciatori di Adriano*. Evocative and mysterious, these two figures, whose identity is unknown, seem to suggest, and at the same time, preserve all the beauty and the fragility of myths and human suffering, which are sublimated in the universality of Mitoraj's message.

A tribute to the sculptural work of the great Polish Master, who chose Versilia as his second home and the stone carved out of its mountains as a medium for the expression of his timeless message. In 1983, Mitoraj chose to make Italy his permanent home and opened a studio in Pietrasanta, where he realised his bronze sculptures in the historical foundries.

Over the years, Bagno Alpemare was frequented by artists such as Gabriele D'Annunzio, Thomas Mann, Eugenio Montale, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Ezra Pound, Edith Piaf, Luchino Visconti, Ray Charles, and many others. Today, the property is owned by Bocelli's family, which has returned it to its former splendour, also through promoting a variety of artistic and cultural initiatives.

The beach resort is open every day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday and Saturday until 11 p.m.

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Igor Mitoraj's Biography

Igor Mitoraj was born on 26 March 1944 in Oederan, a small town in Saxony, Germany, from Polish mother and French father. He spent his youth in Krakow, where he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts. In his last three years, he studied under the tutelage of Tadeusz Kantor (1914-1990), the famous painter, movie director and theatre scenographer. In 1967, Mitoraj, together with other students, exhibited some of his works at a group exhibition held at the Krzysztofory gallery in Krakow.

In 1968 he moved to Paris to continue his studies at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux- Arts. The success of his first solo exhibition in 1976 at the La Hune gallery in Paris encouraged Mitoraj to dedicate himself exclusively to sculpture. In the same period, he was awarded the "Montrouge Prix de la Sculpture" and was also granted a studio in Montmartre, at the Bateau Lavoir, by the then French Minister of Culture.

In 1983 he chose to make Italy his permanent home and opened a studio in Pietrasanta.

In 1986 Mitoraj was invited to exhibit at the XLII Venice Biennale and in 1989 he showed his works for the first time at the New York Academy of Art. In the following years, Mitoraj's works of art were exhibited in many solo and group exhibitions, including at important international museums. At the same time, he received public commissions for monumental sculptures to be shown in major cities: in London at the British Museum, in Paris at La Défense, Atlanta and Tokyo. In Italy his works are exhibited in Florence, at the Uffizi Museum and at the Boboli Garden, in Rome and in Milan, "Fontana del Centauro" (1991) and "Omaggio a De Sabata" (Teatro della Scala, 1993).

In 2001 the Italian President awarded Mitoraj the "Premio Vittorio de Sica" (Vittorio De Sica award). In 2002 and 2006 he prepared the set designs and costumes for the productions of Puccini's Manon Lescaut and Tosca during the Puccini Festival at Torre del Lago (Viareggio, Italy). His monumental works "Dea Roma" and the doors for the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri were installed in Rome in 2003 and 2006 respectively. In 2004 his monumental sculptures were exhibited at the Tuileries Gardens in Paris, at the Trajan's Market in Rome and at the Royal Palace in Warsaw. The following year, his works were exhibited across the city of Venice for the exhibition "Mithra a Venezia".

Igor Mitoraj was an honorary citizen of the Italian cities of Pietrasanta, Greve in Chianti e Massa Marittima. In 2007 he was also awarded an honorary degree by the Academy of Fine Arts of Krakow.

In 2009 he completed two large projects, the set designs and costumes for the production of Verdi's Aida at the Boboli Garden in Florence, and the monumental doors for the Jesuit church in Warsaw.

In 2010, the Facoltà dei Beni Culturali (Cultural Heritage Faculty) of the Università del Salento awarded Mitoraj a honorary degree in archaeology.

In 2011 Mitoraj's sculptures were exhibited at the Valle dei Templi in Agrigento (Sicily, Italy), and at the Archaeological Museum in Sarteano (Tuscany, Italy). The following year, his works were shown in Ravello (Italy), at the Chapel of Villa Rufolo and at the Auditorium Oscar Niemeyer. The same year, Mitoraj was awarded a Commander's Cross of the Order of Reborn Poland.

In 2013 he celebrated the centenary of the Foundation Arena di Verona with the set designs for Verdi's Messa da Requiem.

In 2014 his works were exhibited in the Piazza dei Miracoli and the Museum in Pisa, on the occasion of the 950th Anniversary of the foundation of the Cathedral.

Igor Mitoraj died in Paris on 6 October 2014.

In 2016, two years after his death, the exhibition "Mithra a Pompei" was inaugurated, materialising in this way a long-awaited dream of the artist. Around 30 works re-populated the ancient city in a perfect symbiosis between ancient and modern.

Since 1995 Igor Mitoraj has been represented exclusively by the Contini Art Gallery in Venice and Cortina d'Ampezzo.