





**ANNA MORETTINI PRIZE**  
**2016-2017**

**SAVONAROLA'S UNIVERSE**

Gli  
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## FOREWORD

The Anna Morettini Prize rewards a distant and yet familiar interpretation brought by a contemporary artist of the Florentine tradition. This is the first edition of a competition that aims to develop each year a different theme related to the Florentine culture, encouraging the candidate to reflect on the parallels between the Florentine inheritance, from International Gothic to Baroque, and contemporary disputes on their effects.

The intention is not to add to the old, and in a sense, vain quarrel between the Masters and the Moderns, continuity and rupture, reading and re-reading. The basic line is very simple here: the spirit that operates in life and therefore in art ever prolongs itself and what seems to belong to the past is not rejected but transformed. Capturing the spirit and celebrating it is what this Prize is meant to encourage. The aim is to appreciate an artistic approach more than a documented and known representation of the theme. The essence of this approach is artistic but it also aims to raise the philosophical and spiritual questionings of the period in reference which continue even today to emerge in our contemporary society, providing we do not limit ourselves to the surface of it and withdraw ourselves from the noisy agora.

Florence cannot only be Florence. It must remain an artistic and intellectual reference far richer than the sole demonstration and exhibition of its past whatever its present may be. The strength of Florentine art and culture is such that they are in all of us.

After the exhibition *Renaissances* in Paris, the sponsorship of the Bill Viola exhibition in Florence at Palazzo Strozzi, the Anna Moret-

tini Prize in its 2016-2017 edition has submitted to artists of all nationalities the figure of Girolamo Savonarola as the theme. Both his enigmatic character and his sermons for the salvation of the soul still gravitate over the Florentine territory and spirit.

For this first edition, candidates have been invited to express their interpretation of the character but not only. "The Universe" evokes a feeling of how Savonarola could perceive society or how his contemporaries admitted his religious and political role. This difficult theme was discussed by three experts during a conference in Paris in June 2016, the transcription of which is included in this catalogue, illustrating the conflicts and symbiosis between Savonarola and his time. During this conference the thin line which Savonarola drew between fear and respect was explored. The rejection of the new creative aspirations, the fierce uproar against all the profane representations are to be compared with the strong search for spirituality and a deep respect for the divine message. As P. Reynaud explains, Savonarola's only concern is the salvation of the human's soul. The way of achieving it.

It became interesting to see the diverse reactions of artists of different origins, confronted, as they were, by a heated debate between serenity and persecution in an era still dominated by the relationship between religious and political powers. Each of the three finalists brings a unique outlook on the subject. Their complementarity evokes the three aspects that make a comprehensive portrait of this historical figure still controversial today. His charismatic power is brought to light through the project *Il patibolo* proposed by the collective Gli Impresari. The emblematic

spirit is shown in the anatomical and symbolic aspects of the character through the project of Luigi Presicce, *Di Girolamo*.

The jury chose *Solitaire* by Stéphane Thidet. The question at the heart of the work seems to be Savonarola's theology as explained by our philosophers.

There is a clear opposition: Savonarola uses the word, Stéphane Thidet illustrates the silence. However, the two rely on the same divine presence: the incarnation of the Verb, the silence of God, the critic of his time and the bonfire, the reassuring virtues of water and wood, the call to the masses and to the people, solitude and reflection.

In this balanced work, in constant motion where the heavy and dense presence of mass so gently caresses the water surface much as the Spirit of the first day, we find the simple beauty worthy of Fra Jerome, recalling us of the Midrash Rabbah wherein water, like the spirit, was never poured into a pot of gold or silver but in a humble clay pot.

The perpetual movement, in which the end is deleted by the beginning and the beginning by the end, is also the one of Florence, where the opulence and magnificence are consumed in Savonarola's bonfire of the Vanities and revived in the sober elegance and mystical darkness of its stone palaces.

The Fondation Etrillard, with the cooperation of the city of Florence, is glad to support the Anna Morettini Prize because of its commitment to celebrate the eternal elements of the spirit which inspires Florence.



Laurent Grasso, *Studies into the Past*

## SAVONAROLA'S UNIVERSE

Theme of the Anna Morettini Prize

Conference on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2016, at the Hôtel de La Salle, Paris

### *Participants*

STÉPHANE TOUSSAINT  
LUDOVICA SEBREGONDI  
PHILIPPE RAYNAUD

### *introduced by*

PHILIPPE TRAINAR