

The surgeon Mantero bewitched by the hands

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Renzo Mantero passed away, leaving us without an immense figure of surgeon, who starting from general surgery and orthopaedic sciences became an expert in hand surgery. In the '60s he founded this discipline in Italy after a long training in Paris. Tireless worker and attentive observer Renzo Mantero created novel surgical technologies and founded in Savona a Surgical Unit



Figure 1 - Renzo Mantero. Portovenere February 11, 1930 - Pietra Ligure, November 1, 2012.



Figure 2 - The hand of God, Auguste Rodin.



Figure 3 - The clapsed hands, Auguste Rodin.

recognized in Italy as the Center for excellence in teaching for young Italian surgeons with the wish to become hand surgeons.

But Renzo Mantero was not only a unique clinician and a superb surgeon, he was also a man of incredible intelligence with a sensitivity that made him a pleasant person to be with and a brilliant conversationalist. Not to surprise he was an expert in arts, a passion he inherited from his grandfather, a painter and restorer. He never lost the occasion to visit museums and exhibitions for all his life.

This immense humanistic culture made him possible to transfer his knowledge into the surgery of the hands, that became the theme of philosophical and artistic interpretations, followed by a myriad of writings and lectures around the world. The Journal *Manovre*, that he founded, became soon quite popular with collections of papers extremely interesting for the specialists as well as for the lay people. In these articles you can immediately take the message: the hand is the complementary organ to the speech. With the hand you can talk, you can express your feelings, you can manifest your soul. The hand distinguishes the humans from the animals. The hand is the main reason of the power of the human beings in earth. Renzo Mantero considered Auguste Rodin the artist who best interpreted the central role of the hands, that he modelled and sculptured in over thousand samples. The hands make possible to reach God through the pray, as Michelangelo represented in the *Sistine Chapel* when the hand of Adamo gets so close to the one of God,

almost reaching it. Rodin caught again this image sculpturing Adamo with his outstretched forefinger. In order to represent the creation Rodin gets again inspiration from Michelangelo *Prigioni* sculpture, the hand of God is represented in the moment it frees the human body from the marble in a gesture that is at the same time delicate and full of love.

The hand becomes the metaphor of the man. The hands under a hard work express the pain of the human life. Clasped hands seem to protect a secret. Open hands in the air express a loving flight. Indeed, Rainer Maria Rilke, who served as the secretary of Rodin, focused the attention on hands sculptured separated from the body. These hands were walking hands, sleeping hands, awakening hands, tired hands, hidden hands without any hope.

But Renzo Mantero was such a good healer that after his cure diseased hands were able to recover the joy of life. We wish to say goodbye to Renzo with the words of Don Franco, the priest of Portovenere, the dearest birth town of Renzo Mantero. Don Franco watching to the heaven said "God, Renzo is with you and I am sure that if one of your Angels has a hand problem, he is going to solve it!".

References

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