

My New Foundation

I would like to give a brief account of the events leading up to the establishment of my Foundation, its aims, and in particular the new space that is now being inaugurated.

As long ago as 1974, while preparing a one-man show to be held at the Rotonda della Besana in Milan, I realized how difficult it was to persuade art collectors to lend me the sculptures I wanted to exhibit, and therefore how useful it would be to have a permanent nucleus of works at hand that would always be available for my shows, as well as for the public at large.

From that moment on I began to cast the artist's proofs of my most important sculptures, while at the same time repurchasing my earliest works from private persons or gallery owners whenever this was possible. Following the example of other artists in the United States, Europe and Italy – and in this regard I would like to mention the experience of Mark Di Suvero, Noguchi, Tàpies, Chillida, Miró, Manzù and Marino Marini among others – I decided to set up my Foundation and to find a building where I could place my works. In the 1990s this project was finally realized at Rozzano, in the hinterland of Milan. The building, near the Fonderia De Andreis, the foundry where I have worked for many years, was originally a bolt factory. Rebuilt to a design by Pierluigi Cerri, it became the first home of the Fondazione.

The Rozzano experience, with its successes and limitations, was extremely educational. However, with time two certainties became self-evident. The first was that the Foundation had to be located in a more central area of Milan in order to make it much more available to the general public. The second was the need for larger and more flexible spaces in which to mount temporary exhibitions and organize cultural events and initiatives, and also to provide services (a bookshop, library, video library, small theatre, and cafeteria) and above all a continuity of events that would make this place a living institution and not a mere container of works.

As chance and good luck would have it, while searching for an industrial warehouse where I could build the model of my sculpture *Novecento* (now located in the E.U.R. district of Rome) I found this space. It is an interesting example of industrial archaeology situated in a strategic position in Milan, in the so-called 'Ansaldo – Città della Cultura' area, in the complex of the former Riva & Calzoni turbine manufacturing facility: 3,000 square metres with a height of fifteen metres, perfect for the large-sized *Novecento*, but especially suitable as the new seat of the Foundation.

With the support and suggestions of friends, and with the constant collaboration of my sister Teresa, the rebuilding and restructuring work was carried out in keeping

with the design of Pierluigi Cerri and Alessandro Colombo. Long-term commitment and much courage were needed to complete this work. Lastly, a decisive acceleration came about thanks to the economic contribution of the Region of Lombardy, which granted us a FRISL loan. Now we are almost ready to begin our adventure.

My wish is to inaugurate the new Foundation with a “sculpture feast”, and to this end an exhibition on twentieth-century Italian sculpture, from Medardo Rosso to the present, seemed most suitable to me. Certainly, it would not have been easy to shed my artistic inclinations, my personal preferences and my taste, and perhaps my point of view would have influenced the choice of artists and works... I therefore asked Marco Meneguzzo to help me, and together we prepared this exhibition, which is certainly not an exhaustive or complete survey of twentieth-century sculpture, but it is wide-ranging and does contain a new element, which I must point out clearly.

We wanted at all costs to avoid creating a celebrative or representative event, but rather to highlight the work of innovative artists who have influenced and stimulated contemporary artistic research and expressive idioms. So, side by side with the works of the masters, who have been selected as testimony and memory of critical history, we have presented the inventions and interventions of certain sculptors who have created their works expressly for this exhibition and this space, revealing new and unexpected motifs in their research.

In fact, today I think of my sculptures, and all large sculptures, as reference points in space, as important elements of perception and orientation in the space-time in which we live. Today it is clear that sculptures are nuclei, or crystals, or again eyes, or fires, for the frontier and the journey, for the imagination, in the complexity of present-day life. Hegel, in his *Aesthetics*, already clearly states on a theoretical plane that sculpture is the constitution of its own space within that larger space in which one lives and moves. As is known, there was a long debate on this subject in the twentieth century. For me, sculpture, when it transforms the place in which it is set, is a true testament to its time and succeeds in expressing the complex relationship that exists between man and reality. In my opinion, sculpture is projected into space and removes, as much as possible, the weight from matter and the pedestal from the work.

While I am in my centre, which is the sculpture, I almost need to move around it, as if to conquer a place with the work, in my own multilateral fashion, dreaming of other similar works.

It was the Constructivists who taught us the real lesson: in a room, sculpture can occupy only a corner, and a network of taut wires can be a free-standing sculpture; or, outdoors, sculpture becomes the way to change the sense of a square and invent a space for the urban dimension.

Therefore, in the Foundation, as occurs in other exhibition spaces (for example, the new Dia Art Foundation museum at Beacon), we have attempted to create, within the interaction among the various expressive forms and in the relationship between the works and the space surrounding them, a sort of tension and reciprocal parallel: because the Foundation, far from being a static and conservative museum structure, can carry out the function of a true inventive, almost experimental laboratory, thus aiming at constructing – together with the artists, critics and public – intense and global involvement.

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