

POSTWAR ITALIAN CERAMICS

FONTANA

GARELLI

LEONCILLO

MELOTTI

FONTANA



cod. 3370/8
Decorazione, 1954-55
 Polychrome ceramic,
 17 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 25 $\frac{19}{32}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ in (43,5 x 65 x 13 cm)



cod. 3547/1
Concetto spaziale (Spatial concept), 1950-55
 Polychrome ceramic,
 o 17 $\frac{21}{64}$ in (o 44 cm)



cod. 918/39
Battaglia (Battle), 1950-55
 Coloured and graffiti terracotta,
 13 $\frac{25}{64}$ x 30 $\frac{3}{16}$ in (34 x 77 cm)



Edition 75
Cratere (Crater), 1968
 White porcelain (work realized also in black, silver
 and gold),
 14 $\frac{61}{64}$ x 11 $\frac{27}{64}$ in (38 x 29 cm)



cod. 3814/5
Concetto spaziale (Spatial concept), 1957
 Polychrome ceramic,
 o 14 $\frac{11}{64}$ in (o 36 cm)



cod. 2881/28
Concetto spaziale (Spatial concept), 1950
 Profile, holes, lead on coloured terracotta,
 12 $\frac{13}{64}$ x 15 $\frac{23}{64}$ in (31 x 39 cm)



cod. 1737/95
Concetto spaziale (Spatial concept), 1957
 Painted terracotta,
 o 17 $\frac{33}{64}$ in (o 44,5 cm)



cod. 1900/47
Piatto (Dish), 1952
 Coloured terracotta,
 o 9 $\frac{27}{32}$ in (o 25 cm)

GARELLI



L'ospite (The guest), 1961
 Partially glazed terracotta,
 12 $\frac{3}{64}$ x 52 $\frac{7}{32}$ x 53 $\frac{3}{64}$ in (31 x 15 x 14 cm)



Figure (Figures), 1954
 Glazed terracotta with resin inclusions,
 13 $\frac{25}{32}$ x 42 $\frac{1}{64}$ x 42 $\frac{7}{32}$ in (35 x 11 x 12 cm)



Figura distesa (Lying figure), 1955
 Glazed terracotta,
 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 5 $\frac{5}{16}$ in (20 x 40 x 13,5 cm)



Figura bianca (White figure), 1955-58
 White clay without covering with
 inclusions and craquele,
 11 $\frac{27}{64}$ x 31 $\frac{5}{16}$ x 3 $\frac{5}{32}$ in
 (29 x 10 x 8 cm)



Figura (Figure), 1955-58
 White clay without covering with
 inclusions and craquele,
 11 $\frac{27}{64}$ x 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 42 $\frac{1}{64}$ in
 (29 x 20 x 11 cm)

LEONCILLO



Composizione (Composition), 1960
Plaster,
15²⁹/₆₄ x 12¹⁹/₃₂ x 53³/₆₄ in (39 x 32 x 14 cm)



San Sebastiano, 1960 ca.
Terracotta and enamels,
h 20¹⁵/₃₂ in (h 52 cm)



San Sebastiano, 1960
Terracotta and enamels,
23⁴⁷/₆₄ x 13²⁵/₆₄ x 42¹/₆₄ in
(60,3 x 34 x 11 cm)

MELOTTI



cod. 1955 8
Kore, 1955 ca.
Glazed ceramic,
40³⁵/₆₄ x 9²⁹/₆₄ x 7⁷/₁₆ in (103 x 24 x 20 cm)



cod. VA 429
Vaso Toro (Torus vase), 1955
Polychrome glazed ceramic,
11³⁹/₆₄ x 5⁵³/₆₄ x 2²³/₆₄ in (29,5 x 14,8 x 6,6 cm)



cod. VA 060
Vaso Sole (Sun vase), 1955 ca.
Glazed ceramic,
12²¹/₆₄ x 4²¹/₆₄ in (32,5 x 11 cm)



cod. Cp 9
Coppa (Cup), 1960 ca.
Polychrome glazed ceramic,
11³⁹/₆₄ x 4⁵⁹/₆₄ x 6¹⁹/₆₄ in (29,5 x 12,5 x 16 cm)



cod. 1953 6
Senza Titolo (Untitled), 1953 ca.
Terracotta,
h 9¹/₁₆ in (h 23 cm)



cod. 1953 5
Kore, 1953 ca.
Terracotta,
h 9¹/₁₆ in (h 23 cm)



cod. 1953 4
Kore, 1953 ca.
Terracotta,
h 9¹/₁₆ in (h 23 cm)

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NUVOLE ROSSE

EDIZIONI

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Studio Boys, Archivio Galleria dello Scudo, Archivio Fausto Melotti,
Archivio Garelli / Martini & Ronchetti

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Thanks to Renata Bianconi, Massimo Di Carlo, Fondazione Lucio Fontana,
Andrea Gho, Giovanni Battista Martini, Galleria Matteo Lampertico,
Galleria Russo, Galleria Tonelli

Published by NUVOLE ROSSE, 2014

on the occasion of the exhibition

POSTWAR ITALIAN CERAMICS

Repetto Gallery, 11/12 Dover street, W1S 4LJ, London,
02 - 25 October 2014

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LONDON

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Text by
Luca Massimo Barbero



































m to me





















SHAPING CERAMICS

Luca Massimo Barbero

The Milano's Triennial opens its ninth exhibition with the 50's decade, almost ostentatiously offering the public the contemporary theme of the confluence of visual arts in design and the applied arts: thus opening up to architecture and decoration, from theatrical architecture to scenography¹. That 1951 edition will mark history for some fundamental events where art, powered by a new creative energy is oriented, once again, towards the fusion of visual signs and material elements with architectural space. Examples of this renewed necessity and potentiality of figurative arts to contribute to applied, decorative and plastic arts, are found in the Atrium, the Vestibule and the Stairway of Honour, dedicated to artists – who under architects' orchestration – collaborate to modify and characterize every element of the architectural space. From the frescos on the walls, to the new experimental plastic flooring, to the ceramic relief by Agenore Fabbri, to the famous *Spatial Ambient*, to the neon for the Stairway of Honour designed for the triennial of Lucio Fontana, who also created a *Ceiling* of reflected light². Along with the great project of this Triennial, the Conference *De Divina Proporzione*³ is held from 27th to 29th September, and it deals with architecture and space and the considerations of contemporaneity to which, Lucio Fontana will participate along with Le Corbusier, Sigfried Gideon and Rudolf Wittkover, who held the opening speech. Milan and the Italian people start asking questions and demonstrate the first goals of the dramatic, complex and difficult historical moment called Post Second World War. In fact, this Triennial celebrates and proposes new “cultural products”, which are the result of the efforts and the entrepreneurial, artisanal, and artistic commitment induced by the tragic bombing both of the cities and the countryside. Much has been written about the promptitude and creative capacities of Italy in those years: with a necessary immediateness Italy responded with “reconstruction” and the extraordinary production is yet to come, starting from the florilegium and the multiple births of different movements and artistic structures⁴ – some of them short-lived – along with the new life of laboratories, ateliers, and arti-

sanal companies which will constitute the crown for the fundamental architectural projects of the second half of the 40's. In this period, the urgent and pressing dialogue between architects and artists is a subject that has been emarginated by the major chronicles, yet thanks to new studies, has recently re-emerged in all its power, rich and heterogeneous, proposing itself as a path of differentiation and synthesis of the greatest stories of architectural and visual arts. In the relationship between the spatial architecture of the new vision of Italian and European homes in general, a major role is played by the innovations and the renewal connected with the art of ceramics, for its infinite possibilities and extraordinary as well as millenary different positions in plastic art both as sculpture and object. Returning to this purpose, only apparently less central than other subjects examined by that year's Triennial, Giò Ponti – always supportive of artists and a great promoter for the collaboration between visual arts, decoration, sculpture and architecture – will dedicate a large space in his Preface for a document entitled “Ceramics of the 9th edition of Milan's Triennial”,⁵ for Domus Publishing House, which will, in fact, be published shortly after. The dramatic element of war destruction is immediately the core of architects' reflections on the world of ceramics and its production, seen as a necessary response “for rising again after a devastating catastrophe”, particularly for a country like Germany⁶. Therefore, ceramics is, together with arts and architecture, necessary and manifold material, classical as well as easily reinterpreted in contemporary times in many different ways, and it is also a new field for craftsmen and for sculptors, and a new material for new action, simple and basic but with multiple characteristics.

So, if according to Ponti: “The French Ceramic world appears ruled by the Picassian episode⁷”, while Italy finds its masters in Melandri and Gambone⁸, great in both ceramics and the making of ceramics, although in this particular edition, he refers to: “the valiant crowd of those sculptors and painters who (long before the shattering episode of Picasso⁹) resounding celebrated the wedding between ceramics and artists. They fell in love with ceramics and honoured it with won-

derful works and productions, first among them the sculptor Lucio Fontana, full of spatial enthusiasm, then Fausto Melotti, sculptor, became a master also of this art (...) then next comes Leoncillo Leonardi, also a sculptor (...) and others were charmed by ceramics, Garelli....¹⁰>>.

Ponti lists these four names in his text, along with many other characters of what will be the most vivid and extraordinary decade of the renaissance, production and the use of ceramic material, destined to be the chosen material – for economic as well as many other reasons, – the core and identifier material, along with the renewed reinforced concrete, of what history recalls as the decade of reconstruction. So, if on the one hand, shortly after the war, Italy announces its *handicraft as a fine art*¹¹, exactly in that glimpse, fatally, some of the protagonists of arts decided to express themselves through invention, manipulation, and the multiple possibilities of those materials composing what is defined as *ceramics*. This extraordinary aspect, found many times on the road of Italian art, is what we want to deepen both from a study and exhibition point of view. This exhibition, here in London, is a short and intense story and, we hope, a possible beginning for the development of a future regard for the Italian sculptors of the post second world war period.

“I am a sculptor I am not a ceramist”. L. Fontana¹²

This famous Fontana sentence may once more work as support for a short path of his “sculpting” ceramics. Fontana’s legendary “fury”, as the forerunner of clays and informal grès, he who has “the happiness of stopping the gesture in its eternal temporary movement¹³”, emerges already from the chronicles of sculpture in the 30’s¹⁴. In a significant article of that time, his “making sculpture” and having started to work in Albissola, in Tullio Mazzotti’s laboratory, in futurist chronicles also known as Tullio D’Albissola, starts to identify the artist’s gesture as part of his personality, of the burning experimental passion which characterizes him since the very beginning. So Fon-

tana becomes, from here on “devourer of scratched earth, moulded and finished as clear expression of the brief time-consumption of a Lucky Strike. He started on the quiet, last year with horses and crocodiles vibrating with new varnishes, thus realizing for himself that paint-sculpture solution yearned for in different moments. He wanted to immediately make it big and enormous, in contrast to the sparkling trinketry in the living rooms, with one metre tortoises and five metre caimans¹⁵”. The legend of Fontana and his extraordinary world of expression, colour and matter, which so well expresses itself through clay, grès, and ceramics moves directly to the experiments of ceramic and terracotta sculptures which he returns to as soon as he arrives back in Italy after his experience in Argentina, in 1947. Affected by the “birth and the reconstruction” of which Milan was the international interpreter, Fontana brings back with him not only the extraordinary news collected in the explosive *Manifesto Blanco* just published and destined to lead to *Spatialist Movement* in Milan, but also the radical experience of sculpting with the happy invention of the world of New Figures. Of this syncretism between figurative expression and abstract research, destined to become, throughout the years, the real point of Fontana’s creative process, the return to sculpting ceramics in the laboratory in Albissola, is already symptomatic: new vases, figures, and some extraordinary ceramics with a holy subject, and at the same time sculpting in grès the abstract and absolute bas-relief for the façade and the windows of the building designed by Marco Zanuso and Roberto Menghi in via Senato, Milan. The strong points of Spatialism, and mostly the holes, will engrave and literally pass through the first abstract ceramics created at the beginning of the 50’s, along with some extraordinary figurative experiments exhibited at the Triennial, mentioned at the beginning. On the one hand Fontana goes through, alters, rages on the slab of clay, tracing the sign of a clear imprint as well as a spatial dedication, drilling the surface at a fast pace and following the most recent dictates of his characterizing spatialist spirit. On the other hand, contemporarily and always starting from a caisson, a plain surface

of terracotta, he puts on it a nucleus of matter and in a conscious arrangement in halfway between the poetically inspired and the immediateness of a gesture that is to be read today as absolutely masterly done, he moulds, creates and defines within the freedom of the contrast of matter, colour, gesture and space, a world of figure which lives in the ambiguity of a possibly new identification. As in the case of some of his battles, like the one exposed in this occasion, between 1950-55, where the level seems to surrender wildly at the possibility to become image or in the case of the *Tavolette graffite*¹⁶ cold coloured, stabbed by a new storm of Holes invigorated by the incision of the surface and the symbolic and expressive presence of colour. So these two paths live together in Fontana, two different forms of his research and expression during the 50's and the 60's, the latter the fatal decade when his production comes to an end under the shape of a plate, the round. Abstracted from its functionality and from its traditional image (it's the case of the "excessive" and totally reinvented neo-baroque plates called Savona and transformed by him into places of figurative and magmatic events). Round is an excellent field for experimentation. Here some "Atomics" on which the artist traces the spatial shape of the "cosmogonic" circle, star and planet at the same time – of which we can read in the pages of the Domus – or other baroque pieces, with invented colours, made up, unnatural, as if they still recalled baroque's sensorial provocations.

Almost irritating with their baroque crinkling and the constant and ambiguous invention of a figure jagged in space and put together again with luminous golden strokes, Fontana's hands mould a happy series of angels and puttos, festoons and decorations, shaped as sketched, flying figures with their unstoppable "upside-down" position. 1957 was certainly an important stylistic moment, when his solo exhibition¹⁷ was held entirely dedicated to the new spatialist ceramics, designed as spatial containers and circles crossed by holes and spread with wise erupting knowledge on the cylindrical surface, painted cold with dull colours and grey shades, enlightened only by the trace of the black/white contrast of the edge around the hole.

Other *Spatial Concepts*, round shaped, refusing all two dimensional declarations, twisting themselves and spreading the colours in stripes or vexations of signs, they are pierced by holes where “the thin, vibrating path of this elegant stiletto is analysed and evoked by the strong points of the holes¹⁸”. The inventive, continually transforming story of Fontana, ceramic sculptor, is nourished by this splendid alternation of experiments, always united by a slightly suggested dichotomy between figure, gesture and abstract sign.

*“Language makes you richer, it starts to express,
Something no longer still,
But a boiling clot telling a story”.* Franco Garelli

Franco Garelli, a great interpreter of Italian sculpture of the decades following the second world war, has been out of the international limelight until recently and for this occasion, for the first time, is being exhibited on an international stage. This is not the moment to go through his story, central to the plastic experimentation and the “autre” sculpture, mostly and expertly performed by Michel Tapiè.¹⁹ Certainly his budding, and the first experiments of the young doctor Garelli will mark his opening and his endless updating to new researches for a “new contemporaneity” and at the same time, as recalled by Giovanni Battista Martina: “the choice of creating with a traditional technique, though open to multiple experimental potentialities, like ceramics²⁰”. In fact, the almost unknown sculptures of the 30’s are in ceramics, and these will lead him to move from the Langhe area in Piemonte – characterized by literary and lyrical landscapes, to Turin and then a fast move to Albissola where he meets Arturo Martini, at the beginning of the 40’s, exactly during the fruitful season of the development of the sculpture *crisis* of the Master. From Martini, his peers and from the “sculptors of ceramics” Garelli seems to get as his lymph the contradictory dialectic between the human figure and the abstract element, along with the dialogue between full and void, which will characterize him for the major part

of his artistic adventure. Here, for the occasion of this exhibition, the sculpture *Figure 1954*, almost a sudden tearing of matter and space, where a shape/volume/structure, plastically surrenders to the alternation of the emptiness and the inclusion of materials that differ from ceramics. In the feverish Italy of the second post war, when there is a passionate debate about the necessity of figuration and the abjuration of abstract²¹, Garelli experiences an important, double formative influence. On the one side the almost technical solution of a new sign-figure objectivity with which master Picasso lead the theme of a new figuration, on the other side an extraordinary form of experimentation and experience coming from the close contacts he finds in the laboratories and in the small ceramic city of Albissola²². His relationships with Lucio Fontana and Agenore Fabbri, with whom he goes on a trip to find the studio of Picasso in Vallauris, in the summer of 1950, and the team of artists like Giuseppe Capogrossi, Asger Jorn and the Cobra Group, descendants of the strong expressive colours of expressionists in the north of Europe, will become even stronger when he starts to see Tullio D'Albissola. At the beginning of the 50's some strong synthetic volume ceramics are born. These are primary works, almost geometrical, reproducing the lines of a precise figure, of a hypothetical and intimate bestiary. Destined to become weaker and weaker, these animals will then leave space for fantastic creatures like the *Lying Figure*, 1955. Garelli works in construction and with great monochrome blocks where the dialectics and the distribution of shapes and areas proposes, in structural terms, the questioning and distribution of levels. A sculpture which, through monochrome, not exclusive but a must in his work in this decade, continues to suggest, to mould, and to indicate also in the yearning, and in the abstract research, sometimes more clearly "autre et informel", the figure – that constant dedication to the condition and the extraordinary frailty of Mankind. To Garelli, matter –be it metal, iron or ceramic put next to the fire, the ready-made recuperated from the "industrial civilization" – "will be those that suggest to me the aspect of Mankind²³". An artist aware of the time in which he

created and at the same time bard of the different materials, Garelli, as Anna Costantini²⁴ analyses in her text, is in direct contact with the international experiences that see him, at the end of the 50's, deepening his expressive research by way of an existentialist point of view. As if to testify this period, two sculptures *White Figure* and the *Host*, where the suggested frontality of the previous works or the primitive plasticity of the volume of the works of the beginning of the decade, open up to a more existential, knitted, syncopated dialogue – almost shapeless surfaces, which melt one into the other amongst magma fillings and torn pieces of earth and colour. Sculptures faithful to ceramic shaping which “are not the consequence of a slow deposit, like a stratification, and not even as a consequence of erosion, but come from sudden leaps and breaking s-up.”²⁵.

On this occasion, Leoncillo Leonardi, one of the greatest protagonists of the Italian plastic adventure of the second post war, who made art until the end of the 60's, is represented by three works in terracotta and varnish. He is a polymorphic interpreter and the richest according to traditions and innovations in modelling the *earth*. Here reported are just a few quotes to follow his path, starting from the 30's when he made his expressive Harpies, his Sirens of a world populated by Hermaphrodites and creatures metamorphosing into Seasons. Soon after he will go to Rome, where since the very beginning of the 40's, he will start working on his fortunate and rich series of portraits. Enrico Mascelloni recalls him like this: “Leoncillo, one of the most talented portrait artists (also Brandi, who was far off his thesis, used to define him like this)” and goes on speaking of his works: “not that he was joking before: the ominous Monsters full of sores of the late 30's and the sumptuous empty Trophies of the early 40's demonstrate a crisis of the Universal Man who reflects himself in his mythological copy and is in some way, divine: the Monster, who at the end of these works is pathetic, more grotesque than fearful²⁶”.

This meaningful premise, hinting at a constant expressive tension which leads Leoncillo Leonardi to confront himself with the neo-cubist and synthetic moment of the *Fronte nuovo delle arti* – in which

he will take part for a while – in a very original and personal way: modelling portraits, intimate anti-monuments of human traits, humble workers along with those new emaciated traits of the faces of people of the second post war. He moves modelling through what may seem, at first glance - synthetic cubist levels, but more complex, melted into a strong expression of colour which embraces ceramics in a solo chant, almost a clotted shout. He constantly puts himself between geometry and figuration, along with the solo room for Lucio Fontana at Venice's Biennial in 1954, wrote the grand Roberto Longhi, earnest narrator of contemporary chronicles. He wrote polemically in his text for the catalogue of that Biennial²⁷: "I do not know if that is realism as we want to understand it today, but certainly the communication of the artist with "one" reality of aspects and feelings is so immediate that it reassures us. Anyway, Leoncillo will never risk drowning in those puddles of the rice fields (with no rice weeders), which today we call abstractism". As a wrong vaticination, from the first sketches of certain sculptures of 1956 and 1957, Leoncillo detaches himself progressively, as in a hard purification process and a new complexity born from neo-cubism, to deepen the research that the two sculptures of this exhibition represent perfectly. Immersed in an abstract climate, so hated by Longhi, Leoncillo's new creations in terracotta recall human themes from an evolutionary point of view, from the rising of the figure and primarily in the recurrent theme of Saint Sebastian, his clear symbology of the figure being transformed by his own iterated martyrdom. His new lacerations, from the shattering and opposite stylistic mutation, put him immediately in the field of European Contemporary Sculpture, to which he responds proposing his lacerations that cut open the white on earth's colours, and the reds poured down as bad tempers or cuts. The opposite to the spatialists, perhaps they belonged more to a never ending laic faith in the supreme pain of Man in his eternal war with existence.

*"The adventure of ceramic work
that gets put into the furnace with no shape and comes out perfectly dressed,
is such an exciting thing,
an uncertain borderline between beauty and sensation."* Fausto Melotti.

It's the *Fêtes Galantes* of elements concurring in the complexity of female figures as jugs, fantastic utensils made in ceramic by Fausto Melotti. Both for a need and for happiness, he finds in ceramics an expressive and creative way that has walked with him since his birth in the 30's, years full of analysed rationalism, until the 60's²⁸. For this exhibition, sculptures of figures and utensils tirelessly alternate with one another in their apparently sonic frailty. From the *Female Figures* of the second half of the 40's, made of varnished ceramics and gathered drapes, as only the furnace and clay may create when they meet, to the very first *Cartocci*, with which Melotti opens the 50's decade, and which is the real, lyrical alter ego of the thunderous atomic voice of his friend and fellow artist Lucio Fontana. A new study of Italian sculpture and European moulding is based on these two names of sculptors dedicated to ceramics and to the act of sculpting with earth and fire. The outrageous creations of Fontana and the magical ancient creations of Melotti's universe. If for the master of Spatialism we may speak of a coherent and inventive syncretism between the abstract line and the figurative sign, for Melotti we may find a duality between shapes and supreme beauty in apparent contrast, and of a delicate suspended and poetic figuration which one would not hesitate to define as useful for utensils and objects. Some critics have written, and this can often be read between the lines and the thoughts of the artists themselves, the role of "necessity", of "work" made the working with ceramics necessary: its facility, the economy, the possibility of a great distribution. It is in this not always easy relationship with the market and the usefulness of the object that can be found the really great capacity of the artists/sculptors. The capacity of knowing how to deal with a theme, a shape, a utensil or a figure, without sliding into banality, into didac-

tics, into neutrality of the utensil, whilst remaining inventive and extraordinary, giving to the ceramic matter pressure, colour, shape, and a refuge which may redeem and take the object to a dream universe, a fantastic one: possibly aesthetic. The beauty of a shape which may also be useful. And this is also the theme of Italy trying to reconstruct itself, the duality of Melotti's reflection, or perhaps we should say it identifies the path of the Italian arts of the period, the answer to a possible beauty in the years of the awful drama that is war.

So Giò Ponti, friend, purchaser, and fellow collaborator of Melotti writes, in the occasion of the Triennial, which we chose as viaticum: "The dialogue "between useful and imaginative", may be inserted, as you can see, in dramatic situations of work, life, and history. Humanity as a whole is animated by this duality: on the one hand the research for useful, necessary shapes is charming and here the artist discovers the essential, real, pure, spontaneous shape, and the function and technique which become shape: and here, in this image he may be satisfied, and he may understand and make the useful shape perfect.

But there is also the need for unnecessary shapes in our lives (...). It has happened that the desire for essential shapes has led to the perfection of the shapes of useful things. Sometimes the actual shapes of the latter have revealed a form with *value in itself*²⁹. Melotti seems to personify this definition, this happily obsessive theme of research, emblematic in the dialectic between the Arts and the world of Applied Arts, in a strict, ancient confrontation of artifice and manufacture. It is the "primordial" shape, the synthetic chant of the poetic line that constitutes the core of Melotti's objects. The soft lines of the ceramic surface which became drape, dress, beloved curve moulded by the wind, the elements built his structures in such deep ways, be it a ballerina figure, Kore or a vase. If it's true that the pure abstract shape looks beyond, it is also true that this purity becomes the place of appearance, the discreet stubbornness of the sign becoming symbol, in a sort of ceramic literature which forces itself to become poetic synthesis. So here are the *Korai* of the early

50's, which blow away the figures moulded by the wind (which may also be found in his bas-reliefs, in the loops of some of his figures which reject every right angle so to lose themselves in the sweet folds of the varnished matter), almost "veiled" pleats, mutated by the baroque shattering of Sanmartino, transforming and scrambling to modern busts and steep cones, prisoners of the height of the "enchanted mountain". Unbalanced figures in the wind, unstable, scrunched up in their beauty, protected and suffocated at the same time, wrapped up in the second skin of their clothes, or in the vest built and moulded for them. One for all the *Bull Vase*, which guards inside those essential lines the shape of the trunk of the pyramid and the irreverent hint of those two lines/horns, insect and monster, delight and allusion, almost the signature of that "sad Minotaur"³⁰ that Melotti chants in his poems.

Next to these, no less important are those "Jugs with handles that cannot be held, for the distance that separates them from the body of the object is so narrow (....). Bells so frail that they chip or break if they are rung (...) Flower vases where no one would ever think of putting flowers. In Melotti's ceramics function is placed yet at the same time taken away³¹. The purity of some cups, that alienates every possibility of decoration and lives on the frailty of the inexact lines, soft and inured to the docile plasticity of colour is emblematic of this fundamental aspect of Melotti. So this purity of some cone trunks, which seem, in some of the female figures, to hold upright the world of the "small heads", from the imperishable look, though ephemeral at the same time, women sculptures, betrayed in the end by their Pygmalion, left in febrile though happy state, as the eternal succeeding of seasons. These figures are as natural as the seasons: cups and tiny vases evoking primordial craters moulded by an aware and gentle hand which finds in some ceramics a possibile confrontation with Klee's design, seem to join their thoughts with nature. Cups in varnished ceramics open up like ripe yet imprecise fruit, they do not open up to a random object they could contain but to the yearned for rain, a moment of Nature. These ceramics seem alive, almost

with a zoomorphic reference, natural and phytomorphic to the point that a spelling book could be built with them, Limne on one side and evolutionary Darwin on the other. So a vase seems to collapse with its pure lines onto the surface where it is placed, and at the same time it comes out breaking the triangle born from a crunch to allude to what appears to us, as the tail of an imaginary whale, an animal to imagine. Curly hair and oriental beauties, the ancient purity of white faces, suspended between the time of the Queen of Sheeba and the middle Ages, painted pure, build the figures with shades of brown, soft skins. Or deep cobalt blue abysses, of rare blood reds, rare *Teatrini* with red leaps and white bodies, and the rarefied brown of the earth, are the elements of this ceramic universe, chanted and built in a magical silence by the poet/sculptor, who turns a soft breath into fire.

NOTES

1. For the vastness of the demonstration and the different aspects analyzed in that edition, please consult:

- Agnoldomenico Pica, *IX Triennale di Milano - Catalogo*, Milano, S.A.M.E., 1951;
- *Istituti e scuole statali d'arte alla IX Triennale di Milano e alla 15° mostra mercato di Firenze*, Arti grafiche Corradino Mori, 1951. Book with illustrations and texts on the exhibition of students during the IX Triennial, where the list of the schools may be found;
- *La sedia italiana nei secoli - IX Triennale di Milano - Catalogo*, Firenze, Edizioni Centro Studi Triennale, 1951. Contains a catalogue of images and descriptions of the exhibition on the evolution of the chair shown during the IX Triennial;
- *Il quartiere sperimentale della Triennale di Milano*, Collana di quaderni, Milano, Editoriale Domus, 1954. Book on the construction and the design of the QT8 district;
- *Ambienti arredati*, Quaderni Domus Triennale, Milano, Editoriale Domus, 1954. Collection of all the interior designs of the IX Triennial edition, designs were part of the exhibition.
- *Ceramica*, curated by Zetti and Spreafico, preface by Giò Ponti, Quaderni Domus Triennale, Milano, Editoriale Domus, 1953. Collection of all the ceramics exhibited during the IX Triennial;
- *Vetri*, Quaderni Domus Triennale, Milano, Editoriale Domus, 1952. Collection of the glass works exhibited during the IX Triennial;

- *Oreficeria, metalli, pietre, marmi, legni, pelli, materie plastiche*, Quaderni Domus Triennale, Milano, Editoriale Domus, 1952. Collection of all the works made of these materials exhibited during the IX Triennial;

- *Pizzi, ricami, tessuti, paglia e vimini*, Quaderni Domus Triennale, Milano, Editoriale Domus, 1952. Collection of all the materials exhibited during the IX Triennial;

- Domus, numero 259, Milano, 1951. First edition of the magazine dedicated to Milan's Triennial;

2. For the project of the two areas created for the IX Triennial please consult: Luca Massimo Barbero, *Catalogo ragionato delle opere su carta*, Skira, Milano, 2013 pag 149-158.

3. Please see the acts proposed and analysed in: Fulvio Irace and Anna Chiara Cimoli, *La Divina proporzione, Triennale 1951*, Electa, Milano 2007.

4. For some of the facts tied to the development of the artistic vanguards in Italy after the WWII please consult some of the following essays by the author: *Il Fronte nuovo delle arti: Nascita di una avanguardia*, Neri Pozza, Vicenza, 1997, *Da Art Club al Gruppo degli Otto: la pittura astratta del secondo dopoguerra in Italia*, Fondazione Carical, Cosenza, 2001.

5. *Ceramica*, op. cit.

6. G. Ponti, Prefazione, *Ceramica*, op.cit. p. 6.

7. Idem.

8. Idem.

9. Although this is not the right space to analyse the importance of Picasso sculptures, let us highlight the great cultural and media importance of Picasso's ceramics of these years. Beyond the several exhibitions dedicated to him, amongst others a solo one at the Galleria del Naviglio, for which the catalogue was written by Lucio Fontana (Pablo Picasso, *Ceramiche*, Galleria del Naviglio dal 22 dicembre 1951 al 4 gennaio 1952), and for the differences of the ceramic world please consult the journey of the artists Fontana, Fabbri, Garelli and Tullio D'Albisola in Vallauris August 1950, of which only pictures could be found with some text in J. Michel Foray, Preface at Garelli's catalogue, *Sculture 1948-1966*, curated by Giovanni Battista Martini e Alberto Ronchetti, Musée National Picasso "La Guerre et la Paix", Musée Magnelli, Musée de la ceramique, Vallauris, 27th March -7th June 2004 and, amongst others, by the writer of this essay, "Carlo Cardazzo e Lucio Fontana", in *Carlo Cardazzo, Una Nuova Visione dell'Arte*, Electa, Milano, 2008, pp. 228 - 255.

10. Gio Ponti, Preface, *Ceramica*, op. cit., p. 8.

11. Important to understand the newly born interest for craftsmanship and Italian design for its spread during the second postwar period, the catalogue *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy*, (text by C. L. Raggianti) account of the exhibition held at the House of Italian Handicraft of New York City, 22nd December 1947 to 15th January 1948.
12. Lucio Fontana, *La mia ceramica*, in "Tempo", September 21st 1939; article re-published in P. Campiglio, *Io sono uno scultore e non un ceramista. La ceramica di Lucio Fontana nella seconda metà degli anni Trenta: uno scritto e alcune ceramiche inedite*, in "Faenza", LXXX, 1-2, 1994.
13. Duilio Morosini, *Lucio Fontana, Venti Disegni*, Edizioni Corrente, Milano, 1940, p. 13.
14. On the significant rediscovery of the figurative baroque art, please consult the exhibition of ceramics by Lucio Fontana at the Galleria Karsten Greve in Paris, 31st March - 23rd June 2012, beyond the section dedicated to the ceramics of the 30s and 40s in the recent exhibition dedicated to Lucio Fontana – *Rétrospective*, 25th April to 24th August, at Musée de la Ville de Paris, curated by Choghakate Kazarian and Sébastien Gokalp.
15. L. Pennone (Lupe), Il fenomeno Fontana, in "Il Secolo XIX", February 21st 1937, p. 3.
16. Enrico Crispolti also wrote, along with "furor": "Levity (even when the interaction of the piercing gesture may seem strong and almost outrageous) is for sure the core of the mental origin of images for Fontana. In fact it goes beyond every necessity of a perceptive reassurance, it is naturally optical and has no representative intentions". Enrico Crispolti, *Catalogo ragionato di sculture, dipinti, ambientazione*, SKIRA, Milano 2006, Tomo I p. 28.
17. In 1957 Lucio Fontana had two exhibitions at the Galleria del Naviglio: the first one from the 2nd to the 11th of February and the second one from the 5th to the 15th November. In the same year there also was a solo exhibition at the Galleria del Cavallino, from 28th September to 12th October.
18. Franco Russoli, in *Lucio Fontana. Ceramiche*, catalogue, Galleria del Naviglio, November 5th-15th, 1957.
19. For a first glimpse on the artist and his relationship with ceramics: Garelli, *Sculture*, op. cit.
20. G.B. Martini, *Scultura come avventura umana*, in "Garelli Sculture", op.cit. pag 16.
21. op. cit.: *Il Fronte nuovo delle arti*.
22. For a deepening of the subject of his experience in Albissola and on the figures tied to this city: Francesca Pola, *Una stagione internazionale. Carlo Cardazzo e Albissola* in Carlo Cardazzo, op. cit.

23. R. Guasco, Una cocciuta fedeltà all'immagine dell'uomo, in "Notizie" Chronicles of the homonymous Gallery, Torino, March 1957.
24. A. Costantini, Dopo il Giappone e dopo New York, in "Garelli Sculture", op cit. pp. 28-37.
25. R. Guasco, Una cocciuta, op. cit.
26. E. Mascelloni, Apologia dell'inimicizia. I ritratti neocubisti di Leoncillo. In *Il Fronte Nuovo delle arti*, op. cit., p. 118.
27. R. Longhi, Leoncillo Leonardi, in *Catalogo della XXVII Biennale internazionale d'arte di Venezia*, Venezia 1954, pp. 116-117. Of this particular creative Leoncillo says that: "the levels go back to be round and tied one another, no more squares or one next to the other, this because the image was born inside me (as it happened for the Harpy and for San Sebastiano) before becoming an object, with its own plastic and colour. This sculpture has opened me to a new field where I am starting to move today. I feel more free for a pathetic story sculpture." Op. cit., p. 117.
28. Many were the exhibit occasions where the artistic path of Fausto Melotti was deepened and analyzed. Amongst others: *Melotti*, curated by Carlo Pirovano, May/June 1979 Palazzo Reale, Milano; *Melotti*, 28th April - 30th June 1983, Galleria Nazionale d'arte Moderna, Roma; *Fausto Melotti*, curated by Germano Celant, 25th march - 24th June 1990, Museo Fortuny, Venezia; *Fausto Melotti. Angelico Geometrico*, curated by Denis Viva, 23rd June - 30th September 2012, MART, Rovereto; *Omaggio a Fausto Melotti*, curated by L. Barbero, 1st February - 14th April 2014, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venezia.
29. G. Ponti, in Prefazione, op. cit. pp. 6-7.
30. Fausto Melotti, *Il Triste Minotauro*, All'insegna del pesce d'oro, Garotto (Milano) 1944. The sculptural art of Fausto Melotti has been put next to a poetic and literary work: along with *Il Triste Minotauro* other publications: *Linee*, Adelphi in 1976 and recollected in a version of the volume in 1978 (*Linee*, II). Here, throughout his lyrics, both his poetry and his figurative art are highlighted beyond the complexity and the internal differences of the artist.
31. M. Carboni, *L'angelo del fare. Fausto Melotti e la ceramica*; in *Fausto Melotti, l'opera in ceramica*, curated by Antonella Commellato and Marta Melotti, catalogue published for the exhibition "Fausto Melotti. L'opera in ceramica", M.A.R.T. Rovereto, 30th May - 14th September 2003, Skira, Milano, 2003.

