

**National and International Modernism in Italian Sculpture from 1935-1959**

**by**

**Antje K. Gamble**

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**Doctoral Committee:**

**Professor Alexander D. Potts, Chair  
Associate Professor Giorgio Bertellini  
Professor Matthew N. Biro  
Sharon Hecker  
Associate Professor Claire A. Zimmerman  
Associate Professor Rebecca Zurier**

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## List of Acronyms

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| AIC   | Art Institute of Chicago  |
| AIF   | Americans for Intellectual Freedom  |
| ASCRI | American Society for Cultural Relations with Italy  |
| CIA   | Central Intelligence Agency   |
| CNA   | Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana (National Artisan Company)  |
| CADMA | Commissione Assistenza Distribuzione Materiali Artigianato (Artisan Materials Distribution Assistance Commission) |
| DC    | Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democrats)  |
| E 42  | Esposizione universal di Roma 1942 (Universal Exposition of 1942)   |
| ECA   | Economic Cooperation Administration   |
| EIL   | Esposizione Internazionale del Lavoro (International Labor Exposition) at <i>Italia '61</i>                       |
| ENAPI | Ente nazionale artigianato e piccole industrie (National Organization for Artisan Trades and Small Industry)      |
| ERP   | European Recovery Program   |
| GDR   | German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik or East Germany)                                      |
| HIH   | House of Italian Handicraft   |
| ISIA  | Istituto Superiore Industrie Artistiche (Higher Institute of the Artistic Industries)                             |
| LACMA | Los Angeles County Museum of Art  |
| LCFS  | League of Cultural Freedom and Socialism  |
| MADRE | Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina, Naples  |

|      |  |
|------|--|
| MaRT | Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto       |
| MoMA | Museum of Modern Art, New York                                   |
| OIC  | Office of International Information and Cultural Relations       |
| OSS  | Office of Strategic Services                                     |
| PCI  | Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party)             |
| PNF  | Partito Nazionale Fascista (National Fascist Party)              |
| PRI  | Partito Repubblicano Italiano (Italian Republican Party)         |
| RAF  | Royal Air Force  |
| UAD  | Università d'Arte Decorativa (University of the Decorative Arts) |

## **Abstract**

My dissertation crosses the divide between the inter-war and post-war periods in closely examining the sculptural production, exhibition, and critical reception from 1935 to 1959 of two Italian sculptors, Marino Marini (1901-1980) and Fausto Melotti (1901-1986). Since Italian culture has largely been segregated around the Second World War, a parentheses has been put around Fascist culture, largely because of the Regime's wartime connection to Nazism. Yet, both Marini and Melotti were productive before, during, and after WWII. This dissertation brings attention to how these sculptors' wartime production can be seen as both relating to and moving away from their inter-war artworks.

While many critics and scholars have praised Italian sculptors' post-war production as a phoenix rising from the ashes of Fascism, my project posits that the beginnings of post-war vibrancy can be found during the war years. The intensification of totalitarian controls on culture resulting from both Mussolini's empirical agenda and the Italo-German alliances of 1936 and 1939 led to a sense of urgency among many artists to make new work. This new post-Fascist work would be separate from their own earlier modernist works championed under early-Fascism. This paradigm shift in the mid-1930s did not result in a complete disavowal of their modernist projects however, but rather a continued challenging of the possibilities of sculptural modernism. Through an examination of the two case studies, Marini and Melotti, my dissertation provides a more dynamic understanding of modernist Italian sculpture across the Fascist divide.

Correspondingly, my dissertation sheds light on the post-war Trans-Atlantic critical frameworks that were used to understand these sculptors' modernist sculpture. These works' exhibition and reception reveal critical connections to the debates of the early Cold War. For Melotti, a new sculptural modernism blurred the lines between art and consumerism, being understood as Italy's new robust democratic cultural labor in the aftermath of WWII. For Marini, his sculpture became embroiled within the Trans-Atlantic debates about Cold War ideals of modern sculpture, while at the same time being valued for its cultural cachet within American collections.

## Introduction

### **Across the Divide: The Sculptural Modernism of Marino Marini and Fausto Melotti from Fascism to the Cold War<sup>1</sup>**

Histories of modern Italian sculpture have tended to hinge their analyses around the year 1945, marking both the end of the Second World War as well as the publication date of Arturo Martini's (1889-1947) treatise *La Scultura lingua morta*.<sup>2</sup> This has resulted in the categorization of Italian sculptors' works as either "inter-war" or "post-war" contributions to the country's aesthetic patrimony. For histories of Italian art in general, this segregation has persisted because within twentieth century history the Italian Fascist Regime has been equated with that of the National Socialists in Germany. Known as the *ventennio* (literally translated as "twenty years," referring to the Fascist Era), the twenty-one years of the Fascist Regime from 1922 until 1943 under Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) have a more complicated history than that of Hitler's Nazi Regime. The legacy of artists who practiced during the *ventennio* was likewise affected by the Axis Alliance—Mussolini signed the Berlin-Rome Axis in 1936, a mutual interest treaty, and the Pact of Steel in 1939, which brought Italy into WWII. Though there have been a number of important contributions to the understanding of art produced under Fascism—in particular the work of Emily Braun, Romy Golan, Anthony White and the two recent exhibitions at the Henry

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this dissertation are by the author.

<sup>2</sup> It was republished at least twice in Italian: Martini, Arturo. *La Scultura Lingua Morta*. Verona: Editiones Officinae Bodoni, 1948. & Martini, Arturo. *La Scultura lingua morta: Pensieri*. Verona: Bodoni, 1958.

Moore Institute and the Palazzo Stozzi—the work created during that period largely remains a blind spot for most art histories of Italian art.<sup>3</sup>

For both Fausto Melotti (1901-1986) and Marino Marini (1901-1980), their engagement with Fascist ideologies through their production under the general support and specific patronage of the Fascist Regime has hardly been considered.<sup>4</sup> This has led to a narrow characterization of each sculptor's work and, therefore, restricted possible readings of their works. For Marini, his work has been overwhelmingly characterized as an inter-war contribution to sculptural modernism. This portrayal has been largely due to his connection to Arturo Martini. Melotti's work, on the other hand, is separated across the Fascist divide—half inter-war, half post-war. Importantly, this has resulted in a separation of Melotti's figurative modes from his more abstract ones. Yet, both sculptors made significant contributions before, during and after the Second World War.

The presence of Arturo Martini's *La Scultura lingua morta* in the larger dialogue about modern Italian art has provided scholars with a clear breaking point to place sculptural production on either side of the WWII divide. Though, as Emily Braun has shown, no concrete evidence survives as to Martini's intentions behind *La Scultura*, the treatise did mark an important paradigm shift both in terms of Fascism and the carving/modeling debates.<sup>5</sup> However, the

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<sup>3</sup> Braun, Emily. "L'Arte dell'Italia fascista: il totalitarismo fra teoria e pratica." In *Modernità totalitaria: il fascismo italiano*, Translated by Sandro Liberatore and Roberto Cincotta. Edited by Emilio Gentile. Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2008. 85-99.; \_\_\_\_\_. *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism: art and politics under fascism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.; Golan, Romy. *Muralnomad: the paradox of wall painting, Europe 1927-1957*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.; White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011.; *Scultura Lingua Morta: Sculpture From Fascist Italy*. Edited by Penelope Curtis. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2003.; *The Thirties. The Arts in Italy Beyond Fascism*, Translated by Julia Hanna Weiss. Edited by Antonello Negri, Silvia Bignami, Paolo Rusconi and Giorgio Zanchetti. Florence: Giunti Editore, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Tosi, Maria Teresa. "I quattro rilievi in gesso per l'Arengario a Milano." In *Marino Marini. Il Segno la Forma l'idea: sculture, tecniche miste, disegni, litografie e incisioni 1929-1980*. Edited by Laura e Marco Guastalla Giorgio. Roma: Guastalla Centro Arte Snc, 2008. 9-11.

<sup>5</sup> Braun, Emily. "Bodies from the Crypt and Other Tales of Italian Sculpture between the Wars." In *Chaos & Classicism: Art in France, Italy, and Germany, 1918-1936*. Edited by Kenneth E. Silver. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2010. 145.



moment of change did not come at *La Scultura*'s publication in 1945. As Lamberto Vitali, the author of Marini's first monograph and contemporary art critic, pronounced in 1948 that Martini's writings articulated the culmination of a long history of sculpture's modern development.<sup>6</sup> Though Vitali concluded, "Martini's conclusions can and ought to be rejected," he conceded that "a real problem still remains."<sup>7</sup> The problem for Vitali, indeed as he surmised for Martini, was the restriction of the medium by tradition and by sculpture's presumed connection to the real.<sup>8</sup>

Vitali's conclusions that new kinds of sculpture were being created by "rediscovering pure plastic values" are at the heart of this dissertation project.<sup>9</sup> It is clear that Italian sculptors did make a somewhat abrupt shift in their practice, but it happened well before 1945. The dissolution of the more liberal culture of early Fascism that had supported modern and avant-garde artists which occurred during the 1930s, a phenomenon Emily Braun has also illustrated, confronted artists with the limitations of sculptural tradition and, I argue, caused their reassessment of modernism.<sup>10</sup> Following moves by artists during late-Fascism, a wide diversity of sculptural modernisms sprang from this critical reevaluation of the existing modern idiom. Therefore, I work across the WWII divide. By showing that the much-championed post-war production by Marini and Melotti had its origins at or before the onset of war, I not only complicate the existing narrative but also enrich the possible readings of both sculptors' oeuvre.

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<sup>6</sup> Vitali, Lamberto. *Marino Marini : 33 tavole*. Edited by Giovanni Scheiwiller. Vol. Scultori N. 7, Arte Moderna Italiana N. 29. Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1937. \_\_\_\_\_. "Contemporary Sculptors: VII-Marino Marini." Trans: Bernard Wall, *Horizon* 17-18, no. 105 (1948): 203-04.

<sup>7</sup> Vitali, Lamberto. "Contemporary Sculptors: VII-Marino Marini." Trans: Bernard Wall, *Horizon* 17-18, no. 105 (1948): 203.

<sup>8</sup> Vitali. *Ibid.* 203-4.

<sup>9</sup> Vitali. *Ibid.* 204.

<sup>10</sup> Braun writes that after 1935 there is a shift from a more open place for aesthetic pluralism to, what she terms, "totalitarian art," which has a proscribed aesthetic and subject. See: Braun, Emily. "L'Arte dell'Italia fascista: il totalitarismo fra teoria e pratica." In *Modernità totalitaria: il fascismo italiano*, Translated by Sandro Liberatore and Roberto Cincotta. Edited by Emilio Gentile. Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2008. 97.

As I have begun to lay out, the major contributions of this project are twofold: understanding the cultural politics surrounding the exhibition and reception of both sculptors' work, and Marini's and Melotti's own engagement with the history and theory of sculptural modernity. By understanding the wider landscape in which sculptors worked in the late-Fascist and early-Cold War periods, and tracking the political shifts and the state funding structures, I shed light on the coded rhetoric of major exhibitions and art criticism. Art critical and later art historical accounts had divergent trajectories for each artist; however, their points of flux paralleled one another. Shifts in critical reception and exhibition practices corresponded to major political changes inside and outside of Italy.

The critical divide between Fascist and post-Fascist occurred just before the outbreak of WWII with the conservative crackdown on the more liberal currents of culture in Fascist Italy in the late-1930s, importantly, not with the fall of Mussolini's government in 1943—the timeline is important here because Italy surrendered to the Allied Forces two years before war's end in 1945. As historian and theorist Emilio Gentile has outlined, Italian Fascist culture's unique version of what he has termed as "*modernità totalitaria*/totalitarian modernity" allowed artists many aesthetic freedoms so long as they "participated in the sacralization of Fascism and in the monumental perpetuation of the Fascist civilization."<sup>11</sup> Though Fascist "totalitarian modernity" opposed both "liberal and democratic modernity," it was unique among other regimes in its exploitation of liberal culture, especially in the realms of art and architecture.<sup>12</sup> The pluralism of styles that this version of "totalitarian modernity" allowed for, which Emily Braun calls the "French zone" of aesthetic production, I will simply call it "Fascist liberal culture" throughout the remainder of this

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<sup>11</sup> See: Gentile, Emilio. "Introduzione." In *Modernità totalitaria: Il fascismo italiano*. Edited by Emilio Gentile. Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2008. V-XX. Longer quotation from page XII.

<sup>12</sup> Gentile. *Ibid.* XII.

dissertation.<sup>13</sup> Historian Marla Stone's earlier study of the patronage systems of the Fascist Regime makes a similar point. Stone writes that,

political exhibitions commissioned a modern art that partook of the elements of twentieth-century avant-garde culture, from photomontage and constructivist design to functionalist architecture, expressionist theater, and experimental film. Fascism enlisted new, untainted aesthetic languages in its theme exhibitions and asserted that the aesthetics of the twentieth century must be mass aesthetics. The political exhibitions embraced the new syntaxes supported by modernist culture. Artists constructing the shows found modernist design a ready container for the regime's rhetoric.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, for Mussolini's Italian Fascists, unlike Hitler's National Socialists or even Stalin's Communists, the connection between modern aesthetics and modern politics worked together to represent "totalitarian modernity" through much of the inter-war period. This idea of a totalitarian modern culture under Fascism plays a central role in this dissertation.

In the mid-1930s, the State support for a Fascist liberal culture, with its support for modern and avant-garde aesthetics, wavered in the lead up to the Axis Alliance. As Stone explains,

[the] Battle for Culture testified to the contradictions inherent in a form of state patronage that had drawn strength from the decision not to enthrone a single aesthetic language or set of rhetorical strategies. Aesthetic pluralism had failed to produce an identifiable, unitary Fascist art and this failure became painfully obvious in the context of the regime's post-1935 propaganda exigencies. This last period of official culture was shaped by a series of battling and contradictory tendencies...<sup>15</sup>

Fascist Italy's support of liberal culture came under pressure as it moved closer to war and closer to the prevailing "totalitarian modernity" seen in Nazi Germany. Since artists created progressive work in modernist and avant-garde aesthetics during the first ten to fifteen years of the Regime, it was part and parcel of the larger rhetoric of Fascist modernity. After 1936 that same modern and

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<sup>13</sup> See: Braun, Emily. "L'Arte dell'Italia fascista: il totalitarismo fra teoria e pratica." In *Modernità totalitaria: il fascismo italiano*, Translated by Sandro Liberatore and Roberto Cincotta. Edited by Emilio Gentile. Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2008. 85-99.

<sup>14</sup> Stone, Marla Susan. *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. 130.

<sup>15</sup> Stone. *Ibid.* 178.

avant-garde work began to be deemed degenerate by an increasingly conservative and totalitarian mainstream Fascist art criticism. Though artists never abandoned modernism, as I will outline below, there was an important reassessment of modernism's most important attributes. Then, after the end of the Second World War, American interests focused on Italy as one of the primary European sites for staging the Cold War in Europe. Italy occupied a strategic location and the U.S. felt the necessity to combat the country's strong leftist groups against the threat of Communism spreading into the Mediterranean. This Trans-Atlantic influence shifted the reception and exhibition of Italian modern art and culture to once again champion modernism as central to Italian culture. Complicating the story, however, the work espoused by national and international critics and collectors as exemplar in the post-war period was itself either created under Fascism, or was work that came from the new modernist ideals set by artists during the war following the conservative shift under the Regime.

In addition to the shifts in critical reception and exhibition, I detail important changes in the work of both Marini and Melotti from the 1930s through the 1950s. In both sculptors' work, a major shift occurred corresponding to the moment of disavowal of modernist aesthetics by mainstream Fascist culture. Marking a paradigm shift within modern sculptural practices in Italy, sculptors no longer felt secure in their modern sculptural production by the late 1930s. Alongside contemporaries such as Giacomo Manzù (1908-1991) and Lucio Fontana (1899-1968), Marini and Melotti began a new series of works in the late 1930s, just at the moment that Italy was preparing to enter the Second World War as part of the Axis Powers. The two sculptors' new studio production reflected the unease with the co-option of sculpture for political rhetoric that had taken place under Fascism and later chronicled in Martini's *La Scultura lingua morta*. The work that had, up until this point, reflected advanced modernist ideals as representations of Fascist

modernity had been enthusiastically supported by the Fascist State. When this same State then disavowed advanced modernist aesthetics, Marini and Melotti saw it necessary to reevaluate their sculptural practices now corrupted by their connection to Fascism. However, these sculptors did not abandon modernism altogether. Instead, they returned to the central questions plaguing modernist sculptors relating to production, form and material.

In the end, this new modernist sculpture was one facet of a new, post-Fascist Italian cultural brand that functioned in both Italy and abroad to create an image of a new modern Italy. This project was, in fact, financially and ideologically supported by the new Italian government as well as the European Recovery Program (ERP), funded by the United States and its WWII allies; the United States played a central role in the understanding of post-war Italian culture, both inside and outside of Italy. After the war, artists participated in Italy's economic growth, its presence on the post-war art scene across the Atlantic, and in the rhetoric of the growing Cold War. Marini's and Melotti's divergent forms of new modernist sculpture were championed by Italian and American critics and curators alike for varying yet related reasons. Melotti's work, mainly in ceramics and terracotta, became exemplary of the burgeoning market for Italian design, associated with the market branding later coined "Made in Italy." His sculptures and other ceramic production were exhibited inside and outside of Italy alongside works of handicraft, industrial design, and architecture in order to reflect the regenerated Italian cultural production after Fascism. Particularly in the United States, the exhibition and critical reception of his work was championed with an only thinly veiled Cold War rhetoric that placed democratic productivity as the arbiter of creativity.<sup>16</sup> Marini's bronze sculpture was exhibited and

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<sup>16</sup> "This imagination and beauty stems from an Italy still plagued by problems of poverty, overpopulation and unemployment (2,000,000 jobless out of 20,000,000 workers)—and Italy which almost surely, but for American help, would have gone Communist ere now and may yet do so—an Italy which I found in September to be still largely unaware of the creative revival in its midst." Seymour, Gideon. "Italy at Work." *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, December 2, 1951, np.

collected on both sides of the Atlantic. Alongside sculptors like Henry Moore (1898-1986) and the late Aristide Malliol (1861-1944), Marini became an icon of modern European figurative sculpture. This led to his work being picked up and ultimately dismissed by the important American critic Clement Greenberg (1909-1994)—it is noteworthy to mention that Marini’s dismissal by Greenberg likely was connected to Trans-Atlantic rivalries within the democratic sphere of the Cold War.

This dissertation will first consider the Fascist era production, exhibition and critical reception of the work of Marini and Melotti. As the Regime became more totalitarian and moved away from modern and avant-garde art as representative of Fascist modernism, artists simultaneously moved to fit their work within the new official cultural structure. At the same time, they began to look beyond Fascism. The private studio work created by Marini and Melotti during the late-Fascist and early-Republican period, in light of the critiques articulated in Martini’s *La Scultura*, showed a complex desire to renew sculptural modernism. In two divergent modes, one by Marini and the other by Melotti, these new sculptural modernisms played important roles in the creation of new post-Fascist Italian culture. The final chapters of this dissertation consider the contexts in which Marini’s and Melotti’s work were presented and received after WWII on the Trans-Atlantic art scene. With American financial and ideological support under the Marshall Plan, their sculpture was widely exhibited in the U.S. and the critical reception they received there helped to shape later historical understandings of their work during this period.

## **Fausto Melotti: From *Sculture* to *Teatrini***

Fausto Melotti (1901-1986) was born in Rovereto, a city just east of Lake Garda in northeastern Italy.<sup>17</sup> During the First World War, his family fled intense fighting in the Alpine region and moved to Florence. There he enrolled in the Istituto Tecnico di Firenze and then the Università di Pisa where he studied physics and mathematics. Moving to Milan the following year, he enrolled in the Reale Istituto Tecnico Superiore and then continued his studies at the Politecnico di Milano at the School of Applied Industrial Engineering. Between 1919 and 1922, Melotti frequently returned to Rovereto where he became active in the Futurist movement—he had also earlier been involved in Futurist activities while in Florence. Working with his cousin, the important art theorist Carlo Belli (1903-1991), his brother-in-law architect Gino Pollini (1903-1991), and Futurist painter, playwright and designer Fortunato Depero (1892-1960), Melotti contributed to work created at the latter's "Casa d'Arte Futurista." In 1923, Melotti, Belli, Pollini, Depero, and the Futurist painter and poet, Roberto Iras Baldessari (1894-1965) organized a "Futurist vigil/*veglia futurista*" at the Casa [Figure 0.1]. Melotti's artistic pursuits in Rovereto would eventually lead to his exit from scientific studies for a career in the arts, but only after returning to Milan and finishing his degree at the Politecnico in 1924.

While in Milan, he began to work more closely with Pollini, who shared Melotti's interest in music and his interest in the intersection between the arts. This led to Melotti's experimentation with the applied arts and his engagement with the larger Fascist integration of the arts. With this, he studied the major architects of Europe and later became associated with the young architecture collaborative in Milan, "Gruppo 7"—Pollini, Luigi Figini (1903-1984), Giuseppe Terragni (1904-1943), Carlo Enrico Rava (1903-1985), Guido Frette (1901-1984),

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<sup>17</sup> Unless otherwise noted, basic biographic information for Melotti was taken from: Celant, Germano. *Melotti. Catalogo generale. Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Vol 2. Milano: Electa, 1994. 714-735.

Sebatiano Larco (1870-1959), and Ubaldo Castagnoli (1882-after 1926). In order to take his work to the next level, Melotti enrolled at the Accademia di Brera in Milan and worked alongside Lucio Fontana under the prominent sculptor Adolfo Wildt (1868-1931). During this time he lived and worked with Fontana at the Argentinian's studio.

Throughout the 1930s, Melotti continued to collaborate with Pollini, Gruppo 7 and others like Gio Ponti (1891-1979) on a number of projects [e.g. Figures 0.2-3]—the most important for this study is likely his 1936 sculptural series for the *Sala della Coerenza* by BBPR—the firm's founding members were Gianluigi Banfi (1910-1945), Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso (1909-2004), Enrico Pressutti (1908-1976), Ernesto Rogers (1909-1969)—at the Milan Triennale [Figure 0.4]. During the 1930s, Melotti created his most iconic series, a set of purely abstract sculptures [Figures 0.5-6]. Almost immediately after their creation, they were exhibited at the progressive Milanese abstractionist gallery Il Milione, in 1935. In the accompanying catalogue to the exhibition, Melotti outlined his ideas about abstraction. During the late 1930s, Melotti continued to create public Fascist works like those for the Triennale but his new studio series of figurative works, including the *Teatrini* series, were different; they were not publicly exhibited until after the end of the coming war.

In 1938, Melotti received his first major Fascist commission to create maquettes for sculpture for the E 42 (Esposizione universale di Roma 1942 or Universal Exposition of 1942) project. From this, he won a contract for two series of full-sized sculptures in 1941 and moved to Rome to work on the final marbles—only one set of which would be completed [i.e. Figure 1.28-29]. In 1943, he returned to Milan to find his studio destroyed by British bombers.

Throughout the 1940s and 50s, Melotti worked almost exclusively in ceramics and terracotta, and continued to participate in exhibitions at the new post-war Milan Triennale.



Then in 1960, Melotti returned to his earlier imagery with his work *I Sette savi* [Figure 0.7]. This work marked another shift in the sculptors' oeuvre.

During the rest of his career, Melotti continued to create works in ceramic, including industrial ceramic production, but also began a new set of works constructed from pieces of metal [Figures 0.8-9]. These works return to a more abstract form, yet with some Kandinskyan figurative traces. Through the 1970s and 80s his work was much acclaimed and he won a number of national and international prizes for sculpture, culminating in a major retrospective at the Forte Belvedere in Florence in 1981.<sup>18</sup> Melotti passed away at his home on Corso Magenta in Milan on the 22nd of June 1986.

In the case of Melotti, his purely abstract sculptures from 1934-35 [Figures 0.5-6] have almost exclusively been discussed alongside the later series of constructions he made from the 1960s onward.<sup>19</sup> This paradoxical dislocation seems to have originated with the artist himself. In a 1962 article in *Domus*, "Abstract Sculptures of 1935 and 1962," Melotti made the distinction while pointing to a series of issues central to his interest in abstraction. The poetic text provides clues as to his retrospective ideas about the blind spot in between his sculptural practice of 1935 and 1962. Melotti wrote:

we playfully drag the figurative world along, tied to a string, or apply a title taken from nature to certain graphic inventions. ...[P]lastic arts do not descend from drawing. Bewildering, like miracles, they appear and disappear. ...It is at this point that this license no longer seems so, but only the tragic forewarning of a coming catharsis of this long civilization of ours, and Picasso's "condition," his wandering always outside the limits, as the hardest and ultimately the most moral of all conditions. Thus we too, sons of the

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<sup>18</sup> See: Faustini, Gianni. "Il maestro trentino al Forte di Belvedere. Le sculture di Melotti nella luce di Firenze." *Adige Trento*, May 17 1981.; Quintavalle, Arturo Carlo. "Arte. Fausto Melotti. Forte di Belvedere, Firenze, aprile-giugno 1981." *Panorama*, May 18, 1981, 25.

<sup>19</sup> For example: Melotti, Fausto. "Sculture astratte del '35 e del '62 di Fausto Melotti." *Domus*, no. 392 (1962): 48.; De Micheli, Mario. *La Scultura del Novecento*. Edited by Ferdinando Bologna, Storia dell'arte in Italia. Turin: UTET, 1981. 123.

same sins, see our long interludes absolved.<sup>20</sup>

I suggest that the absolution in Melotti's description referred to his feeling free to return to abstraction once the stigma of Fascist appropriation had faded. Rather than reinforcing segregation, the work in-between was necessarily a part of the process to re-incorporate the ideals of pure abstraction into his practice by 1962.

In art historical narratives, the in-between work likewise is uneasily categorized. Germano Celant, the most well known art critic in Italy today and writer of the *Arte Povera* founding manifesto, has written extensively on Melotti.<sup>21</sup> Celant, like most critics of his generation, writes in a highly poetic and often opaque language, akin to the artist's own poetic prose. In as much, Celant's description illustrates Melotti's sculptures' obfuscation of meaning despite the sculptor's intense desire to communicate. Celant writes that:

the sculpture subsists, through its title, a divine protection, it saturates the transcendent force. We are in the presence of the spirit of the place, devils and angels, divinity or natural energy. And since, for the history of the religions, the dwelling is always a *universal image/imago mundi* [a play of *anima mundi*], and it reproduces a macrocosm of sentiments and thoughts from Melotti.<sup>22</sup>

What Celant's analysis sheds light on here is that Melotti heavily relied on signs and symbols, whose origins were sourced overwhelmingly from Catholicism, music and mathematics, in order to create meaning. Therefore, I posit, the figurative work should be understood in a parallel way to the abstract sculptures, because they too rely on signs and symbols to tell a sculptural story.

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<sup>20</sup> Melotti, Fausto. "Selbstzeugnisse und Aphorismen—Statements and Aphorisms (hrsg. Antonella Commellato, Marta Melotti)." In *Fausto Melotti. Ratio und Strenge—Spiel un Poesie/Fausto Melotti. Rigor and Rationality—Poetry and Playfulness*, Translated by Jeremy Gaines. Edited by Klaus Wolbert. Milano: Edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta, 2000. 33-34.

<sup>21</sup> For example: Celant, Germano. *Melotti. Catalogo generale. Sculture 1929-1972*; \_\_\_\_\_ . *Melotti*. Translated by Karel Clapshaw, IVAM Centre Julio González. Valencia: Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno, 1994.; \_\_\_\_\_ . *Melotti*. Milan: Mondadori Electa S.p.A., 2011.

<sup>22</sup> "...la scultura subisce, attraverso il titolo, una protezione divina, si satura di forza trascendente. Siamo in presenza dello spirito dei luoghi, diavoli o angeli, divinità o energie naturali. E siccome per la storia delle religioni, la dimora è sempre un; *imago mundi*, essa riproduce un macrocosmo, quello dei sentimenti e dei pensieri di Melotti." Celant, Germano. "Fausto Melotti, un concerto di idee e di forme." In Celant. *Melotti. Catalogo generale. Sculture 1929-1972*. Vol. 1. VII.

Of the work in-between, in particular Melotti's *Teatrini* series, Celant almost completely omitted the historical context of their creation. Common to the scholarship on Melotti and his contemporaries, this omission operates to allow Celant to speak strictly to the formal shifts in the work, making them autonomous from almost any connection to Fascism. It also speaks to a certain understanding of Italian Fascism as an "imperfect or unrealized" form of totalitarianism in relation to Nazism or Stalinism, as Braun has written.<sup>23</sup> Braun articulates that at the same time "art historians and students of aesthetics have judged totalitarian art as «bad» propaganda" and have made it the antithesis of good modernist art.<sup>24</sup> In the Fascists' allowance of "a pluralism of styles, the artists [were allowed] to continue to adhere to the French *avant-garde* movements" and therefore seen as disconnected to totalitarian culture.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, as I have described above and as Braun herself argues, it was this initial rejection of a state aesthetic style that helped the Fascists be so successful in their control of the masses through the illusion of "relative personal independence."<sup>26</sup> The after effects of this situation are found in the Fascist blindspot, an understanding that art in the avant-garde or progressive modernist style cannot be in dialogue with a totalitarian culture; this therefore removes the importance of a Fascist context for many scholars.

Though it is clear that Celant's assessment of Melotti is concerned with the sculptor's development of a formalist style, namely that the impetus for stylistic shifts was, at least in part, affected by political shifts, my dissertation deals with the issues his reading leaves out. The effects of the Fascist blindspot are seen in Celant's reading of Melotti's work, and in particular his sculptural production in the ceramic medium. Celant characterizes Melotti's *Teatrini* as

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<sup>23</sup> Braun, Emily. "L'Arte dell'Italia fascista." 87.

<sup>24</sup> Braun. Ibid. 88. Emphasis original to text.

<sup>25</sup> Braun. Ibid. 86. Emphasis original to text.

<sup>26</sup> Braun. Ibid. 87.

originating both in the inter-war moment and a post-war one. Out of an inter-war metaphysical analysis spurred on by Wildt, Giorgio di Chirico (1888-1978), Carlo Carrà (1881-1966) and Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964), and subsequently out of a clear break after the atrocities of the war, Melotti's *Teatrini*, for Celant, are related to Fascism only through the trauma of war.<sup>27</sup>

For the most recent contribution to the Melotti scholarship, a huge retrospective curated by Celant at the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina (MADRE) in Naples, critic and curator Antonella Soldaini presents a more integrated the reading of the *Teatrini* into a long sculptural development.<sup>28</sup> She suggests that these figurative ceramics should be understood as being connected to larger sculptural trends in Melotti's works and those of his contemporaries'. Soldaini works to integrate Melotti's ceramic production into a larger, if earlier, European moment. Like Pablo Picasso's (1881-1973) *Figure (proposé comme projet pour un monument à Guillaume Apollinaire)*, 1928 [Figure 0.10], Soldaini writes, Melotti's later ceramic works' "fleeting and fragile" quality had "abandoned the vertigo of life" and led to the "instant" "events" of the *Teatrini*.<sup>29</sup>

The first major study to focus on Melotti's *Teatrini* came in 1996 in the exhibition *Fausto Melotti: Teatrini 1931-1985* at the Galleria dello Scudo in Verona.<sup>30</sup> Curated by art historian Carlo Pirovano, this exhibition presented the ceramic *Teatrini* alongside later metal constructions that Melotti created preceding the ceramic works.<sup>31</sup> In the catalogue for this exhibition, Dutch art historian and former director of the Stedelijk Museum Rudi Fuchs writes that "like most artists

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<sup>27</sup> See: Celant. *Ibid.* VII & XIII-XV.

<sup>28</sup> *Melotti*, Edited by Germano Celant, Museum of contemporary Art DonnaREgina Milan: Mondadori Electa S.p.A., 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Celant, Germano. "Viaggio Nella Galassia Melotti." In *Melotti*. Edited by Germano Celant, Museum of contemporary Art DonnaREgina Milan: Mondadori Electa S.p.A., 2011. 15.

<sup>30</sup> *Fausto Melotti: Teatrini 1931-1985*. Translated by Ursula Barr Creagh, Dorinana Comerlati, Michael Haggerty and George Whiteside. Edited by Carlo Pirovano. Verona: Charta, 1996.

<sup>31</sup> Pirovano, Carlo. "Catalogo delle opere/Catalogue of the works." In *Fausto Melotti: Teatrini 1931-1985*. Edited by Carlo Pirovano. Verona: Charta, 1996. 49-167.

[who] have used abstract formulas in some compromised form or other” Melotti’s *Teatrini* use their “intimate stage, abstract and semi-abstract forms and figures, in [a] delightful mixture of colours, tell their stories and act [out] their fairy tales.”<sup>32</sup> Fuchs points to and upturns the prevailing hierarchy of abstraction over figuration within modern art historical scholarship. In so doing, he sets up the importance of these works within Melotti’s larger oeuvre: “They show that the artist, with autonomous grace, has accepted all the strange ambiguities of the 20th century and has found his own, specific place there.”<sup>33</sup>

In the most recent exhibition of Melotti’s work in 2013, the connection between his larger project and the interwar period is foregrounded; this construct is set up through the comparison between Melotti and the Swiss-German painter Paul Klee (1879-1940).<sup>34</sup> The catalogue presents a thoughtful comparison of the two artists and the numerous affinities that their works share—ones that are productive to this study. At the same time, the exhibition hinges on the “penchant for geometric rigour” seen in both artists in 1935 and moves out from there, linking the work of Klee between 1935-1940 to that of Melotti between 1935-1986.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the catalogue presents the view that both artists began to investigate and complicate the abstract/figurative dyad after 1935. This study also situates Melotti’s later production within this inter-war moment between 1935 and the date of Klee’s death in 1940.

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<sup>32</sup> Fuchs, Rudi. "Il teatri di Melotti/Melotti's Theatre." In *Fausto Melotti: Teatrini 1931-1985*, Translated by Ursula Barr Creagh, Dorinana Comerlati, Michael Haggerty and George Whiteside. Edited by Carlo Pirovano. Verona: CHARTA srl (Graphiche Aura), 1996. 7 & 9.

<sup>33</sup> Fuchs. *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Klee-Melotti*, Translated by Sylvia Notini, Giulia Bordignon, Paola Tedeschi-Pellanda and Alison Gallup. Edited by Guido Comis and Bettina Della Casa, Museo d'Arte della Città di Lugano. Berlin: Kehrer Verlag Heidelberg, 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Comis, Guido. "Klee e Melotti: un percorso fra analogie e differenze/ Klee and Melotti: A Path of Similarities and Differences." In *Klee-Melotti*, Translated by Sylvia Notini, Giulia Bordignon, Paola Tedeschi-Pellanda and Alison Gallup. Edited by Guido Comis and Bettina Della Casa, Museo d'Arte della Città di Lugano. Berlin: Kehrer Verlag Heidelberg, 2013. 17.

Within the few surveys of Italian modern art, Melotti has been included but not particularly singled out as significant in the art historical narrative. The earliest comprehensive account of Italian modernism by the important contemporary art critic Raffaele Carrieri (1905-1984) mentions Melotti only briefly in the lists of abstractionists and artists who associated with the Il Milione gallery in Milan before the Second World War.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, in his major survey of modern Italian sculpture, Mario De Micheli describes the ceramic work very typically; he calls this period “a long creative pause in which [Melotti] was mostly dedicated to ceramics.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, De Micheli suggests, his ceramics cannot be comparable to the high art sculpture of his “abstract purism” of the 1934-35 and post-1970 works.<sup>38</sup>

The overwhelming characterization of Melotti’s ceramics as being secondary points towards an important prejudice in modern sculptural discourses. As Sharon Hecker articulates, materials typically associated with craft have been disregarded in terms of serious scholarship.<sup>39</sup> Even though the sculptor had collaborated with architects, painters, and poets from the earliest moments of his artistic career, the inherent collaborative nature of Melotti’s work in the craft medium of ceramics has been a blind spot in the scholarship since the works’ creation. The choice of medium allies with larger trends in Italian modern sculpture, and Melotti’s move back to figuration corresponds with his most extensive Fascist commissions. With issues of both medium and form at play, the ceramic work in between adds to the separation of it from his other, more abstract work.

For the recent exhibition “Return to Earth” at the Nasher Sculpture Centre, Marin

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<sup>36</sup> Carrieri, Raffaele. *Avant-Garde Painting and Sculpture in Italy (1890-1955)*. Milan: Edizioni della Conchiglia, 1955. 259 & 263.

<sup>37</sup> De Micheli. *La Scultura del Novecento*. 123.

<sup>38</sup> De Micheli. *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Hecker, Sharon. "'Servant of Two Masters': Lucio Fontana's Sculptures in Milan's Cinema Arlecchino (1948)." *Oxford Art Journal* 35, no. 3 (2012): 339.

Sullivan gives an introduction to the work of Melotti and Fontana alongside contemporaries who worked in ceramics: Picasso, Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) and Joan Miró (1893-1983).<sup>40</sup> Sullivan's contribution is important because it places the nascence of the sculptors' ceramic production during the Fascist period alongside the work of Martini, Ponti and Tullio Mazzotti (known as Tullio d'Albissola, 1899-1971). She highlights the complexity of Melotti's use of clay, which at least partially had to do with its relative economy. As with the above examples, Sullivan's account too reflects the Fascist blindspot in describing these works as a "therapeutic tactile immediacy and material means to work through the traumas of the war."<sup>41</sup> This reading softens the contextual criticality, with respects to the sculptural production, in order to eschew the artist's connections to Fascism. The strength of Sullivan's contribution is its emphasis on the active production of ceramics from the 1930s to the early 1960s, moving beyond the idea that this work in between had nothing to do with Melotti's larger sculptural production.

Dutch art historian Abraham Hammacher was central to the scholarship on modern art after the Second World War, and wrote extensively on Italian sculpture in particular. In his 1975 monograph on Melotti, Hammacher describes the *Teatrini* as part of Melotti's oeuvre of "anti-sculpture," or sculpture that uses both positive and negative space to focus on the void.<sup>42</sup> The *Teatrini* also connected, for Hammacher, to Melotti's interest in music and "the analogous problem in plastic art of the relation between purely abstract values and figuration, however reduced or semi-abstract this may have become."<sup>43</sup> His reading of the sculptor's work astutely brings together the different references that Melotti used to describe his own work without

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<sup>40</sup> Sullivan, Marin R. "Lucio Fontana and Fausto Melotti: Divergent but Parallel." In *Return to Earth: Ceramic Sculpture of Fontana, Melotti, Miró, Noguchi, and Picasso 1943-1963*. Edited by Jed Morse. Dallas: Nasher Sculpture Centre, 2013. 10-31.

<sup>41</sup> Sullivan. *Ibid.* 14.

<sup>42</sup> Hammacher, A.M. *Melotti*. Translated by James Brockway and Richard McKeon Sadleir. Milan: Electa, 1975. 9.

<sup>43</sup> Hammacher, *Ibid.* 11.

leaving them at face value. What Hammacher's account does miss is Melotti's active participation in Fascist culture and the ramifications of that engagement with "totalitarian modernity."

Hammacher's second major contribution to the Melotti scholarship came during the sculptor's major retrospective at the Forte Belvedere in Florence in 1981.<sup>44</sup> In his look back in 1982, he started the catalogue with the *Teatrini* because they "set up one of the fundamental questions about the mental nature and mechanics of [Melotti's] imagination."<sup>45</sup> He aptly wrote that Melotti's work, no matter its form—poetry, sculpture, ceramics—represents a unified artistic expression. As with Sullivan's account, Hammacher marks the ceramic production as central to Melotti's larger oeuvre. In this dissertation, I build on these studies in order to present a fuller view of Melotti's ceramics and, in particular, his *Teatrini*.

### **Marino Marini's Modern Sculpture as Anti-Monuments**

Marino Marini (1901-1980) and his twin sister Egle (1901-1983) [Figure 0.11] were born on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 1901 in the Tuscan city of Pistoia.<sup>46</sup> The twins were interested in art from an early age and, at sixteen, both enrolled at the Accademia di Belle Arte in nearby Florence. There they studied under painter Galileo Chini (1873-1956). Though a talented painting student, Marino Marini soon began to move his focus to differing media—his sister would go on to be an acclaimed poet. Early in his formal arts education, Marini travelled to Paris in order to follow the latest trends in art. By 1922, he focused his efforts on sculpture and started exhibiting widely the

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<sup>44</sup> Hammacher, A.M. "Spazio e tempo in Melotti e l'astrattismo del XX secolo." In *Melotti*. Edited by A.M. Hammacher. Firenze: Electa Firenze s.r.l., 1981. 15-20; \_\_\_\_\_. "La casa e le stanze di Fausto Melotti - I teatrini." In *45° Maggio Musicale Fiorentino*. Edited by Stefano Socci. Florence: Ente Autonomo Teatro Comunale di Firenze, 1982. 115-18.

<sup>45</sup> "Questa scelta pone una delle questioni fondamentali della natura mentale e del meccanismo dell'immaginazione." Hammacher, A.M. "La casa e le stanze di Fausto Melotti - I teatrini." 115.

<sup>46</sup> Unless otherwise noted, basic biographical information was taken from: *Marino Marini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998.343-346.



following year.

In 1927, Marini participated in the Third International Exhibition of Decorative Arts at Monza, where he no doubt met Arturo Martini [Figure 0.12]. The following year Marini had two works included in the 1928 Venice Biennale with the group of Novecento artists, including Martini, from the Il Milione gallery in Milan. Successively in 1929, he moved north to further his sculptural career at the Istituto Superiore Industrie Artistiche (Higher Institute of the Artistic Industries or ISIA) and taught there for almost ten years.

He returned again to Paris in 1930 and 1931, where he met Picasso, Georges Braque (1882-1963), Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), the French sculptors Aristide Maillol (1861-1944) and Henri Laurens (1885-1954), the Lithuanian sculptor Jacques Lipchitz (1891-1973), the Surrealist painter Yves Tanguy (1900-1955), and the Spanish sculptor Julio González (1876-1942). There he also became close to a number of other important Italians in France, such as Giorgio di Chirico (1888-1978) and Massimo Campigli (1895-1971). During the inter-war period, Marini actively engaged with a broader European art scene and, importantly, was not nationally isolated.

By 1932, Marini was invited to become a member of the Fascist-controlled Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence, marking official his recognition and integration into the Regime's cultural elite. In his second appearance in the Rome Quadriennale in 1935 [Figure 0.13], Marini won the Gran Premio for sculpture—a prize Martini had won the pervious year. Throughout the 1930s, Marini continued to travel throughout Italy and Europe, even going to Nazi Germany in 1934. While in Paris, he won the Grand Prix at the 1937 International Exhibition. Back in Italy and newly married to the Swiss-born Mercedes Pedrazzini (known as “Marina” after their marriage, 1913-2008), he began a post at the Accademia di Turin before returning to Milan a year later to

be the Chair of sculpture at the Accademia di Brera in 1941.

Like Melotti, the 1942 bombing of the city destroyed Marini's studios in both Monza and Milan, pushing Marina and he to flee the city and move to her hometown, Locarno at the northern tip of Lago Maggiore in Switzerland. For the duration of the war, Marini continued his work and exhibited extensively in Switzerland and Italy. Importantly, during this period he solidified a clear vision for his *Cavaliere* series [Figures 0.14-16], the central focus of this dissertation.

In 1948, Marini returned to Milan where he resumed his teaching at Brera. That same year at the Biennale, Marini met the English sculptor Henry Moore (1898-1986) and, importantly, his American dealer Curt Valentin (1902-1954). During the next decade his work was widely exhibited throughout Europe, and North and South America. Marini continued to travel, meeting his contemporaries and often sculpting their portraits. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, he was given a number of large retrospectives, both in Italy and abroad, solidifying his important place in the canon of modern sculpture. Marini passed in the Tuscan seaside city of Viareggio on August 6, 1980. After his death, his wife Marina did much to secure his legacy and was central in setting up the two museums devoted to the sculptor as well as founding in 1990 of the Fondazione Marino Marini, in Marini's hometown of Pistoia.

There has been much scholarship on Marini in both Italian and English, including a large number of monographs (for example: Vitali, 1937; Contini, 1944; Carli, 1950; Apollonio, 1958; Hunter, 1993; Meneguzzo, 1997; Casè, 2000; Hammacher, 2001; Tosi, 2008). In the past five years, there has been an increased interest in Marini and his work—there are two museums in Tuscany devoted to the sculptor, one at the Fondazione in Pistoia and one in the historic center

of Florence, and two recently opened multi-room exhibition spaces devoted solely to his work, one at the Novecento Museum in Milan and another at the Vatican. Within the broader critical reception, there are three distinct ways of considering Marini's work: first is Italian scholarship from the artist's lifetime, which focuses on the artist's formal ingenuity; second is international criticism from during and after his lifetime, which focuses on Marini as exemplar of European humanist culture; and third is more recent Italian scholarship that tries to clarify and detail the history of Marini and his works based on new archival research. All three types have informed my work in various ways.

The critical responses to Marini's work generated during his lifetime feature most prominently in my analysis as they shed light on the intersection of politics and the art world—how its focus and specific use of language was informed by larger geo-political and art critical shifts of the contemporary time period. This is true for the criticism of Melotti's work as well.<sup>47</sup> For Marini, the rich national and international reception has provided a fruitful base from which to draw conclusions about the development of the art historical record of this sculptor. Below, I will outline the major art historical contributions to the Marini scholarship.

International art historical studies of Marini also reflect critical biases which I negotiate within this project. Overwhelmingly, art historical analyses have done three things: they have set up Marini as simultaneously both hyper-Italian and generally-European, they have looked for the possible historical references in Marini's work, and they have foregrounded his personal biography for an explanation of the shifts in his production. Though Marini fostered some of these ideas, through my research it has become clear that most of these readings were later taken

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<sup>47</sup> This is also true for Melotti despite the somewhat lopsided archival documents that I considered. The Melotti archives were closed during my research trips, because his daughter and the executor of his estate and archives, Marta Melotti, was working to create the Fondazione Fausto Melotti for its opening last summer (2014).

up by Marini himself in order to accommodate critics', curators' and collectors' preexisting ideas to further his successful career.<sup>48</sup>

Sam Hunter, the American art critic, historian and founding director of the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis wrote on Marini a number of times. Beginning in 1948, with a review in the *New York Times*, he elaborated that Marini's references were as diverse as Etruscan bronzes to T'ang Chinese terracotta—likely from Lamberto Vitali's similar assertion in his 1937 monograph, the first on the sculptor.<sup>49</sup> The connection between Marini and a vaguely Chinese tradition (its specific identity changes from T'ang to Ming to Han over time) was just one of a number of connections international critics made between Marini's work and archaic imagistic traditions.<sup>50</sup> By 1950, for Hunter, Marini possessed the qualities of “Han dynasty Chinese, an Egyptian of the great age, and ancients Cretan, a medieval guildsman and a contemporary America.”<sup>51</sup>

Hunter, in particular, relied on Marini's biography to understand the sculptor's works. Marini's early studies in Florence weighed heavily on the sculptor's legacy for the art historian, however, not through his connection to the Accademia in Florence, but instead to Marini's claimed chance encounter with the aged patriarch of modern sculpture August Rodin. Hunter recounts the meeting between the fourteen year old Marini and Rodin, a year before the elder

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<sup>48</sup> “I like going to the source of things. I am interested in a civilization at its beginning. I have always looked for the part that was the kernel of a civilization, for example, the Etruscans.” Marini, 1979 quoted in Hunter, Sam. *Marino Marini: The Sculpture*. New York: Abrams, 1993. 15. Also see: Marini, Marino. "Incontro con Marino Marini, 2." By Piero Bargellini, Giovanni Carandente, Lorenzo Papi and Carlo L. Ragghianti. *Critica d'arte* 50, no. 4. (Jan.-March, 1985): 53-62.

<sup>49</sup> Hunter, Sam. "European Sculpture. Work by Modern Artists -- Painters in Contrast." *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1948, X13.; Vitali, Lamberto. *Marino Marini : 33 tavole*. Edited by Giocanni Scheiwiller. Vol. Scultori N. 7, Arte Moderna Italiana N. 29. Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1937. 8.

<sup>50</sup> Hunter. *Ibid.*; Vitali. *Ibid.*; Soby, James Thrall. "Letter to Alfred H. Barr, Jr.," Aug. 24, 1948, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154.; Devree, Howard. "Diverse Modernism: Early and Recent Paintings by Picabia—Marini's sculpture—John von Wicht," *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1950. p. X9

<sup>51</sup> Devree. *Ibid.* X9

sculptor passed. In the piazza in front of the San Marco cathedral—home to the famed Fra Angelico (ca. 1395-1455) *Annunciation* (ca. 1438-1447)—the two did not speak a word but the meeting was profound, Hunter outlines.<sup>52</sup> As a kind of “Moses” figure to the young Marini, Rodin played the part of silent master. For Hunter, this set up irrevocable connections between Marini and both Tuscany in the lived space of the capital Florence and the larger European tradition of sculpture. At the same time, it simplifies Marini’s sculptural heritage in order to place it in the larger canon of European modern sculpture. Marini’s connection to Rodin is tangential at best and, as I will show, his close connection to Martini and the legacy of Adolf von Hildebrand (1847-1921), Rodin’s rival, as well as that of Medardo Rosso (1858-1928) complicates Hunter’s story.

Hunter characterizes Marini’s post-war production as a kind of return to order after Fascism, as part of a larger European phenomenon. He writes that:

Expressionist art, which had flourished primarily in Germany and Northern Europe in the early twentieth century, received a major impetus throughout the rest of the continent—both in abstract and figurative art, in painting and in sculpture—following the end of World War II. ...In Italy, a number of gifted figurative sculptors of the postwar period stuck a compromise between these dominant new directions of modernism and traditional expectations, and at least one important artist [Marini] made a serious effort to come to terms with the Italian past, some of which had been so recently revealed.<sup>53</sup>

For Hunter, Marini’s place as a larger international phenomenon is coupled with Marini’s Italian uniqueness; Hunter is not alone here in this kind of categorization.<sup>54</sup> Though a strange group, Hunter associates Marini with CoBrA artists (the original CoBrA members, in 1948, were Karel Appel, Constant, Christian Dotremont, Asgar Jorn, and Joseph Noiret, Alberto Giacometti, Balthus, Jean Dubuffet, and Francis Bacon—the conspicuous absence to this list is Henry

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<sup>52</sup> Hunter. *Marino Marini: The Sculpture*. 18.

<sup>53</sup> Hunter. *Ibid* 15.

<sup>54</sup> See: Carrieri. *Avant-Garde Painting and Sculpture in Italy (1890-1955)*. 182. ; De Micheli. *La Scultura del Novecento*. 87.

Moore).<sup>55</sup> Marini was clearly working within a modernist dialogue of primitivism. His nudes were titled *Pomona* [Figure 0.17], referencing the Etruscan fertility goddess, and his *Cavaliere* [Figure 0.14-16] cited the long history of equestrian monuments on the Italian peninsula. However, the scholarship still overwhelmingly lacks a clear view of the reasoning behind Marini's specific choices—Hunter's relies on mythological allusions, Marini as Oedipus and/or Tiresias, while Penelope Curtis connects it to the “‘uglifying’ of the body by Marini, Moore, Picasso, Richier, Fautrier and many others, during the war and after.”<sup>56</sup>

For example, the understanding of Marini's *Cavaliere* series, the central sculptural subject matter considered in this dissertation, relies on an account that Marini gave of encountering horses rearing after the early bombing of Italy.<sup>57</sup> Though the story is plausible, the equestrian type was too prevalent in the aesthetic environment of Italy, as historical and modern examples of political power, to explain Marini's *Cavaliere* through this biographical detail. This too comes to the fore in the descriptions of his later works, when Marini's *Cavaliere* give way to his *Miracoli* [Figure 0.18]. The *Miracoli* have generally been described as reflections of atomic-age anxiety. Both art historian Nicoletta Cobolli Gigli and art critic Renato Diez have described Marini's move towards more abstract forms in this series in this way.<sup>58</sup> Though Marini speaks about his own fears surrounding the state of geo-politics during the Cold War, this does not fully explain the work.<sup>59</sup> As I argue in the last chapter of this dissertation, Marini's active engagement with

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<sup>55</sup> Hunter. *Marino Marini: The Sculpture*. 15.

<sup>56</sup> Hunter. *Ibid.* 16-17.; Curtis, Penelope. *Sculpture 1900-1945: After Rodin*, Oxford History of Art. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. 249.

<sup>57</sup> For example: Soby, James Thrall. "Marino Marini." In *Marino Marini, February 14 - March 11, 1950*. Edited by Buchholz Gallery. New York: Curt Valentin, 1950. 1.; Hunter. *Marino Marini: The Sculpture*. 16.

<sup>58</sup> Diez, Renato. "Sculptura. Lingua viva." *Arte (Italy)*, no. 360 (2003): 11-20.; Gigli, Nicoletta Cobolli. "Miracoli ai confini del reale." *Arte (Italy)*, no. 360 (2003): 22-25.

<sup>59</sup> In a 1958 interview, Marini stated that “‘ If you really want to find the sources of my present style in antiquity, I must confess that you will find them in the remains of the life of the past rather than in those of its art. [...] If the whole earth is destroyed in our atomic age, I feel that the human forms which may survive as mere fossils will have become sculptures similar to mine.’” Roditi, Edouard. *Dialogues: Conversations with European Artists at Mid-Century*. San Francisco: Bedford Arts, Publishers, 1990. 88.

international trends in modern sculpture shows through in his heightened use of abstraction and its new material qualities.

The *Cavaliere* have featured prominently in the majority of studies on Marini, as in mine. In Carrieri's aforementioned survey of modern Italian art, he devotes an entire section of the survey to Marini, as he does with Arturo Martini, among others, and thoughtfully describes three of the four major post-war themes in Marini's work: "Nudi, Cavalli e Cavalieri, Giocolieri, Ritratti."<sup>60</sup> Though Marini's *Cavaliere* were six of the twelve illustrations that accompany the text, including an image of the early plaster version of *Angelo della Città* [Figure 0.19], Carrieri does not discuss them in detail. In De Micheli's more recent survey, he describes the larger equestrian series (including *Cavaliere*, *Guerrieri*, and *Miracoli*) as having a sense of the historical and the epigraphical.<sup>61</sup> For example, he quotes Marini as saying volume "is not the only problem in sculpture, it is that which must never forget that, what is exciting in a sculpture is always its poetry. (1939)"<sup>62</sup>

The most important major study on the *Cavaliere* series to date came in 1997, in a large illustrated catalogue titled *Marino Marini. Cavalli e cavalieri*. Former Venice Biennale curator Marco Meneguzzo rightly suggests that these works were meant to be seen in relation to the history of equestrian monuments. He also aptly connects Marini's move to this theme to Martini's treatise:

It is no accident that I used the word "statuary" in those opening lines, as if speaking of the craft activity that so roused the ire of another great figure in Italian sculpture, Arturo Martini, in the very years in which Marino's personality was emerging: if Martini was tormented by the problem of avoiding statuary, as a heavy burden of tradition, Marino

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<sup>60</sup> Carrieri. *Avant-Garde Painting and Sculpture in Italy (1890-1955)*. 182. English translation included in an insert to the book, see: pages 18-19.

<sup>61</sup> De Micheli. *La Scultura del Novecento*. 87.

<sup>62</sup> "...La «ricerca dei volumi» ha scritto una volta Marini, « non è il solo problema dello scultore, il quale non deve mai dimenticare che ciò che commuove di più, in una scultura, è sempre la sua poesia». Marini cited in De Micheli. *Ibid.*

on the contrary set out to rediscover its universal and timeless motivation.<sup>63</sup>

In this dissertation, I build on Meneguzzo's connection between Marini's *Cavaliere* and the equestrian monument; I also move away from his reading in a few important ways. First, I take a more open stance to statuary and political control. Meneguzzo separates "civic virtue" from "the institutionalization of the abnormal relationship between Fascism and the spirit of the Romans, between State and classicism, in which the concept of the monument played its part."<sup>64</sup> As I will describe below, the use of advanced modernism for Fascist propaganda was a symbiotic relationship until the mid-1930s. Therefore, Marini's use of the equestrian does not turn away from the Fascist use of culture in the way that Meneguzzo suggests. Instead, I argue that his new series of themes, including the *Cavaliere*, were created in response to the Fascist Regime's rejection of liberal culture that the sculptor had previously supported.

The most recent scholarship on Marini is very exciting and has enriched my own understanding of Marini. Chiara Fabi has written a soon-to-be published supplement to the Museo del Novecento collection catalogue that sets straight many of the factual inconsistencies in Marini's biography and in the catalogue raisonné.<sup>65</sup> In addition, both Fabi and another young Italian art historian, Teresa Meucci, have begun to investigate Marini and his contemporaries' relationships with American dealer Curt Valentin after WWII.<sup>66</sup> These studies have built a foundation for understanding the facts about Marini's relationship with his dealer and his American collector-base, which this dissertation continues.

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<sup>63</sup> Meneguzzo, Marco. "The Parable of the Horseman of the West." In *Marino Marini. Cavalli e cavalieri*, Translated by Christopher Shanti Evans. Edited by Marco Meneguzzo. Milan: Skira, 1997. 15.

<sup>64</sup> Meneguzzo. Ibid. 15-16.

<sup>65</sup> Fabi, Chiara. *Marino Marini: La collezione del Museo del Novecento*. Milan: Silvana, (forthcoming).

<sup>66</sup> Fabi, Chiara. "1958: Medardo Rosso at the Peridot Gallery, New York." Paper presented at the College Art Association, New York, Feb. 12, 2015.; Meucci, Teresa. "Il debutto di Marino sulla 57<sup>a</sup> Strada di New York." In *Manzù/Marini: gli ultimi moderni*. Edited by Laura D'Angelo and Stefano Roffi. Milan: Silvana, 2014. 69-77.; \_\_\_\_\_ . "Marino Marini e Curt Valentin: La fortuna dello scultore in America." *Quaderni di scultura contemporanea*, no. 8 (2008): 6-21.



In this dissertation, I will look at the sculptors' production and their critical reception and exhibition within their contemporary contexts. Marini and Melotti have differing traditions within art historical scholarship, yet there are some similarities that I have identified here: both sculptors' relationship to Fascism is downplayed at best and the works considered from the period in this dissertation have been largely divorced from any connection to their contemporary context. This sheds light on a more complex understanding of the works created "across the divide" of the Second World War as well as historiographic anomalies that have shaded the art historical reception of the works.

### **Across the Divide: From Fascism to the Cold War**

Central to the present study is an understanding that sculpture exhibited after the Second World War did not spring from the ashes of Fascism, as such. Instead, the work of artists like Marini and Melotti grew from their inter-war work and shifted during the Fascist period when Mussolini was still in power. Building on the important work done by scholars like Emily Braun, Penelope Curtis, Antonello Negri and Maria Teresa Tosi, among others, I am working within an open dialogue about the complexities of Fascist culture.<sup>67</sup> Coupled with the critical histories of the period by Emily Braun, Emilio Gentile, John Foot, Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, Marla Stone and Christopher Duggan, among others, I have made an examination of the move by the Fascist

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<sup>67</sup> Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism*. 2000.; Curtis, Penelope. "Modernism & Monumentality." In *Scultura Lingua Morta: Sculpture From Fascist Italy*. Edited by Penelope Curtis. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2003. 11-34.; Negri, Antonello. "Introduction." In *The Thirties. The Arts in Italy Beyond Fascism*, Translated by Julia Hanna Weiss. Edited by Antonello Negri, Silvia Bignami, Paolo Rusconi and Giorgio Zanchetti. Florence: Giunti Editore, 2012. 14-17.; Tosi, Maria Teresa. "Marino Marini e la forma del colore [Marino Marini and the form of color]." In *Marino Marini: La forma del colore [Marino Marini: the form of color]*. Edited by Marco Bazzini and Maria Teresa Tosi. Florence: M&M, 2001. 24-25. \_\_\_\_\_. "I quattro rilievi in gesso per l'Arengario a Milano." In *Marino Marini. Il Segno la Forma l'idea: sculture, tecniche miste, disegni, litografie e incisioni 1929-1980*. Edited by Laura e Marco Guastalla Giorgio. Roma: Guastalla Centro Arte Snc, 2008. 9-11.

Regime from an embrace of modernist and avant-garde aesthetics towards a more conservative attitude about culture over the course of the *ventennio* with a strong footing.<sup>68</sup>

Building upon this foundation, this dissertation sets out to track the changes that took place in the works by the two sculptors in their modernist projects, while simultaneously shedding light on the politics embedded in the critical reception of their work. I show how this critical reception changed in response to the geopolitical environment as well as to the larger sculptural debates that ebbed and flowed throughout the middle of the century. In as much, I also do not back away from either sculptor's place within Fascist culture. Both gained prestige in Italy through association with the Regime, through commissions and within state-sponsored exhibition venues. As Penelope Curtis' exhibition *Scultura Lingua Morta-Sculpture from Fascist Italy* at the Henry Moore Institute showed, all of the most important Italian modernist sculptors participated in official Fascist culture. This is important to remember because it highlights the dramatic policy shift and subsequent intellectual disillusionment that happened in the late years of the Regime that Braun describes.<sup>69</sup> Unlike Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy initially supported modern and avant-garde art, even championing it and incorporating its ideals into their official rhetoric as a sign of the modernizing of the peninsula.<sup>70</sup> The shift away from modernism worried artists, not only

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<sup>68</sup> Braun, Emily. "L'Arte dell'Italia fascista: il totalitarismo fra teoria e pratica." In *Modernità totalitaria: il fascismo italiano*, Translated by Sandro Liberatore and Roberto Cincotta. Edited by Emilio Gentile. Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2008. 85-99.; Duggan, Christopher. *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.; Falasca-Zamponi, Simonetta. *Fascist spectacle: the aesthetics of power in Mussolini's Italy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.; Foot, John. *Italy's Divided Memory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.; Gentile, Emilio. "Introduzione." In *Modernità totalitaria: Il fascismo italiano*. Edited by Emilio Gentile. Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2008. V-XX.; \_\_\_\_\_. *La Grande Italia. The Myth of the Nation in the 20th Century*. Translated by Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009.; Stone, Marla Susan. *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

<sup>69</sup> Braun. "L'Arte dell'Italia fascista: il totalitarismo fra teoria e pratica." 85-99.

<sup>70</sup> There was an open market, if heavily restricted, in Nazi Germany as well. Arie Hartog explains that "[m]any artists and middle-class art-lovers kept at a distance from the dictatorship by retiring into their aesthetic [offering] the advantage of being able to identify like-minded persons without having to talk about politics." Hartog, Arie. "A Clean Tradition? Reflections on German Figurative Sculpture/Eine saubere Tradition? Überlegungen zur deutschen figurlichen Bildhauerei." In *Taking Positions: Figurative Sculpture and the Third Reich/Untergang einer Tradition: Figurliche Bildhauerei und das Dritte Reich*, Translated by Ursula Wulfekamp and Guy Slatter. Edited by Penelope Curtis. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2001. 39.

because it occurred with the lead-up to war against the French—Italy having been on the side of the Allies in WWI, and under Fascist Rule had already invaded Ethiopia in 1935 without much dissent—but also because it brought the curbing of Fascist liberal culture and the increasingly totalitarian control of the press, artists, and intellectuals.

Recent scholarship has begun to shed light on the complexities of the post-war period also under consideration in this dissertation. The early Cold War period in Italy has already been studied by historians, but art historians are just beginning to work on the period between 1945 and 1960. Historical studies by Christopher Duggan, David E. Ellwood, John Foot, Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Frances Stonor Saunders have been particularly important for my understanding of this period and, in particular, America's presence in the financial and ideological rebuilding of Italy after the war.<sup>71</sup> Their work has focused my study of international reception to a particular investigation into how Italian artists fared in the United States. Art historical studies by David Getsy, Sharon Hecker, Nancy Jachec and Teresa Meucci, along with design and architectural histories by Elena Dellapiana, Paulo Scrivano and Penny Sparke have

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<sup>71</sup> Duggan, Christopher. *A Concise History of Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.; \_\_\_\_\_ . "Italy in the Cold War Years and the Legacy of Fascism." In *Italy in the Cold War. Politics, Culture and Society 1948-58*. Edited by Christopher Duggan and Christopher Wagstaff. Oxford & Washington D.C.: Berg Publishers Limited, 1995. 1-24.; \_\_\_\_\_ . *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.; Ellwood, David W. "The 1948 elections in Italy: a cold war propaganda battle." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 13, no. 1 (1993): 19-33.; \_\_\_\_\_ . "From 'Re-education' to the Selling of the Marshall Plan in Italy." In *The Political Re-Education of Germany & Her Allies After World War II*. Edited by Nicholas Pronay and Keith Wilson. London: Croom Helm, 1985. 219-39.; \_\_\_\_\_ . "Italian modernisation and the propaganda of the Marshall Plan." In *The art of persuasion. Political communication in Italy from 1945 to the 1990s*. Edited by Luciano Cheles and Lucio Sponza. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001. 23-48. ; \_\_\_\_\_ . "Italy, Europe and the Cold War: The Politics and Economics of Limited Sovereignty." In *Italy in the Cold War. Politics, Culture and Society 1948-58*. Edited by Christopher Duggan and Christopher Wagstaff. Oxford & Washington D.C.: Berg Publishers Limited, 1995. 25-46. ; \_\_\_\_\_ . "Il Piano Marshall e la «Rivoluzione delle Aspettative»." In *La Rivoluzione dei Consumi. Società di massa e benessere in Europa 1945-2000*. Edited by Stefano Cavazza and Emanuela Scarpellini. Bologna: Società Editrice Il Mulino, 2010. 161-82.; \_\_\_\_\_ . "The Propaganda of the Marshall Plan in Italy in a Cold War Context." In *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960*. Edited by Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, The Intelligence Series. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003. 225-36.; Foot, John. *Italy's Divided Memory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2009.; Gienow-Hecht, Jessica C.E. "Culture and the Cold War in Europe." In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume 1*. Edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 398-419. ; Saunders, Frances Stonor. *The Cultural Cold War. The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*. New York: The New Press, 1999.; \_\_\_\_\_ . "Modern Art was CIA 'weapon'." *The Independent*, 22 October 1995.

been valuable resources in understanding the relationships between art and politics in the post-war period as well as in contextualizing the important shifts within the sculptural medium that are at the heart of my study.<sup>72</sup>

From the work of these scholars, I have been able to place both Marini and Melotti within a larger context at the moment of the burgeoning Cold War. Notably, the critical reception, exhibition and collecting practices were heavily influenced by the larger political context of the Trans-Atlantic community. As the financial success of the so-called “Economic Miracle” did not come to Italy until late in the 1950s, the U.S. provided the major market for art during the immediate post-war period. Though Italian sculpture was extensively exhibited throughout Europe and South America after WWII, its most important market was unequivocally the United States. Not only did American curators, critics and collectors support Italian sculptors, and not only did the U.S. Marshall Plan financially support Italian cultural production, but the art historical understanding of Marini’s and Melotti’s works from this period have been framed by the American rhetoric of the Cold War. Therefore, the last two chapters of

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<sup>72</sup> Getsy, David. “Tactility or opticality, Henry Moore or David Smith: Herbert Read and Clement Greenberg on *The Art of Sculpture*, 1956.” *Sculpture Journal* 17, no. 2 (2008): 75-88.; Hecker, Sharon. “Ambivalent Bodies: Medardo Rosso’s Brera Petition.” *The Burlington Magazine* 142, no. 1173 (2000): 773-77. ; \_\_\_\_\_. “If the boot fits... Luciano Fabro’s *Italie*.” *Forum Italicum* 47, no. 2 (2013): 431-62.; \_\_\_\_\_. “‘Servant of Two Masters’: Lucio Fontana’s Sculptures in Milan’s Cinema Arlecchino (1948).” *Oxford Art Journal* 35, no. 3 (2012): 337-61.; Jachec, Nancy. “Anti-Communism at Home, Europeanism Abroad: Italian Cultural Policy at the Venice Biennale, 1948-1958.” *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 2 (2005): 193-217.; \_\_\_\_\_. *Politics and painting at the Venice Biennale, 1948-1964*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.; Meucci, Teresa. “Il debutto di Marino sulla 57<sup>a</sup> Strada di New York.” In *Manzù/Marini: gli ultimi moderni*. Edited by Laura D’Angelo and Stefano Roffi. Milan: Silvana, 2014. 69-77.; \_\_\_\_\_. “Marino Marini e Curt Valentin: La fortuna dello scultore in America.” *Quaderni di scultura contemporanea*, no. 8 (2008): 6-21.; Dellapiana, Elena, and Daniela N. Prina. “Craft, Industry and Art: ISIA (1922-1943) and the Roots of Italian Design.” In *Made in Italy: Rethinking a Century of Italian Design*. Edited by Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. 109-25.; Scrivano, Paolo. “Signs of Americanization in Italian Domestic Life: Italy’s Postwar Conversion to Consumerism.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, no. 2 (2005): 317-40.; \_\_\_\_\_. “Romanticizing the Other? Views of Italian Industrial Design in Postwar America.” In *The Italian Legacy in Washington DC: Architecture, Design, Art and Culture*. Edited by Luca Molinari and Andrea Canepari. Milan: Skira, 2007. 156-61.; Sparke, Penny. *Design in Italy: 1870 to the Present*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1988. ; \_\_\_\_\_. “Industrial Design or Industrial Aesthetics?: American Influence on the Emergence of the Italian Modern Design Movement, 1948-58.” In *Italy in the Cold War. Politics, Culture and Society 1948-58*. Edited by Christopher Duggan and Christopher Wagstaff. Oxford & Washington D.C.: Berg Publishers Limited, 1995. 159-65. ; \_\_\_\_\_. “The Straw Donkey: Tourist Kitsch or Proto-Design? Craft and design in Italy, 1945-1960.” *Journal of Design History* 11, no. 1 (1998): 59-69.;

this dissertation are primarily set in the United States.

From *Italianità* (roughly translated as *Italianness*) to “Made in Italy,” the politicized frames that structured the understanding of Italian cultural production shaped the critical reception of both sculptors.<sup>73</sup> Marini’s and Melotti’s own projects reflect a consistency of artistic focus that was both cognizant of, and at times even engaged with contemporary politics. Looking at sculptural theory, history and aesthetic changes, this dissertation highlights the complex web of meanings that were used to describe their sculpture while at the same time tracking the changes in their sculptural production.

Chapter One examines Marini and Melotti’s non-commissioned works that were promoted by the Fascist State, and official State-commissioned production created from 1935 to 1943. To set the stage, I will start with an overview of the Fascist exhibition venues and their corresponding critical frameworks; combined, this environment came to shape the multifaceted nature of what can be described as “Fascist Art.” For example, Marini exhibited non-commissioned works at both the more radical Rome Quadriennale and the very conservative Venice Biennale—both exhibitions were supported under Fascist State arts funding. Both sculptors, Marini and Melotti, also began to reevaluate their modernist practices as the Fascist Regime turned away its support for advanced modern and avant-garde aesthetics in the lead up to the Pact of Steel that allied Fascist Italy with Nazi Germany in 1939.

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<sup>73</sup> *Italianità* is a term that was most explicitly used for a Fascist ideal of an Italian civilization. As Emilio Gentile writes, this Fascist rhetoric originated as an artistic ideal. The “myth of Italianism” was seen as a “necessity of a radical process of moral, cultural, and political regeneration meant to give birth to a “new Italian.” Long before the birth of fascism, Futurism urged the necessity of overcoming the barriers between culture and politics by means of a symbiosis between culture and life, a symbiosis designed to reawaken the intellectual and moral energies of the Italians, to endow them with a new sense of Italianness and spur them to the conquest of new preeminences. Artists and intellectuals were to abandon the privileged isles of aristocratic individualism and immerse themselves in the impetuous flux of modern life in order to become the artificers, the spiritual guides of the New Italy.” Gentile, Emilio. "The Conquest of Modernity: From Modernist Nationalism to Fascism " *Modernism/Modernity* 1, no. 3 (1994): 59.

Chapter Two turns to the period from 1943 to 1952 when Italy became both a real and ideological battleground. This chapter considers the private studio work, begun under Fascism, and its progress in the post-Fascist period. Arturo Martini's 1945 treatise *La Scultura lingua morta* [*Sculpture: Dead Language*] put into words a generation of sculptors' search for new forms of modernist sculpture. Moreover, critics in Italy began to reconsider the purpose of modern sculpture and what its part would be in leading the country out from under the shroud of Fascism.

Chapter Three examines how one version of new Italian modern sculpture was exhibited under the umbrella of "handicraft" in the Cold War context of the United States after WWII. For Marshall Plan organizers, Melotti's and his contemporaries' sculpture and other work in ceramic served as exemplars of Italy's post-totalitarian, American-initiated cultural renaissance. This exhibition solidified the understanding of Melotti's wartime sculptural experiments and post-war work as precisely this new kind of post-Fascist *Italianità*—what would be later termed as "Made in Italy." For the burgeoning Cold War cultural policies in the United States, this international presentation in the 1950s of Italian modernist sculpture, design, architecture and craft made Italy an icon for democratic creativity. At the same time, its characterization as something between fine art and luxury commodity furthered existing ambiguities in modernist sculpture's claimed high art autonomy. Melotti and his contemporaries utilized this nebulous nature of their new forms of modern sculpture to push the formal qualities of the medium further.

The final chapter will look at the presence of Italian sculpture within the international dialogue about modernist sculpture as fine art during the 1950s. While negotiating this new post-war context, Marini's work was used to shape emerging dialogues about modernist sculpture in

the post-war period. From museum curators like James T. Soby to critics like Clement Greenberg, sculptors like Marini became representative of the best of European modernist sculpture for American critics. At the same time, Marini represented a particular Italian identity, a modern post-Fascist *Italianità* that was exploited by critics, curators and collectors alike in the service of Cold War rhetoric. This “Cultural Cold War” strove to connect American culture to the rich humanist tradition of Italy.

In the Epilogue, I briefly look to the later production by both sculptors after 1959 as well as consider the ramifications of their versions of modernism on its critique by the later neo-avant-garde. What I hope to suggest here is the connection between modernism and State politics was never severed, despite all hopes during the late-Fascist and early-republican periods. At the same time, Marini’s and Melotti’s broadening of the sculptural field opened up new possibilities of modern sculpture that would be both taken up and critiqued by the younger generation to follow. The generation of sculptors that came after, in particular those associated with *Arte Povera* (Luciano Fabro, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Giuseppe Penone) and later Piero Manzoni and Alberto Burri, critiqued the Modernists’ centralized place of the object and its subsequent commodification.

## Chapter 1

### **Cultivating a New Italian Sculptural Modernism in the Late-Fascist Period: 1935-1943**

The second decade of Mussolini's dictatorship presented artists and intellectuals with never before seen opportunities in which large cultural organizations were financially, ideologically, and officially supported by the Regime. In an accelerating shift begun after Adolf Hitler's visit to the country in 1936 to mark the two countries' new treaty,<sup>74</sup> the once open-ended definition of "Fascist" culture came under more intense scrutiny. Mussolini admitted to his biographer Yvon De Begnac, "I shall never understand how a man like the Führer [...] could have allowed a battle to break out in his country against Expressionism, which my friend Oppo tells me is the most elevated voice in German art in this country."<sup>75</sup> Yet, growing restrictions on

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<sup>74</sup> See: Crum, Roger J. "Shaping the Fascist "New Man" - Donatello's *St. George* and Mussolini's Appropriated Renaissance of the Italian Nation." In *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Edited by Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005. 133-44.

<sup>75</sup> "Io non capirò mai perché un uomo come il Führer, inventore di un nuovo modo germanico di volgersi ai problemi della critica politica, e tutt-altro che privo di cultura nel campo delle arti figurative, abbia permesso che nel sup paese si scatenasse la battaglia contro l'espressionismo che, mi dice il mio amico Oppo, è la voce più alta dell'arte tedesca in questo secolo." Yvon De Begnac, *Taccuini mussoliniani*, edited by Francesco Perfetti, Bologna, il Mulino, 1990, p. 424; cited in Salaris, Claudia. *La Quadriennale. Storia della rassegna d'arte italiana dagli anni Trenta a oggi = History of the Exhibition of Italian Art from the Thirties to Today*. Translated by Felicity Lutz, Fondazione La Quadriennale di Roma. Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2004. 46. Translation and excerpt from Salaris.



Jewish-Italian citizens and elevated calls for the purge of “degenerate” art from Italian exhibitions, what Emily Braun calls “fascistization,” affected artists and their supporters alike.<sup>76</sup>

Artists and intellectuals who had up until this point felt free to make their own aesthetic choices, now worried about the influx of these new Nazi German dogmas. This sentiment was reflected in a 1937 letter from the abstract painter, Osvaldo Licini (1894-1958), a friend of Melotti and his cousin Carlo Belli. Licini wrote to Belli to congratulate the critic on his “article critiquing the infamous [conservative painter and art critic, Antonio] Maraini.” In this letter, he outlined his own worries for already growing restrictions on art in Italy.<sup>77</sup> Licini called out the then Superintendent of the Biennale, Antonio Maraini for “suffocating art in Italy.” Maraini had introduced subject restrictions on artists participating in the Biennale for the 1930 exhibition.<sup>78</sup>

He continued on to say that this was the “true mark of Bolshevism,” since it was the Russians, not the Germans, who were the first to put down modern art.<sup>79</sup> The letter unfolds as an attentive study of a larger international phenomenon of aesthetic censorship and its growing encroachment into the Italian landscape. Licini capped the letter with a somewhat hesitant

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<sup>76</sup> “The extremist wing of the Fascist culture mobilized with newspapers like A. F. Della Porta's «Il Perseo», Telesio Interlandi's «Quadrivio», «Il Tevere» and «La difesa della razza», and Roberto Farinacci's «Il regime fascista», with the aim of banning all modern forms of expression: Futurism, Rational Architecture, Metaphysical painting, the Novecento, but also galleries like La Cometa in Rome and the Milanese gallery Il Milione, that were closely associated with Abstract art and considered centers of anti-Italian power. Pensabene distinguished himself as one of the staunches opponents of Modernism and, taking advantage of the anti-Semitic policy adopted by Fascism, he began to criticize the former Quadriennale exhibitions, accusing them of not expressing true Italian values, since they were corrupted by «French-style discourses» and by excessive love of foreign things.” Salaris, *Ibid.* “Negli anni Trenta il regime rese più pressanti i richiami all’ortodossia e istituì una serie di concorsi a premi per favorire l’affermarsi dell’arte didascalica tra le generazioni più giovani; dopo il 1935 mise in atto una politica di «fascistizzazione» degli intellettuali e della popolazione in generale, e di conseguenza nella mostre patrocinate dallo stato si registrò una presenza più massiccia di opere inneggianti alla guerra.” Braun, Emily. “L’Arte dell’Italia fascista: il totalitarismo fra teoria e pratica.” In *Modernità totalitaria: il fascismo italiano*, Translated by Sandro Liberatore and Roberto Cincotta. Edited by Emilio Gentile. Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2008. 96.

<sup>77</sup> Licini, Osvaldo. Letter to Carlo Belli, October 1937, in *Archivio del '900*, R. 43/n.186 V7, MaRT, Rovereto.

<sup>78</sup> Braun, Emily. “L’Arte dell’Italia fascista: il totalitarismo fra teoria e pratica.” In *Modernità totalitaria: il fascismo italiano*, Translated by Sandro Liberatore and Roberto Cincotta. Edited by Emilio Gentile. Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2008. 97.

<sup>79</sup> “Maraini per soffocare le arti, in Italia, sono di pura marca bolscevica. André Gide, di ritorno da un viaggio in Russia ha potuto scrivere: “Credo che in nessun altro paese lo spirito sia meno libero, più curvo, più terrorizzato, più asservito che nella Russia dei Sovieti”. Poi è venuta la Germania, a questa si dovrebbe accodare l’Italia.” Licini, Osvaldo. Letter to Carlo Belli, October 1937, in *Archivio del '900*, R. 43/n.186 V7, MaRT, Rovereto.

glimmer of hope for the continued aesthetic freedom of Italian artists—“[f]ortunately Mussolini is not Hitler”—even though his sentiments illustrated how Italian artists were aware of and wary of the larger international situation of aesthetic censorship. His letter represents an environment in the mid-1930s in which artists still had faith that Mussolini would uphold his demonstrated tolerance to advanced modernism and support for its artists.

The signing of the “Pact of Steel” on May 22, 1939 marked the culminating moment of a paradigm shift in Italian Fascist culture as well as its official entrance into the Second World War.<sup>80</sup> Since the middle of the decade, a growing number of cultural leaders had begun to have influence in their support of German-style political ideals, advocating for their installation as official policies. State support of modern and avant-garde aesthetics, both inside and outside official channels, was brought into question by a group of conservative critics who were gaining support within the Fascist apparatus. At the same time, the signing of Italy’s military alliance with Germany soured much hope for Mussolini’s continued support of artists in the same way as before. Fascist officials questioned whether artists who made modernist and avant-garde work were truly contributing to Italian civilization or were they, as the Germans argued for their own modern art, part of an international Jewish conspiracy. A “totalitarian art” was needed in this new Fascist moment of empirical expansion and the old liberal “Fascist art” needed to be purged.<sup>81</sup>

Successively, the passage of the first of a series of racial laws in November of 1938 and, the following May, the signing of the Pact of Steel brought a number of aspects of Italian Fascist

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<sup>80</sup> See: Duggan, Christopher. *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 319-350.

<sup>81</sup> Braun, Emily. "L'Arte dell'Italia fascista: il totalitarismo fra teoria e pratica." In *Modernità totalitaria: il fascismo italiano*, Translated by Sandro Liberatore and Roberto Cincotta. Edited by Emilio Gentile. Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2008. 97.

policies closer to those of Nazi Germany's.<sup>82</sup> Unsurprisingly, this moment marked a second wave exodus of prominent artists and intellectuals from Italy. The first wave left Italy when Mussolini came to power in the 1920s, due to their ideological opposition to the Fascist Regime, Mussolini's totalitarian dictatorship, and his violent purges of leftist activists. The second wave left for different and more varied reasons. Artists and intellectuals who had found a place to work within the country under Fascism without coming in direct opposition to the Regime were now confronted with a radicalization of State culture and found it necessary to leave. The truly totalitarian nature of late-Fascism came from internal constructs of empire-building with the invasion of Ethiopia in 1936.<sup>83</sup> Then, when Mussolini turned his back on other Latin civilizations, France in particular, and sided with a Germanic civilization, fears grew further.

This complex political and ideological moment led to the second wave exodus of artists and intellectuals. Their unease about the burgeoning war, the future of aesthetic freedom in Italy, physical security for Jewish citizens, and the legacy of Italian Fascism all led to this second wave of emigration in one way or another. The Jewish painter Giorgio di Chirico left Italy for Paris to flee the new racial laws soon after their ratification;<sup>84</sup> sculptor Lucio Fontana moved back to his birthplace, Argentina in the Spring of 1940, where he would stay until 1947, because of the increasing restrictions placed on his artistic expression;<sup>85</sup> Renato Poggioli, later author of *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1962), fled in 1939 and became a founding member of the Mazzini Society, an

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<sup>82</sup> See: Codovini, Giovanni, and Dino Renato Nardelli. *Le leggi razziali in Italia*. Foligno: Editoriale Umbra, 2002.

<sup>83</sup> Gentile, Emilio. "Introduzione." In *Modernità totalitaria: Il fascismo italiano*. Edited by Emilio Gentile. Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2008. XVI.

<sup>84</sup> "Biography," *Fondazione Giorgio di Chirico*, <http://www.fondazionedechirico.org/biografia/?lang=en> [accessed: 27 Feb. 2015]

<sup>85</sup> "Biography." In *Fontana*. Edited by Enrico Crispolti. Milan: Charta, 1999. 270. Anthony White claims that Fontana shifts his work because, in part, of the Fascist incorporation of abstract art into the official fold. For Fontana therefore, abstraction became mere propaganda. White's reading is very convincing and allies with my own argument for Melotti and Marini. See: White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and K&uot;utsch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 61-127.

organization whose aim was to support intellectuals who had fled Fascism and had come to the United States to fight it;<sup>86</sup> and Margherita Sarfatti, Mussolini's one-time mistress who had been a central figure in the Milanese art scene, left for France and subsequently South America at the enactment of the racial laws because of her Jewish heritage.<sup>87</sup>

The connection between the invasion of Ethiopia, the racial laws, the Pact of Steel, and an anxiety among artists and intellectuals had larger ramifications. The artists who stayed were confronted with a growing chorus of Fascist intellectuals redefining modern and avant-garde art with the German model in mind.<sup>88</sup> Licini's concerns in 1937 were quickly realized in the successive years. As Anthony White describes, this shift was not immediate. It gradually affected artists and to varying degrees over the course of the 1930s.<sup>89</sup> He writes that, though

there were... mounting objections to abstraction in the more fanatical right-wing press in Italy...abstract art was exhibited in Italy at the Quadriennale of Rome in 1935, 1939, and 1943, and remained visible throughout the fascist era at a number of official and nonofficial exhibitions. Evidently, the situation of abstract art in fascist Italy was complex.<sup>90</sup>

White's description points to the complexities of the Fascist State exhibition apparatus as much as it does the critique of modernist aesthetics—as I will describe below, the Quadriennale strove to retain some of the earlier Fascist liberal culture that began to be curtailed after 1935.

Even the internationally renowned avant-garde movement, Italian Futurism, did not fare well in the growing conservatism of the late 1930s. Though Marinetti had a personal history with Mussolini, starting when the Futurists and Fascist had joined to lobby for Italian intervention in

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<sup>86</sup> See: Camurri, Renato. "Idee in movimento: l'esilio degli intellettuali italiani negli Stati Uniti (1930-1945)." *Memoria e ricerca*, no. 31 (2009): 59-62. & Varsori, Antonio. *Gli Alleati e l'emigrazione democratica antigascista (1940-1943)*. Florence: Sansoni Editore, 1982. 38-43.

<sup>87</sup> Farrell, Nicholas. *Mussolini. A New Life*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003. 303-4.

<sup>88</sup> See: Barron, Stephanie. "1937: Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany." In *"Degenerate Art" The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. Edited by Stephanie Barron. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991. 9-23.

<sup>89</sup> White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 62-64.

<sup>90</sup> White. *Ibid.* 64.

WWI, the Futurists' activities were increasingly curbed.<sup>91</sup> Many of their members were removed from exhibitions after the “radical enforcement of the corporation laws in 1934 and the formation of the Ministry of Popular Culture in 1937.”<sup>92</sup> The last major blow came in 1939 when their Rome-based publication *Artecrazia* was forced to close after the implementation of the Racial Laws.<sup>93</sup>

However, unlike Germany, the Italian Fascists never undertook total upheavals of private and public property; there were no confiscation, wholesale liquidation or destruction of collections of advanced modernist works, nor were there ever official Fascist decrees about aesthetic standards. Yet a number of prominent Fascist ideologues mobilized a cultural war against the modern aesthetic in all its forms, using a series of new periodicals—A. F. Della Porta's *Il Perseo*, Telesio Interlandi's *Quadriavio*, *Il Tevere* and *La difesa della razza*, and Roberto Farinacci's *Il regime fascista*.<sup>94</sup> In the end, artists lost their teaching positions and almost all the Jewish artists and intellectuals who did not flee were apprehended and sent to German concentration camps.

An important example of the Italian participation in the Nazi “Final Solution” for the present study is the fate of Gianluigi Banfi and Lodovico Belgiojoso. Two members of the prominent Milanese architecture firm BBPR, with whom Melotti extensively collaborated, Banfi and Belgiojoso were arrested soon after the racial laws were ratified and both were sent to

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<sup>91</sup> Tompson, Susan. "Futurism, Fascist, and Mino Somenzi's Journals of the 1930s: *Futurismo*, *Sant-Elia*, and *Artecrazia*." In *Italian Futurism, 1909-1944: Reconstructing the Universe*, Translated by Stephen Sartarelli and Marguerite Shore. Edited by Vivien Greene. New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2014. 256. & Poggi, Christine. "Introduction to Part Two." In *Futurism: An Anthology*. Edited by Lawrence Painey, Christine Poggi and Laura Wittman. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. 323.

<sup>92</sup> Berghaus, Günter. *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909-1944*. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996. 233.

<sup>93</sup> Tompson, Susan. "Futurism, Fascist, and Mino Somenzi's Journals of the 1930s: *Futurismo*, *Sant-Elia*, and *Artecrazia*." In *Italian Futurism, 1909-1944: Reconstructing the Universe*, Translated by Stephen Sartarelli and Marguerite Shore. Edited by Vivien Greene. New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2014. 258.

<sup>94</sup> Salaris, Claudia. *La Quadriennale. Storia della rassegna d'arte italiana dagli anni Trenta a oggi = History of the Exhibition of Italian Art from the Thirties to Today*. Translated by Felicity Lutz. Edited by Fondazione La Quadriennale di Roma. Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2004. 46.

German concentration camps. While Belgiojoso survived the war, Banfi was gassed just two weeks before the camp's liberation.<sup>95</sup> The firm would go on to design a monument in 1946 for the Cimitero Monumentale in Milan in remembrance of those who had died in German concentration camps, including their friend and collaborator Banfi.<sup>96</sup>

In Italy, Jews increasingly became a target of the Fascists because they were seen as an international and/or a-national force. Giacchino Volpe, author of the first official history of the Fascist State, wrote in 1943 that

as Fascism developed and clarified its own principles to itself, there was an increasing emphasis on arguments which were nationalistic, anti-cosmopolitan, anti-humanitarian and anti-pacifist, anti-plutocratic, anti-democratic, anti-liberal, anti-Masonic, anti-Bolshevik: all of them, more or less implicitly or explicitly anti-Jewish, or which could express themselves in an anti-Semitic movement.<sup>97</sup>

Italian Fascist anti-Semitism was connected to a large web, created by critics, of perceived currents of undesirables that were all thought to reflect, at this moment, a dangerous internationalism that threatened the Regime and the Fascist civilization and its Empire.

This phenomenon was articulated in the final two issues of the Futurist journal *Artecrazia*, which railed against the “sudden, cataclysmic eruption of anti-Semitism.”<sup>98</sup> Art historian Christine Poggi explains that the second to last issue of *Artecrazia*, titled “The Italian Character of Modern Art,” reflected a frantic push by the avant-garde group to stand in the face of radical criticism and remain viable within the Fascist cultural hierarchy. Both the journal's editor, Mino

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<sup>95</sup> Gregotti, Vittorio. "Milano e la cultura architettonica tra le due guerre." In *Il Razionalismo e l'architettura in Italia durante il fascismo*. Edited by Silvia Danesi Squarzina and Luciano Patetta. Venice: La biennale di Venezia, 1976. 21. & Foot, John. *Italy's Divided Memory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2009. 90.

<sup>96</sup> Despite this loss, the firm BBPR outlived the war and the remaining members went on to create iconic buildings throughout Milan after the war. However, they no longer worked in the functionalist style, which for them represented Fascism too strongly. See: Guidarini, Stefano, and Luca Molinari. "BBPR e Milano / BBPR's Milan." *Domus*, October 1997, 127.

<sup>97</sup> Volpe, Giacchino. "The Introduction of Fascist Racial Policy (1943)." In *Fascism*. Edited by Roger Griffin, Oxford Readers. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. 80-81.

<sup>98</sup> Poggi, Christine. "Introduction to Part Two." In *Futurism: An Anthology*. Edited by Lawrence Painey, Christine Poggi and Laura Wittman. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. 330.

Somenzi, and the avant-garde movement's founder, F.T. Marinetti "affirmed the patriotic qualities of Futurism, to be distinguished from its degenerate (German) derivatives, and argued that Italian Futurism had inspired much of modern art and could not therefore be accused of being anti-Italian."<sup>99</sup> The institutionalization of Italian Fascist anti-Semitism was a symptom of a desire to secure the nation from international influences, in contrast to the strictly articulated biological racism seen in Nazi Germany.<sup>100</sup>

Undoubtedly, this informed the historian and political theorist Emilio Gentile's description of the official incorporation of anti-Semitism into Fascist ideology. Gentile argues that, though "[o]fficially grafting racism and anti-Semitism onto the Fascist ideology" was presented in Fascist propaganda as a seamless transition, "the more thoroughly this agreement was gone into, the more difficult it was to uphold in the long run."<sup>101</sup> The continued disparity between the two national policies persisted because, Gentile argues, the Nazi "biological racism"

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<sup>99</sup> Poggi. *Ibid.* 330.

<sup>100</sup> Sander Gilman gives a detailed reading of the long history of equating Jews with the insane and, in the early twentieth-century with degenerate art. Gilman, Sander. "The Mad Man as Artist: Medicine, History and Degenerate Art." *Journal of Contemporary History* 20 (1985): 575-97.

<sup>101</sup> Gentile, Emilio. *La Grande Italia. The Myth of the Nation in the 20th Century*. Translated by Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009. 190.

and the Fascist “spiritual racism” were distinct.<sup>102</sup> As he has further articulated recently, Italian Fascism’s “totalitarian modernity” was initially pluralist in terms of culture, an aspect that allowed for a more effective control of the masses.<sup>103</sup> This became of particular import in Italy after its invasion of Ethiopia and alliance with Germany because of the perception of Italian racial impurity. The Fascist ideal “New Order” made national/civilization supremacy paramount.<sup>104</sup>

The Italian Fascists had initially been concerned with the supremacy of Fascist civilization in its growing Empire, regardless of race in as much as other races would, of course, assimilate. Since it was central to their ideology, the Fascist understanding of their unique

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<sup>102</sup> Gentile’s characterization that I use here does have its detractors, however. His idea of Fascist “spiritual racism” is passionately refuted by Michele Sarfatti who writes: “[t]he evidence is clear. Italian anti-Jewish laws were not aimed just at anti-Fascist or non-Fascist Jews or only at people who were members of a Jewish community; they were aimed at all those who were termed “of Jewish race.” ... This was undoubtedly biological—not spiritual—racism.” Sarfatti makes strong points as to the exact legal terms of the racial laws being akin to the German ones in type (i.e. Jewish by blood not faith), yet he points out their dissimilarities. Sarfatti writes that “the aim of the Italian Fascist regime in those years [1940-1943] was to eliminate Jews from the country, not to eliminate the country’s Jews” even if, in the end, an agreement with Berlin was reached to deport Jews to Nazi concentration camps in 1943. [See: Sarfatti, Michele. “Characteristics and Objectives of the Anti-Jewish Racial Laws in Fascist Italy, 1938-1943.” In *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*. Translated by Antony Shugaar. Edited by Joshua D. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 71-80.] It is clear that there was wide-spread anti-Semitism in Italy long before the implementation of the Racial laws in 1938. Annalisa Capristo writes that the “case of the Accademia d’Italia constitutes important evidence of the existence in Italy of a creeping anti-Semitism well before 1938, when it was made public and official by the racial legislation.” [See: Capristo, Annalisa. “The Exclusion of Jews from Italian Academies.” In *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1933-1945*. Translated by Antony Shugaar. Edited by Joshua D. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 81-95.] In parallel, Sandro Servi astutely describes how the government-funded propaganda journal, *La Difesa della Razza* “was designed to foster pride in the “Italian race”,” and “present itself as a forum for the popularization of modern biological racism.” [See: Servi, Sandro. “Building a Racial State: Images of the Jews in the Illustrated Fascist Magazine, *La Difesa della Razza*, 1938-1943.” In *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1933-1945*, Translated by Antony Shugaar. Edited by Joshua D. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 114-57.] Therefore, it is clear that a rhetoric of biological racism was at play at least by the mid-1930s, but Gentile’s view offers an important way into a broader look at the differences between the Fascist and Nazi agendas. Since Italian Fascism never gained the kind of cultural control as its German counterpart, even during the war years, Gentile gives us an useful way to understand the reason for Mussolini’s relatively-late incorporation of Racial laws into the State legal apparatus.

<sup>103</sup> Gentile, Emilio. “Introduzione.” In *Modernità totalitaria: Il fascismo italiano*. Edited by Emilio Gentile. Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2008. V-XX.

<sup>104</sup> Gentile, Emilio. *La Grande Italia. The Myth of the Nation in the 20th Century*. Translated by Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009. 191-2.



civilization as the “Third Rome”<sup>105</sup> was more important to uphold in response to German antagonism at Mussolini’s initial non-commitment to the Nazis’ fervent kind of racism.<sup>106</sup> This can be seen in the official response, or rather lack thereof, to internal and external pressures to regulate modern art. In Nazi ideology, modern and avant-garde art was equated to the disease of the Jewish conspiracy, even when that art was created by non-Jews or even by enthusiastic Nazi party members like Emil Node.<sup>107</sup> However, these pressures grew throughout the 1930s, and with the enactment of the Racial Laws, the move towards totalitarian control of aesthetics coincided with the persecution of the Italian Jewry.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) Senior Curator Stephanie Barron provides a thoughtful investigation into the larger context for art under the National Socialists and outlines the implementation of their cultural policies in the catalogue for the 1991 exhibition “*Degenerate Art*” *The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* at LACMA. In her description, the Nazis focused on a biological term to understand art:

*Entartet*, which has traditionally been translated as “degenerate” or “decadent,” is essentially a biological term, defining a plant or animal that has so changed that it no longer belongs to its species. By extension it refers to art that is unclassifiable or so far beyond the confines of what is accepted that it is in essence “non-art.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> See: Kallis, Aristotle. "The “Third Rome” of Fascism: Demolitions and the Search for a New Urban Syntax." *The Journal of Modern History* 84, no. 1 (2012): 40-79.; Wilkins, Ann Thomas. "Augustus, Mussolini, and the Parallel Imagery of Empire." In *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Edited by Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005. 53-65.

This idea of a new, modern Italian empire comes from Fascist interpretations of the ideas of Giuseppe Mazzini. See: Isabella, Maurizio. "Liberalism and Empires in the Mediterranean: The View-Point of the Risorgimento " In *The Risorgimento Revisited: Nationalism and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Italy*. Edited by Silvana Patriarca and Lucy Riall. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 248.

<sup>106</sup> See: Michaelis, Meir. *Mussolini and the Jews. German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy 1922-1945*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978. 205-7.

<sup>107</sup> Barron, Stephanie. "1937: Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany." In *"Degenerate Art" The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. Edited by Stephanie Barron. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991. 9.

<sup>108</sup> Barron, Ibid. 11.

Therefore, within German discourse as early as the nineteenth century, certain kinds of modern and avant-garde art were understood as essentially “non-art.”<sup>109</sup> This definition of modern and avant-garde art as “non-art” also began to pervade Italian discourse after 1935.

As in the German case, the growing control of Fascist culture was tasked, in part, to a series of right-wing periodicals who were to “defame them in the press.”<sup>110</sup> In the state-sponsored propaganda journal *La Difesa della Razza* [*The Defense of the Race*], one article explicitly tied modern architecture to a pervasive Jewish influence. As historian Sandro Servi recounts,

[the] author [G. Dell’Isola] criticizes rationalism in architecture with attacks against Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Erich Mendelsohn but blames a group of Jews, foreigners (the Hungarian Flaudi), and Italians (Levi Montalcini), faulting them for the diffusion of this rationalism in Italy. The chief crime of these architects was the use of iron, which Italy had to import. As Dell’Isola wrote, “While [these architects] claimed they wanted to become ‘modern,’ the iron, imported for no good reason, has brought that much more gold dropping into the pockets of the international plutocracy.” The article was illustrated—with little relation to the text—by two sculpture by Jacob Epstein, a famous Jewish sculptor born in New York and active in England, as well as a painting by Chagall.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Of course the German case is more complicated than Nazi art versus Degenerate Art. As Arie Hartog elaborates in the exhibition catalogue for *Taking Positions: Figurative Sculpture and the Third Reich* (2001), examples exist where artists both operated within the Reich apparatus but were also showcased in the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition. He writes that Gerhard Marcks “was dismissed from his teaching post for speaking out on behalf of his Jewish colleagues. In 1937, while living in Mecklenburg, he was officially invited to take part in a competition for a monument to the National Socialist movement in Rostock. That same year the Ministry of Education proposed Marcks as a new member of the Preußische Akademie der Künste, while members of the Ministry of Propaganda took works by him to the *Entartete Kunst* [*Degenerate Art*] exhibition. Marcks is therefore one of the most prominent examples of the confusion in the artistic policy of the Third Reich, not least because he is one of the few cases, in which a—somewhat rare—definitive decision is documented at the highest level by Adolf Hitler. It was decided that Marcks should not be officially honoured. He was able, however, to continue to work, for he still has prospective purchasers.” [Hartog, Arie. “A Clean Tradition? Reflections on German Figurative Sculpture/Eine saubere Tradition? Überlegungen zur deutschen figürlichen Bildhauerei.” In *Taking Positions: Figurative Sculpture and the Third Reich/Untergang einer Tradition: Figürliche Bildhauerei und das Dritte Reich*, Translated by Ursula Wulfekamp and Guy Slatter. Edited by Penelope Curtis. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2001. 30-41. Quoted text on page 36.] However, he points out all Jewish artists and art collectors were excluded all together.

<sup>110</sup> Gabler, Josephine. “Conformity in Dissent: The Sculptors in the Third Reich/Anpassung im Dissens: Die Bildhauer im Dritten Reich.” In *Taking Positions: Figurative Sculpture and the Third Reich/Untergang einer Tradition: Figürliche Bildhauerei und das Dritte Reich*, Translated by Ursula Wulfekamp and Guy Slatter. Edited by Penelope Curtis. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2001. 48.

<sup>111</sup> Servi, Sandro. “Building a Racial State: Images of the Jews in the Illustrated Fascist Magazine, *La Difesa della Razza*, 1938-1943.” In *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1933-1945*, Translated by Antony Shugaar. Edited by Joshua D. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 139 & 144.

Here, Servi describes a larger, yet extremely vague, connection between modern aesthetics, anti-Semitic ideas and Italy's economic burdens. By illustrating artworks by well-known Jewish artists (Epstein and Chagall) alongside an article about the Jewish-led debasement of architecture, in its modernist form, the editors of *La Difesa della Razza* set clear parallels. Modernist art, like its counterpart in architecture, was Jewish and run by international interest, and therefore needed to be removed from Italian Fascist society. Though the article offered some space for modern art to work in Italy, with the editor's choice of non-Italian examples to illustrate Jewish modern art, G. Dell'Isola's article in *La Difesa della Razza* implicated modernism as Jewish more generally by its mere association with international interests.

In a helpful framing of this phenomenon, the Comparative Literature scholar Neil Levi theorizes that the reading of modernism and the avant-garde as Jewish, or the process of "Judaization," points to a coming together of "aesthetic modernism and modern antisemitism [in order to] seek formal solutions to the problem of how to render intelligible the experience of modernity."<sup>112</sup> Therefore, it is the moment when the experience of modernity is unsettling and needs further explanation when modernism meets antisemitism.

The unintelligibility of the cultural modernism following the Pact of Steel reverberated to generate the Racial Laws and the antagonism toward modern and avant-garde artists. Levi's thesis is particularly apt in the Italian case because their "totalitarian modernity" had retained the pluralistic aesthetic of a modernist liberal culture for so long. As historian Marla Stone shows, the Fascists supported modern art throughout much of the Regime's existence because it rhetorically reflected the Fascist State's own modernity. She writes:

Italian Fascism with its futurist, syndicalist, and modernist origins offered little of the a priori aesthetic antimodernism and anti-avantgardism associated with Nazi Germany and

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<sup>112</sup> Levi, Neil. *Modernist Form and the Myth of Jewification*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014. 4.

the Soviet Union under Stalin. Instead, arts patronage under Italian Fascism accommodated modernism and the avant-garde, adapting them to the Fascist cultural, political, and social context.<sup>113</sup>

However, after almost two decades of modernizing Italy, when Mussolini sided with Hitler, conservative critics gained the power to question the future of the Fascist State.<sup>114</sup> Though there was an uneasy ideological alliance between the Axis powers, Fascism increasingly began to incorporate German ideals in the service of strengthening their own totalitarian powers in Italy.

The shift toward a conservative view of culture and a reading of modern art as Jewish/foreign/degenerate was the coalescence of multiple factors: a desire to be ideologically closer to their soon-to-be-ally, Third Reich Germany; an inability to reconcile themselves to the newly adopted Nazi “biological racism;” a desire to focus Fascist aesthetic culture on a non-international *Italianità*; an anxiety about the future of Fascist-made modernity. The context of a growing desire to separate Italy from any connection to non-Italian (and later non-Aryan) culture allowed modernism to become suspect to a growing number of influential members of the PNF (*Partito Nazionale Fascista* or National Fascist Party) including il Duce. As Mussolini had already economically and politically isolated the country, including receiving sanctions from the League of Nations following his unauthorized colonization of Ethiopia, the Regime needed to secure their nationalist foundations as it had not before.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Stone, Marla Susan. *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. 4.

<sup>114</sup> There was push back against this move in Italy among intellectuals, as there was with artists. Starting with the implementation of the requirement of professors and members of the academy to pledge allegiance to Fascism in 1934, through the passage of the Racial laws, prominent intellectuals like Benedetto Croce and Faetano De Sanctis openly criticized the state’s conservative movements. See: Capristo, Annalisa. "The Exclusion of Jews from Italian Academies." In *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1933-1945*. Edited by Joshua D. Zimmerman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 82 & 88-89. Also see: Stone, Marla Susan. *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. 175-221.

<sup>115</sup> See: Duggan, Christopher. *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 249-282.; Gentile, Emilio. *La Grande Italia. The Myth of the Nation in the 20th Century*. Translated by Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009. 171-182.

For modernist artists, even if they were neither Jewish nor anti-Fascists, their work was likewise suspect. Modernism itself was a marker of internationalism and represented a dangerous strain of culture not easily bridled by Fascism. This coincided with an increasingly vocal call for the integration of the arts that changed the “status and function of the art object.”<sup>116</sup> As White describes, the “synthesis of the arts, one of the pillars of artistic utopia, was connected to a strong social reform agenda” in Fascist Italy as well as abroad.<sup>117</sup> In his reading of Fontana’s aesthetic shifts in the 1930s, White shows how both the shifting political agenda and the sculptor’s own aesthetic ideals informed the move from figuration to abstraction and back. Here, Fontana is an important parallel to Melotti’s similar moments of flux. The integration of the arts, White outlines, made modernism function for Fascism as an art of “spectacle.”<sup>118</sup> Therefore, not only was modern aesthetics suspected by conservative critics, it was also suspect to artists uneasy with its integrated use in overtly propagandistic exhibitions like the 1932 *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*.

This more complex reading of the shifting paradigms within Italy at the moment when it entered the war with the Pact of Steel is operative for understanding the diversity of reactions that artists had at the time. Artists’ own critique of their “Fascist Art” played an important role in the new work that they began to create during the wars years. The new work created in the late 1930s and early 1940s, in critique of earlier modernists trends supported under early-Fascism, would become internationally renowned after war’s end.

Fascist Italy no longer could accommodate advanced modernist and avant-garde aesthetic ideals unless it was confined within over propagandistic subjects. A combination of growing

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<sup>116</sup> White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 64.

<sup>117</sup> White. *Ibid.* 67.

<sup>118</sup> White. *Ibid.* 84.

racialized distinctions, increased militarization in the wake of the Etrurian campaign, and the uncertainty of the future of the Italian Fascist Empire as it grew closer to its German counterpart, increased the scrutiny on Fascism's liberal culture from within and outside. As Licini professed in his letter to Belli in 1937, Germany was not the first dictatorship to bring down modern art under the label of "degenerate."<sup>119</sup> Therefore, contemporary artists were cognizant of the difference between Italian Fascism and other forms of "totalitarian modernity." The new racial legislation and shifting Fascist ideals as Italy entered WWII signaled to artists that the golden age of Fascist aesthetic freedom would be ending and alternatives must be sought.

During this moment of social, political, and ideological upheaval, the work of Marini, Melotti, and their contemporaries changed. Both sculptors remained in Italy during the bulk of the Second World War, though Marini left later in 1942.<sup>120</sup> Similar to White's reading of Fontana, I argue that Marini's and Melotti's new studio work marked shifts in form and theme in reaction to the conservative shifts away from a "Fascist" art and toward "totalitarian" art; these aspects have been little studied. One major blindspot has been the consideration of the socio-political moment beyond a simplified reading of war trauma. The signing of the Pact of Steel in 1939 not only marked Italy's official entrance into the Second World War, as described above, but it also marked a paradigm shift among artists and intellectuals. Marini and Melotti both understood the ramifications of the Fascist-Nazi alliance, with its growing calls against advanced modernist and avant-garde aesthetics. Their work changed in response and the sculptors reevaluated their aesthetics in order to continue their modernist projects in a new and more truculent context.

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<sup>119</sup> Licini, Osvaldo. Letter to Carlo Belli, October 1937, in *Archivio del '900*, R. 43/n.186 V7, MaRT, Rovereto

<sup>120</sup> *Marino Marini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998.343.

Marini's and Melotti's late-Fascist Era sculptural production, therefore, reflected both their earlier modernist projects and also their new initiatives to distance themselves from that same past. In doing so, they strove to move away from Fascist connotations, a tactic that would serve them well at war's end.

When Mussolini entered WWII, state propaganda emphasized the difference between the two world conflicts:

Italy entered World War II under the banner of a revolutionary war that, after the victory of the Axis, was intended to achieve an imperial Fascist community, a New Europe and a New Order... Fascist propaganda explained that after rising to the rank of a great power with the victory in World War I, Italy had become not only an imperial power, with world responsibilities and ambitions, but also for the third time in the centuries-old history of the peninsula, the founder of a New Civilization that went beyond the dimensions of a nation and held itself up as a universal civilization.<sup>121</sup>

Therefore, Mussolini's intentions for the Second World War were to bring Italian civilization to the world. However, there was an uncertainty as to what Italian Fascist civilization even looked like once Fascism allied with the Germans. Artists, still invested in a rhetoric of nationalist Italian modernism, experienced a growing number of complex roadblocks in the way of continuing their previous projects. Since artists were so closely utilized to reflect the success of early-Fascist culture, their shift should be seen as a move away their "Fascist Art" practices in order to seek a new Italian modernist project. This new practice however did not completely break with the earlier one.

For many artists, even those who continued to work within official Fascist frameworks, the modernist ideals once sanctioned and even directly supported by Fascism were now doubly compromised for artists. Mainstream Fascist culture no longer supported the liberal culture with

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<sup>121</sup> Gentile, Emilio. *La Grande Italia. The Myth of the Nation in the 20th Century*. Translated by Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009. 183.

its aesthetic freedoms and, at the same time, those aesthetics were tainted by association with the now authoritarian Fascist totalitarianism. Fausto Melotti returned to figurative sculpture in ceramics, poetry, and drawing after his highly praised purely-abstract sculpture of the mid-1930s; Marino Marini turned to a constricted set of figural types, which adhered to his earlier advances in form but outlined a restricted view of sculptural modernism.<sup>122</sup> Importantly, these non-Fascist studio works were created alongside and sometimes in dialogue with a continued Fascist totalitarian art practice—whether through official commissions or state-sponsored exhibition cycles. The studio production of these two sculptors point to an understanding, if unarticulated, that there had been an irreconcilable change in Fascist culture that could not sustain the advancement of the kind of modern art they had created throughout the previous decade that contributed to Fascist culture.

### **National and International Exhibitions in Fascist Italy**

After a decade of successes in domestic affairs and foreign expansion, the Fascist state began to bolster its political apparatus to solidify the legacy of the Regime.<sup>123</sup> The Regime's shifted focus changed the way in which cultural production was used and regulated by the Fascists. As with its German counterpart,<sup>124</sup> the Fascist Regime had harnessed the visual arts to

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<sup>122</sup> These works by Melotti and Marini introduced here will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

<sup>123</sup> There are many histories of the Fascist Regime; some of the best are listed here. See: *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Edited by Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.; Falasca-Zamponi, Simonetta. *Fascist spectacle : the aesthetics of power in Mussolini's Italy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.; Knox, MacGregor. *Mussolini Unleashed 1939-1941. Politics and Strategy in Fascist Italy's Last War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.; Stone, Marla Susan. *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.; Thompson, Doug. *State control in Fascist Italy: Culture and conformity, 1925-43*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991.

<sup>124</sup> See: Barron, Stephanie. "1937: Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany." In *"Degenerate Art" The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. Edited by Stephanie Barron. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991. 9-23.; Gabler, Josephine. "Conformity in Dissent: The Sculptors in the Third Reich/Anpassung im Dissens: Die Bildhauer im Dritten Reich." In *Taking Positions: Figurative Sculpture and the Third Reich/Untergang einer Tradition: Figürliche Bildhauerei und das Dritte Reich*, Translated by Ursula Wulfekamp and Guy Slatter. Edited by Penelope Curtis. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2001. 42-59.



work within a larger propaganda mission, but to much different ends, during the first decade of the Regime.<sup>125</sup> As Fascist Era art historian Francesco Sapori described in his 1932 book *L'Arte e il Duce* [*Art and the Duce*], Italian Fascist art needed to not just reflect a glorified Roman past but needed to be forward looking.<sup>126</sup> Sapori proclaimed that the “plan of the Duce is a promise of modernity...”.<sup>127</sup> Sapori’s book was published just before the pinnacle of Fascist liberal culture, identified with the second Quadriennale in 1935, before the shift to the so-called “triumphant Fascism” of the late 1930s.<sup>128</sup> Sapori outlined the important place of artists within the Regime, arguing that through the “hierarchy of exhibitions” there were diverse and ample opportunities for artists throughout Italy to participate in Italian Fascist modernity.<sup>129</sup>

Despite the later conservative turn, there were a number of outspoken contemporary proponents of a liberal Fascist culture. In addition to Sapori, Giuseppe Bottai, the jack-of-all-trades (lawyer, editor, curator, art critic, theorist), understood that pluralist liberal culture as an essential part of a successful Fascist Regime. Bottai was an early member of the Fascist movement, participating in the 1922 March on Rome and he played an important role in the “pluralist position” in the support of culture from the beginning.<sup>130</sup> Marla Stone outlines that:

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<sup>125</sup> Malvano, Laura. *Fascismo e politica dell'immagine*. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1988.; *The Thirties. The Arts in Italy Beyond Fascism*, Translated by Julia Hanna Weiss. Edited by Antonello Negri, Silvia Bignami, Paolo Rusconi and Giorgio Zanchetti. Florence: Giunti Editore, 2012.; Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi. *Fascist spectacle : the aesthetics of power in Mussolini's Italy*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1997.; Stone, Marla Susan. *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

<sup>126</sup> Sapori, Francesco. *L'Arte e il Duce*. Milano: A. Mondadori, 1932. 4-5. Sapori was University of Rome professor of art history and then *Commissario del Sindacato fascista romano degli autori e scrittori* [Commissioner of the Roman Fascist Syndicate of Artists and Writers].

<sup>127</sup> “Il programma del Duce è una promessa di modernità, che in Roma, non piú ristretta nell'antica cinta Aureliana, tende le braccia verso i monnti ed il mare.” Sapori. *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>128</sup> Thompson, Doug. *State control in Fascist Italy: Culture and conformity, 1925-43*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991. 31.

<sup>129</sup> Sapori. *Ibid.* 169-183.

<sup>130</sup> Stone, Marla Susan. *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. 187. Stone quotes Bottai from: “Discorso pronunziato da S. E. Bottai nella inaugurazione della XXI Biennale a Venezia,” *Rassegna dell'intrusione artistica* (May-June 1938): 183.

While stressing the importance of art mobilized within and for the Fascist state, Bottai declared that “socially useful” art had to be “good” art: “A relationship between art and politics exists only for this: the work lacking artistic quality, whatever its ideological or emotional content, is also politically useless, since such content does not express anything and where it does, it does so confusedly, or wrongedly.” For Bottai, the Fascist state, rather than force a single reactionary aesthetic upon artists, would gain the most as protector of aesthetic integrity.<sup>131</sup>

Stone goes on to emphasize that the stance that Bottai makes, here in the late 1930s, was in direct opposition to the “Nazi model” that relied on an “absolute fusion between artistic interests and political” ones.<sup>132</sup>

Founder of the Fascist periodical, *Critica fascista* (1923), from the very beginning, Bottai engaged intellectuals in debates about Fascist culture. In 1926 and '27, Bottai began a dialogue in *Critica fascista* about the definition of “Fascist Art.”<sup>133</sup> Contributors included: the *Novecento* critic and curator Margherita Sarfatti, the Director of the Venice Biennale Antonio Maraini and Cipriano Efisio Oppo, Director of the Rome Quadriennale. Three clear factions emerged: conservatives, modernists, and anti-modernists.<sup>134</sup> Maraini was the most prominent conservative and he advocated for art that clearly reflected *Italianità*, specifically work that was both inspired by historical forms of Italian art and presented a national ideal in its subject matter. He claimed that not all aesthetics should be allowed, writing that “art is not a phenomenon isolated by individual caprice: it is a predestined and complex product of particular conditions intimately tied to the

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<sup>131</sup> Stone. *Ibid.* This idea that the Fascists “should make “good art”” lines up with Braun’s own advocacy that pre-1935 Fascist art needs to be seen as anything but “bad[*cattivo*].” Braun, Emily. “L’Arte dell’Italia fascista: il totalitarismo fra teoria e pratica.” In *Modernità totalitaria: il fascismo italiano*, Translated by Sandro Liberatore and Roberto Cincotta. Edited by Emilio Gentile. Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2008. 99.

<sup>132</sup> Stone. *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Stone. *Ibid.* 43.

<sup>134</sup> Stone. *Ibid.* Even though I agree with the general categories listed here, that Stone set out, I diverge from her characterization of each personality and their allegiances. She writes that Oppo was a conservative, alongside Maraini. From my own research into the two curators, as well as through numerous discussions with other art historians on the subject, it is clear to me that Oppo was a “modernist,” if not more than, both Bottai and Sarfatti. This I will discuss later in this Chapter. To understand the complexities of Oppo’s place also see: Morelli, Francesca Romana. “Oppo “grande arbitro degli artisti d’Italia”?” In *Cipriano Efisio Oppo Un legislatore per l’arte: Scritti di critica e di politica dell’arte 1915-1943*. Edited by Francesca Romana Morelli, Esposizione Nazionale Quadriennale d’Arte di Roma. Rome: Edizioni De Luca, 2000. 1-6.

conditions of a given country.”<sup>135</sup> In contrast, along with Bottai, Oppo and Sarfatti were modernists. All three supported an integration of *Italianità* in spirit and modernism in form or, in other words, saw that the two were not mutually exclusive. The anti-modernists included critics like Roberto Farinacci, Giuseppe Pensabene, Giovanni Preziosi, and Telesio Interlandi. They were zealots. They argued “against foreign and modern cultural influences” and were the key figures who gained prominence in the late 1930s advocating for the German model of aesthetic control of the arts.<sup>136</sup>

The critical debates in *Critica fascista* illustrated the diverse and shifting nature of Fascist culture in the mid-1920s. Moreover, despite differing allegiances, from conservative to liberal, all supported the Regime. In the later years of the *ventennio*, each critic would choose sides on a number of topics. For example, when Bottai reached the position of Minister of National Education, and seemingly without any hesitation, he oversaw the implementation of the Racial Laws in 1938.<sup>137</sup> While he helped with the mass dismissal of Jewish intellectuals from universities and other cultural institutions, Bottai still continued to foreground the idea that only the allowance for liberal cultural freedoms would sustain the totalitarian regime. The historian Doug Thompson aptly describes the importance of Bottai’s seemingly-incongruous ideas:

Bottai was clearly aware that a culture must form naturally out of a way of life and must neither be forced nor imposed by the regime. All a political regime could do was to prepare and tend to subsoil, provide a framework and direct opportunity, but the choices, whether of subject matter in the humanities or of careers in the lives of young adults, had to be freely made, otherwise they would very likely lack genuine commitment. He was probably correct in his thinking but unfortunately, as has already been noted, his influence on practical developments tended to fall far short of his theories.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Stone. *Ibid.* 44.

<sup>136</sup> Stone. *Ibid.* 45-46.

<sup>137</sup> Duggan, Christopher. *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 385.

<sup>138</sup> Thompson, Doug. *State control in Fascist Italy: Culture and conformity, 1925-43*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991. 118.

In 1939, a ploy to combat the encroachment on advanced modernist and avant-garde art, Bottai “inaugurated his own exhibition, the Premio Bergamo, as a gathering place for those who believed that “Fascism does not promulgate aesthetics”.”<sup>139</sup> Then, in 1943, he was among those who turned on Mussolini during the Grand Council of Fascism and the Fascist Dictator was deposed.<sup>140</sup> Therefore, figures like Bottai represent the complex relationship supporters of modern and avant-garde artists had within the official Fascist apparatus. Also, Bottai’s example importantly shows that being a supporter of liberal culture did not preclude one from having seeming incongruous ideas about other Fascist policies and raising up through the Regime’s hierarchy.

As, the Fascist Party grew more monolithic, conservative, and authoritarian, concurrently a subversive current began in reaction. Even conservative critics saw the inherent contradiction in the prescriptive culture of late-Fascism. In a 1941 article in *Emporium*, E. Gaifas wrote:

The obligatory subject must not be thought of as imposing technical and inspirational limitations. The painter can create a work of art out of any subject provided that the whole of his sensibility is involved in his recreation of the external object. Thus even the predetermined subject can, in the total freedom of its making, be transformed into an object that has been selected spontaneously.<sup>141</sup>

Gaifas’ text pointed to, then explained away, any restrictions to aesthetic freedom in his rhetorical separation of the subject matter from creativity. What his text reflected was an anxiety about the artistic community’s loss of aesthetic freedom with the increased controls placed on exhibitors alongside the larger control of everyday citizens. For artists who had been free to make and

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<sup>139</sup> Stone, Marla Susan. *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. 188.

<sup>140</sup> Guerri, Giordano Bruno. *Giuseppe Bottai, un fascista critico: Ideologia e azione del gerarca che avrebbe voluto portare l'intelligenza nel fascismo e il fascismo alla liberalizzazione*. Milan: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, 1976. 215-240.

<sup>141</sup> Thompson, Doug. *State control in Fascist Italy: Culture and conformity, 1925-43*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991. 119. English translation is from Thompson. Thompson cites (L. Malvano, *Fascismo e politica dell'immagine*, Turin, 1988. 187.) for the original Italian text.

exhibit without any restrictions on style or content, this moment marked the paradigm shift and redefined “Fascist Art.”

### **Fascist State Exhibitions of Modern Art**

Through the early *ventennio*, a vibrant art scene was supported by a large number of both public and private venues. This created a multifaceted and ever-shifting cultural landscape in which artists could exhibit their work. In cities like Milan and Rome, private galleries flourished alongside state-sponsored exhibitions. At the same time, public state-sponsored exhibitions of various shapes and sizes were held at the local, regional and national level.<sup>142</sup> Through the mid-1930s, both public and private venues supported the latest and most advanced work by the ever growing number of contemporary national and international artists alongside an established canon of artists from the recent-past.

Of particular importance to this study were the national exhibition the Quadriennale di Roma and the international exhibition the Biennale di Venezia. The clear incorporation of these two major exhibitions into the Regime’s larger plans took place in the late 1920s.<sup>143</sup> The new quadrennial exhibition was launched in 1931. At its helm was the modernist Cipriano Episcopo. The Rome Quadriennale represented the best Italian national artwork by young emerging artists. In comparison, the Venice Biennale represented the work by established Italian Fascist artists and artistic icons recently passed.<sup>144</sup> Leading the Biennale was the conservative Antonio

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<sup>142</sup> See: Stone, Marla Susan. *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. 95-127.

<sup>143</sup> Salaris, Claudia. *La Quadriennale. Storia della rassegna d'arte italiana dagli anni Trenta a oggi = History of the Exhibition of Italian Art from the Thirties to Today*. Translated by Felicity Lutz. Edited by Fondazione La Quadriennale di Roma. Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2004. 12.

<sup>144</sup> Salaris. *Ibid.*

Maraini. Therefore, each state-sponsored exhibition had its own goals and served different purposes for the Regime.

The two major exhibitions, both run by semi-autonomous government bodies, were structured to have clear roles as companion exhibitions.<sup>145</sup> Along with their divergent foci and very different geographical locations, the Biennale and Quadriennale affected and responded to the changing cultural politics of Fascist Italy in different ways. As introduced above, their directors had divergent visions for the future of Fascist culture and therefore negotiated, in different ways, the ever shifting political alliances in the late Fascist period as conservative currents began to take root among intellectuals. In this sense, the international-looking Venice Biennale became increasingly conservative and implemented prescriptives on content and style by the 1926, while the Rome Quadriennale remained relatively liberal and strove to support advanced modernism throughout late-Fascism.<sup>146</sup>

The Venice Biennale presented to an international public a narrow view of Fascist art by 1930. First inaugurated in the Giardini in 1895 as the Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia [International Art Exhibition of the City of Venice], the Biennale had already been well established as a center for the international art scene by the March on Rome.<sup>147</sup> The fine arts [*arte plastica*] exhibition was organized around a series of national pavilions. Added throughout the twentieth century to the city's public gardens, the pavilions were located in the *Giardini* on the east side of the city.<sup>148</sup> A major restructuring came in 1930 and saw Giuseppe

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<sup>145</sup> Salaris. Ibid. & Martino, Enzo di. *The History of the Venice Biennale 1895-2005*. Translated by Barbara Trotto and Susan Candy. Venice: Papiro Arte, 2005. 30-31

<sup>146</sup> Martino, Enzo di. *The History of the Venice Biennale 1895-2005*. Translated by Barbara Trotto and Susan Candy. Venice: Papiro Arte, 2005. 30.

<sup>147</sup> Bazzoni, Romolo. *60 Anni della Biennale di Venezia*. Venice: Lombroso Editore, 1962. 13-33.

<sup>148</sup> For a detailed description of the national pavilions and their architects, see: Bazzoni. Ibid. 77-116.

Volpi become the President, presiding over the art exhibition's new director, Maraini. Volpi's tenure at the Biennale marked the shift of the exhibition into a proper Fascist State venue for propaganda and away from a presentation of avant-garde currents in contemporary art.

As President, Volpi built the exhibition to present a kind of model Italian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, created through a series of multi-disciplinary events that accompanied the art exhibition.<sup>149</sup> He added the music festival in 1930, a contemporary art convention and a film festival in 1932, and a theater festival in 1934.<sup>150</sup> From the top down, the Biennale's exhibition of Italian art reflected Volpi's idea of a unified Italian Fascist culture. This allowed Maraini to present his own narrowing definition of "Fascist Art." For architecture, it was the Rationalist style: the Palazzo Centrale was rebuilt in the style in 1932[Figure 1.1]. For art, it was a more traditional-leaning figurative modernism of *Italianità*, depicting idealistic themes of the pastoral worker or the victorious Duce.

Under the direction of Maraini, the new "nationalistic character" of the exhibition was most evident in its portrayal of Fascist art as "totalitarian art." As the 1930 exhibition program outlined:

The laws of cosmopolitanism derive especially from researches done in the convulsive and artificial ambience of Paris, where real talent is found together with willful artifice, voracious interests, and morbid ambition... The completely theoretical cerebralism of that cosmopolitan esthetic is particularly contrary to the spirit and sentiment of our [Italian] feelings.<sup>151</sup>

Maraini used the growing anti-international sentiment to his advantage here. The first exhibition under Volpi and the second under Mariani, the 1930 edition presented a clear and restricted

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<sup>149</sup> See: Stone, Marla. "Staging Fascism: The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution." *Journal of Contemporary History* 28, no. 2 (1993): 218.

<sup>150</sup> Martino, Enzo di. *The History of the Venice Biennale 1895-2005*. Translated by Barbara Trotto and Susan Candy. Venice: Papiro Arte, 2005. 31-2.

<sup>151</sup> Alloway, Lawrence. *The Venice Biennale 1895-1968 from Salon to Goldfish Bowl*. Greenwich: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1968. 96. English translation from Alloway.

view of Italian “Fascist Art.”<sup>152</sup> For example, in response to this 1930 edition, the first to have an American Pavilion, an American reviewer “went out of her way to applaud Fascism’s vision and care for the arts.”<sup>153</sup> I argue that such a comment could not have been made under the Biennales during the previous tenure of Antonio Fradeletto (General Secretary 1920-1927). The Biennale had therefore become like the national exhibitions in Nazi Germany, a direct and explicit presentation of art as Fascist totalitarian propaganda.

Though Maraini reassured artists that “it was not the intention of the regime “to impose a particular aesthetic program on the artists,””<sup>154</sup> there was a stark contrast between the pre-and post-1930 exhibitions. Maraini’s exhibitions did not reflect the most advanced aesthetics but instead created an image of Fascist control of the arts before nation-wide controls had been implemented. Because of this, the 1934 Biennale became one of the icons of this nationalist ideal that was presented for Hitler’s visit to the country. He and Mussolini toured the *Giardini*, part of the Führer’s only official visit of his premiership outside of Germany. As a souvenir of his visit, the Führer received a tranquil painting of boats by Memo Vagaggini.<sup>155</sup>

The Venice Biennale held a pivotal role in presenting Mussolini’s glory and control over the Fascist Italian state, its people, and its culture to a wide international audience at this seminal moment. Two years later in 1936, growing tensions forced the United States and Great Britain to withdraw their pavilions, not to return till after war’s end. This not only reflected the changing

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<sup>152</sup> Alloway. *Ibid.* 103-4. Importantly, coming at a time in the late 1960s when the Biennale was seeing a “re-evaluation” that “took account of the demands of many seeking a change in the statute of 1930,” Alloway may have been aware of these issues just under the surface when writing his history. See: Stefano, Chiara Di. “The 1968 Biennale. Boycotting the exhibition: An account of three extraordinary days.” In *Starting from Venice*. Edited by Clarissa Ricci and Angela Vettese. Milan: Et al. Edizioni, 2010. 130. Also see: Wilson, Simon. “The Venice Biennale.” *The Burlington Magazine* 118, no. 883 (1976): 723-27.

<sup>153</sup> Alloway, *Ibid.* 93-94.

<sup>154</sup> Martino, Enzo di. *The History of the Venice Biennale 1895-2005*. Translated by Barbara Trotto and Susan Candy. Venice: Papiro Arte, 2005. 33.

<sup>155</sup> Martino. *Ibid.* 33-34.



political landscape in Europe more generally but also was likely a direct result of the sanctions placed on Italy by the League of Nations in 1935 in the wake of the Ethiopian campaign—the blooming relationship between Mussolini and Hitler coincided with these growing tensions between Italy and the League of Nations constituents.<sup>156</sup> In the eyes of the international public, therefore, curbing support for this venue of, by now, overt propaganda was important—this is further highlighted by the fact that Oppo, the Quadriennale’s director, would continue to engage with the international art scene through official channels until the early 1940s, as I will describe below.

The Quadriennale in Rome not only played a different role, focusing exclusively on young Italian artists, but also remained at the fore of modern aesthetic movements until the late-1930s. Its Director, Cipriano Efisio Oppo, was a vocal proponent for the idea that “Fascist art is that which has been created during the Fascist Era.”<sup>157</sup> Rising quickly through the official ranks in the twenties, he held much sway, alongside Bottai, in how Mussolini and the Regime regarded art—so much so that in 1930, Margherita Sarfatti proclaimed that Oppo was the “greatest arbiter of artists in Italy.”<sup>158</sup> Therefore, Oppo’s second installment of the exhibition, the 1935

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<sup>156</sup> For a description of the Ethiopian campaign and the League of Nations sanctions, see: Duggan, Christopher. *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 249-282.

<sup>157</sup> “Oppo, del resto è convinto, e lo afferma in numerose occasioni, che “*l'arte fascista è quella che si farà durante l'era fascista*.” Morelli, Francesca Romana. “Oppo “*grande arbitro degli artisti d'Italia*?”” In *Cipriano Efisio Oppo Un legislatore per l'arte: Scritti di critica e di politica dell'arte 1915-1943*. Edited by Francesca Romana Morelli, Esposizione Nazionale Quadriennale d'Arte di Roma. Rome: Edizioni De Luca, 2000. 2. Morelli citation for this is: C.E. Oppo, *Arte fascista/Arte italiana*, in “*Critica fascista*”, Rome 1 febbraio 1927, p. 44

<sup>158</sup> Morelli, Francesca Romana. “Oppo “*grande arbitro degli artisti d'Italia*?”” In *Cipriano Efisio Oppo Un legislatore per l'arte: Scritti di critica e di politica dell'arte 1915-1943*. Edited by Francesca Romana Morelli, Esposizione Nazionale Quadriennale d'Arte di Roma. Rome: Edizioni De Luca, 2000. 1-3. ; ““*Grande arbitro degli artisti d'Italia*” lo definisce Margherita Sarfatti, uno dei suoi più intelligenti e tenaci avversari, nel dedicargli nel 1930 una copia del suo saggio, *Storia della pittura moderna*.” Morelli, *Ibid.* 1.

Quadriennale, marked the pinnacle of liberal Fascist culture before its constraint in the second half of the decade.<sup>159</sup>

The official critical presentation of the Second Quadriennale in 1935 provides a helpful outline of the official organizing principles, practical and ideological, of the Rome exhibition cycle. Opposite the title page, a quote reads:

L'arte è per noi un bisogno primordiale ed essenziale della vita - L'arte è stata sempre una delle forze spirituali dell'Italia - MUSSOLINI [For us, art is a primordial need and essential for life. - Art has always been one of the spiritual forces of Italy. - MUSSOLINI]<sup>160</sup>

Therefore from the outset, art was distinguished as a marker of both Italian life and the inspiration for *Italianità*. It was not, importantly, just a mouthpiece of Fascist ideology.

Oppo brought together the most advanced work by young and up-and-coming artists and strove to present the “spiritual compression between art and the Regime.”<sup>161</sup> Art at the Quadriennale bespoke “fascist inspiration” without the “constraints and obligations to serve the State, as was the case in Germany, for example.”<sup>162</sup> Art historian and curator Francesca Romana Morelli writes that Oppo focused on the talent of young artists, bringing to the national stage the work of “Marino Marini, Scipione, Mario Mafai, [and] Corrado Cagli,” rather than on their particular “obedience to the Regime.”<sup>163</sup> Art, therefore, did not have to directly serve the Regime but its very creation reflected its spirit. Oppo’s “Fascist Art” championed the Regime through its

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<sup>159</sup> See: Pontiggia, Elena. "La Grande Quadriennale." In *La Grande Quadriennale. 1935 La Nuova Arte Italiana*. Edited by Elena Pontiggia and Carlo F. Carli. Vol. 3, I Quaderni della Quadriennale. Milano: Mondadori Electa, S.p.A., 2006. 11-111.

<sup>160</sup> Cällari, Francesco. *11. Quadriennale D'Arte Nazionale. storia critica*. Vol. 3. Roma: Vittorio Ferri, 1935. np. [Emphasis original]

<sup>161</sup> Cällari. *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>162</sup> Cällari, Francesco. *11. Quadriennale D'Arte Nazionale. storia critica*. Vol. 3. Roma: Vittorio Ferri, 1935. 9.

<sup>163</sup> Morelli, Francesca Romana. "Oppo "grande arbitro degli artisti d'Italia"?" In *Cipriano Efisio Oppo Un legislatore per l'arte: Scritti di critica e di politica dell'arte 1915-1943*. Edited by Francesca Romana Morelli, Esposizione Nazionale Quadriennale d'Arte di Roma. Rome: Edizioni De Luca, 2000. 4,

advancement of modern art, explicitly being presented in opposition to the German totalitarian model.

The first two instances of the Rome Quadriennale (1931 and 1935) were set up to showcase the wide variety of artists and their artworks without constraints by group affiliation or content.<sup>164</sup> Unlike the Biennale, the Quadriennale focused on a kind of national patronage program for Italians and other “authentic [non-Italian] artists” working in Italy.<sup>165</sup> In her history of the Quadriennale exhibition, Claudia Salaris writes,

[t]he selection criterion was based on the quality of the work, rather than the stature of the artists, and this meant that groups were not admitted. «Hence no Futurists, no Novecento painters, but individual artists», announced Oppo when planning the first exhibition. This was a tactical move. He thus intended to assume an impartial attitude to all the conflicting currents that were already aspiring to represent the art of the [Fascist] state.<sup>166</sup>

Under Oppo’s direction, the Quadriennale was designed to be a presentation of the best works of painting and sculpture that Italian artists had to offer, in order to represent a broad view of “Fascist Art”—in stark contrast to Maraini’s presentation of “Fascist Art,” or more aptly “totalitarian art,” at the Biennale. This structure not only reflected a different curatorial methodology but, moreover, reinforced a particular political ideal: the Fascist State fostered the best of its new young artists irrespective of style or content because the best art represented the modern revolution brought about by the Regime.<sup>167</sup> This ideal exhibition, therefore represented the “totalitarian modernism” that pervaded early Fascist rhetoric.

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<sup>164</sup> Salaris, Claudia. *La Quadriennale. Storia della rassegna d'arte italiana dagli anni Trenta a oggi = History of the Exhibition of Italian Art from the Thirties to Today*. Translated by Felicity Lutz, Fondazione La Quadriennale di Roma. Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2004. 13-14. This was true save for a special Futurists room that F.T. Marinetti personally petitioned Mussolini to intervene, forcing Oppo to concede a group room to the avant-garde group.

<sup>165</sup> Cällari, Francesco. *11. Quadriennale D'Arte Nazionale. storia critica*. Vol. 3. Roma: Vittorio Ferri, 1935. 9.

<sup>166</sup> Salaris, Claudia. *La Quadriennale. Storia della rassegna d'arte italiana dagli anni Trenta a oggi = History of the Exhibition of Italian Art from the Thirties to Today*. Translated by Felicity Lutz, Fondazione La Quadriennale di Roma. Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2004. 13-14.

<sup>167</sup> Braun, Emily. "L'Arte dell'Italia fascista: il totalitarismo fra teoria e pratica." In *Modernità totalitaria: il fascismo italiano*, Translated by Sandro Liberatore and Roberto Cincotta. Edited by Emilio Gentile. Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2008. 89.

The Quadriennale's focus on Italian artists made it a particular focus for discussions around "Fascist Art." This broad view was built upon the early-Fascist ideas about liberal culture espoused by Bottai, Oppo, and even Mussolini. Early in his dictatorship, Mussolini spoke in this way about art's contribution to Fascist culture:

We must not remain contemplatives, [Mussolini said in a speech at the Perugia Academy in October 1926], we must not exploit the heritage of the past. We must create a new heritage to set alongside the old one, we must create a new art, *an art of our times*, a Fascist art.<sup>168</sup>

In contributing to a discussion in 1927 about a state art in the periodical *Critica Fasista*, introduced above, Oppo tellingly commented that no one can answer the question "What will Fascist art be like?" without appearing to be a bit of a clairvoyant.<sup>169</sup> Oppo's characterization of Fascist art as a reflection of a general epoch and not a defined style or subject matter is important in understanding the complexities of artistic creation under the Fascist Regime. At the opening of the first Novecento exhibition in 1923, Mussolini likewise said:

I declare that far be it for me to encourage anything that might resemble state art. Art belongs to the realm of the individual. The state has only one duty: not to sabotage it, to give artists human conditions, and to encourage them from an artistic and national standpoint.<sup>170</sup>

Therefore, a "Fascist Art" was created by artists who were meant to be creative and innovative to the best of their abilities and supported through commissions and exhibitions of studio work by the state. This did not preclude art from acting as propaganda, in fact, it foregrounded the centrality of modern and avant-garde aesthetics in state-sponsored culture. Therefore, it changed the stakes for artists. Their work could reflect Fascism without explicitly representing Fascist

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<sup>168</sup> Salaris, Claudia. *La Quadriennale. Storia della rassegna d'arte italiana dagli anni Trenta a oggi = History of the Exhibition of Italian Art from the Thirties to Today*. Translated by Felicity Lutz. Edited by Fondazione La Quadriennale di Roma. Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2004. 15. Emphasis added to text.

<sup>169</sup> Salaris. *Ibid.* 14-15.

<sup>170</sup> Salaris. *Ibid.* 18-19.

themes. Like the glorious artists of Italy's past, modern Fascist artists strove to greatness and this greatness reflected the greatness of the Fascist State.

The 1935 edition of the Quadriennale is particularly important for the present study because Marino Marini won the Premio for sculpture that year—and with the award he won a huge cash prize: 100,000 Lire.<sup>171</sup> It was then, with this official recognition, that he became an exemplar of progressive modernist sculpture under Fascism, following in Arturo Martini's footsteps. As part of a large display of sculpture that focused on a “meditation on form (design replaced by volume) in the architecture of atmosphere,”<sup>172</sup> Marini's work was singled out. Even though Arturo Martini held a more prominent place in the exhibition space, critics argued that Marini's work out-shone his predecessor.<sup>173</sup> His new and innovative “anti-academicism” showed that Marini had learned the “recent lessons of Martini” to create a “family of figures.”<sup>174</sup> At the heart of the room stood Marini's *Icaro*, 1933 [Figure 1.2] and it was this sculpture that stole the show.

Representing the iconic Greek hero, Marini's Icarus was made in wood and hung on the wall. His use of wood reflected an already established interest in alternative sculptural media— at this Quadriennale he presented works in marble, bronze, wood, terracotta, plaster, and wax—

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<sup>171</sup> Lorenzoni, Laura. “Marini's Life.” In *Marino Marini*, Translated by Georgina Dennis. Edited by Pierre Casè. Milan: Skira, 2000. 286.

<sup>172</sup> Cällari, Francesco. 11. Quadriennale D'Arte Nazionale. storico critico. Vol. 3. Roma: Vittorio Ferri, 1935. 54.

<sup>173</sup> “Arturo Martini pur avendo insito nella sua arte l'amore per l'antico inteso in un sentire primitivo della natura con i suoi esseri, è quello che or mai rimane più libero da certi manierismi fuori dalle polemiche. Chi, in vece, insiste nel fare deforme già superato, costruendone quasi una propria natura, è Marino Marini che nella sua sala ha sette ritratti ed otto figure: dei primi, appassionati ci sembra quello di «Donna Marino Torlonia», vivace quello del «pittore Funi», attento quello di «Donna Allen Tusca»: c'è una indagine psicologia scarmigliata che si legge paradossalmente sulle epidermidi. Le altre figure parlano per le loro pose: bello l'atteggiamento di «Icaro» rampante nell'aria, preso con le sue membra nel vuoto; costretta la posizione della «Giovane coricata»; vincolato ed oppresso il «Nuotatore» nella sua sosta.” Cällari, *Ibid.* 57

<sup>174</sup> Pontiggia, Elena. “La Grande Quadriennale.” In *La Grande Quadriennale. 1935 La Nuova Arte Italiana*. Edited by Elena Pontiggia and Carlo F. Carli. Vol. 3, I Quaderni della Quadriennale. Milano: Mondadori Electa, S.p.A., 2006. 71.

allying himself with diverse contemporary currents inside and outside of Italy.<sup>175</sup> At the same time, coupling the medium with its unconventional mode of display, being hung from the wall, harkened back to a long tradition of ecclesiastical sculpture. Marini's *Icaro* spoke the language of Fascist *Italianità* with its humanist subject matter and modernist aesthetic with its innovative form.

Marini's *Icaro*, like the crucified Christ, hung on the wall at the precipice of death [installation view: Figure 0.13]. Icarus, suspended mid-air, his plan having just failed the moment before, has an expression that suggests a lack of complete recognition or perhaps resignation. The wings of *Icaro*, having already melted beyond repair, are just visible at his back—drips of wax run down all over his stunned body. The texture of the wood and Marini's manipulation of it added suggestions of the winds blowing and swirling around the ill-fated man falling from the heat of the Sun.

The way in which Marini used the wood medium here was indicative of a larger move by the sculptor to go beyond the dichotomy of carved versus modeled sculpture. The debate between the two modes of sculptural making had been raging for some time among artists and critics alike—from Hildebrand to Wilenski to Stokes and continuing to Greenberg to Read two generations later.<sup>176</sup> In *Icaro*, Marini carved the form in wood but, in its affect, the carved mass only played one role. The overall composition and form of Icarus' body undermine the kind of

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<sup>175</sup> For example, see: Wilenski, R.H. "from *The Meaning of Modern Sculpture*." In *Modern Sculpture Reader*. Edited by David Hulks & Alex Potts Jon Wood. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007 (1932). 106-08.

<sup>176</sup> See: Causey, Andrew. "R. H. Wilenski and *The Meaning of Modern Sculpture*." In *Sculpture and the Pursuit of a Modern Ideal in Britain, c. 1880-1930*. Edited by David J. Getsy. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 267-89.; Getsy, David. "Tactility or opticality, Henry Moore or David Smith: Herbert Read and Clement Greenberg on *The Art of Sculpture*, 1956." *Sculpture Journal* 17, no. 2 (2008): 75-88.; Greenberg, Clement. "The New Sculpture (1949)." In *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Arrogant Purpose, 1945-1949*. Edited by John O'Brian. Vol. 2. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1986. 313-19.; \_\_\_\_\_. "The New Sculpture (1958)." In *Art and Culture*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1973. 139-45.; Read, Herbert. *The Art of Sculpture*. Third ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969 (1956).; Hildebrand, Adolf von. "from *The problem of Form in the Fine Arts*." In *Modern Sculpture Reader*. Edited by David Hulks & Alex Potts Jon Wood. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007 (1893). 1-12.; Stokes, Adrian. "from *Stones of Rimini* 1934." In *Modern Sculpture Reader*. Edited by Jon Wood, David Hulks and Alex Potts. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007. 113-28.; Wilenski, R.H. "from *The Meaning of Modern Sculpture*." In *Modern Sculpture Reader*. Edited by David Hulks & Alex Potts Jon Wood. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007 (1932). 106-08.

solidity touted by proponents of direct carving. Likewise, the remnants of dripping wax that Marini depicted in the work hark to the traditional media of modeled sculpture—bronze. This emphasis on the surface texture too connected the work to the tradition of modeled sculpture.

In the official critical response to this exhibition, the literary and cultural critic Francesco Cällari described Marini's work as "ecstatic," in contrast to the "calm stasis" of the previous year's Premio winner, Arturo Martini.<sup>177</sup> He wrote that *Icaro*, in particular, reflected a kind of life in its "sense of light and positive and negative-space."<sup>178</sup> These formal aspects, Cällari described, created gravitas in the figure. For example, the sculpture generated the sense of falling rain, echoing the actual fall of Icarus and his mood at the same time—art historian Elena Pontiggia has likewise described the work as representing both ascension and falling simultaneously.<sup>179</sup> At the same time, the narrative nature of the work speaks to the possibilities of both "human grandeur and misery."<sup>180</sup> Marini's work created a powerful sense of ambiguity in form and subject matter.

Another focus in Cällari's contemporary response to Marini was the sculpture as a modernist material object. The rhythm on the surface of the sculpture created a sense of suspended movement. At the same time, it pointed to the material quality of the sculpture, to Marini's "love of form for form's sake."<sup>181</sup> The work was described in a similar way by Marini's contemporary, and fellow exhibiting sculptor at the 1935 Quadriennale, Roberto Melli. In a very poetic letter, he described Marini's *Icaro* as:

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<sup>177</sup> Cällari, Francesco. *11. Quadriennale D'Arte Nazionale. storia critica*. Vol. 3. Roma: Vittorio Ferri, 1935. 111.

<sup>178</sup> "L'esempio luminoso di questo vivo senso di luce, di spazio, di vuoto è nel suo «Icaro»..." Cällari. *Ibid.* 111.

<sup>179</sup> Cällari, *Ibid.* 112.; Pontiggia, Elena. "La Grande Quadriennale." In *La Grande Quadriennale. 1935 La Nuova Arte Italiana*. Edited by Elena Pontiggia and Carlo F. Carli. Vol. 3, I Quaderni della Quadriennale. Milano: Mondadori Electa, S.p.A., 2006. 71.

<sup>180</sup> Pontiggia, *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> "...amore della forma per la forma..." Cällari, Francesco. *11. Quadriennale D'Arte Nazionale. storia critica*. Vol. 3. Roma: Vittorio Ferri, 1935. 112.

an open form, struggling in the void (not in space) to find a point of support. It manifests struggle, in multiple aspects: the yearning, the passion, the tumultuous recognition of himself, the alpha and omega. In as much, the form springs to existence like electricity from this stimulus, replete with life, profound and acute, the electricity gushes out from little pinholes to penetrate me.<sup>182</sup>

The ambiguity in form as well as subject is a common theme. “In the void,” Marini’s *Icaro* is not suspended from the wall but rather its form functions outside of space. Therefore, the sculpture pushed the boundaries of sculptural modernism. Above all, however, it represented what was possible for a “Fascist Art.”

Between the 1935 exhibition and the following one, in 1939, a number of important logistical and ideological shifts occurred that affected the later iterations of the Quadriennale. In 1937, the Quadriennale became an independent entity no longer under the purview of the city of Rome, coming under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Corporations.<sup>183</sup> This action standardized the Quadriennale’s exhibition schedule as well as opened up future possibilities for an international aspect to the exhibition.<sup>184</sup> Salaris writes that,

The Statute explains in this regard that «the aim of the independent institution is to organize and manage of [*sic.*] the Quadriennale art exhibitions and the initiatives connected with the aforesaid exhibition for the development of national art, also in its relations to foreign art.» This was one of Oppo’s main concerns and he had already found a way of exporting Italian art, by sending a selection of works from the first Quadriennale to America, and subsequently he was to act as guarantor for countess Pecci Blunt’s New York gallery.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> “Forma aperta, annaspamento nel vuoto, non nello spazio, per cercare un punto d’appoggio—scriveva il collega Melli, in un’intensa lettera dell’opera—In questo annaspamento è dichiarato, forse, tutto: l’anelito, la foga, il riconoscimento tumultuoso di sé, il principio, e l’invocazione del punto di arrivo. La forma ne deriva perciò come elettrizzata da questo pungolo di vita piena, profonda, acuta, che sprizza fuori dagli occhietti a capocchia di spillo, penetrantissimi.” Pontiggia, Elena. “La Grande Quadriennale.” In *La Grande Quadriennale. 1935 La Nuova Arte Italiana*. Edited by Elena Pontiggia and Carlo F. Carli. Vol. 3, I Quaderni della Quadriennale. Milano: Mondadori Electa, S.p.A., 2006. 71-72.

<sup>183</sup> Salaris, Claudia. *La Quadriennale. Storia della rassegna d’arte italiana dagli anni Trenta a oggi = History of the Exhibition of Italian Art from the Thirties to Today*. Translated by Felicity Lutz. Edited by Fondazione La Quadriennale di Roma. Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2004. 43.

<sup>184</sup> Salaris. *Ibid.* 43.

<sup>185</sup> Salaris. *Ibid.* 43-44.



Like the Venice Biennale, the Quadriennale also came to have a complementary international presence, yet would contrast that of the Biennale. Unlike its Venetian counterpart which presented Italian art to an international public in an Italian venue, Oppo saw the Quadriennale as an exhibitor of Italian art abroad. This is an important for two reasons: Oppo set the foundations for later initiatives undertaken after war's end; and Oppo lost much of his curatorial control by 1939.

As Morelli describes, when the Quadriennale came under the purview of the Ministry of Education and Bottai, Oppo's adherence to supporting the most innovative modern artists was curbed to make way for the "totalitarianization" of all aspects of the Fascist State.<sup>186</sup> Critiques, most notably by Giuseppe Pensabene, who had claimed that the Quadriennale in particular did not reflect Italian values and was tainted by "French-style discourses," likely contributed to this conservative move.<sup>187</sup> However, when Oppo was sidelined as the Director of the Quadriennale he took on a number of other important tasks, including heading the artistic direction of the E42 project, described below, and acting as a kind of cultural attaché in the United States. Oppo traveled to the U.S. first in 1931 and totally immersed himself in New York culture.<sup>188</sup> It is no wonder that the Acting Director American Academy in Rome, Charles Rufus Morey—later American Cultural Attaché in Rome, starting in 1945—played an important role in the early

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<sup>186</sup> Morelli, Francesca Romana. "Oppo "grande arbitro degli artisti d'Italia"?" In *Cipriano Efisio Oppo Un legislatore per l'arte: Scritti di critica e di politica dell'arte 1915-1943*. Edited by Francesca Romana Morelli, Esposizione Nazionale Quadriennale d'Arte di Roma. Rome: Edizioni De Luca, 2000. 5.

<sup>187</sup> Salari, Claudia. *La Quadriennale. Storia della rassegna d'arte italiana dagli anni Trenta a oggi = History of the Exhibition of Italian Art from the Thirties to Today*. Translated by Felicity Lutz. Edited by Fondazione La Quadriennale di Roma. Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2004. 46.

<sup>188</sup> Morelli, Francesca Romana. "Oppo "grande arbitro degli artisti d'Italia"?" In *Cipriano Efisio Oppo Un legislatore per l'arte: Scritti di critica e di politica dell'arte 1915-1943*. Edited by Francesca Romana Morelli, Esposizione Nazionale Quadriennale d'Arte di Roma. Rome: Edizioni De Luca, 2000. 5. [Here, Morelli recounts an interesting comment from Oppo's daughter Eugenia Oppo who said "Se Mussolini fosse stato in America, non si sarebbe mai alleato con Hitler."]

development of the iconic 1949 “Twentieth Century Italian Art” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.<sup>189</sup>

The 1939 Quadriennale reflected the broader shift in the political climate in Italy. This iteration of the exhibition also included Marini, though his oeuvre was almost exclusively represented by portrait heads and one *Giovinetta*—only five works in total.<sup>190</sup> Gone was the variety; gone was the celebration of artistic experimentation. The only one of Marini’s works illustrated in the catalogue [Figure 1.3] was an uninspired portrait of an unidentified man.<sup>191</sup> Among the sculptural contributions to the 1939 Quadriennale was Lucio Fontana’s ceramic *Paoletta* [Figure 1.4]. This polychrome ceramic reflected Fontana’s innovative use of the craft medium for high art sculpture as well as his use of color to actively engage with the modern culture of commodities.<sup>192</sup> Despite this, the majority of works included were only mildly innovative and some, like Italo Griselli’s *S.M. la Regina Margherita*, 1939 [Figure 1.5], right out of the previous century. Painting reflected a similar conservative shift.

The conservative shift in the late 1930s was a shock to artists and intellectuals who had found a place within the Fascist cultural armature. Very vocal protests ensued. Modern artists from each of the different groups, styles, and media found a leader in Marinetti—among the artists who defended modern Italian art from the “Degenerate Art” purge were: the Futurist Mino Somenzi, who organized widespread action which was supported by radical architects (Cesare Cattaneo, Giuseppe Terrani, Marco Zanuso, Alberto Satoris, Giuseppe Pagano, Giò

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<sup>189</sup> See: Morey, Charles Rufus. "Letter to Alfred H. Barr, Jr.," Apr. 18, 1947, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers*. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153.; Barr, Alfred H., Jr. "Letter to Charles Rufus Morey," Mar. 25, 1948, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers*. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153.

<sup>190</sup> *III Quadriennale d'arte nazionale: catalogo generale*. Rome: Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 1939. 90.

<sup>191</sup> This work is not included in the sculptor’s catalogue raisonné.

<sup>192</sup> White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 46-7.

Ponti, Gian Luigi Banfi, Ludovico Belgioioso, Enrico Peresutti and Ernesto N. Rogers), Novecento artists (Ottone Rosai and Achille Funi), Marinetti's numbered Futurist colleagues, a large group of Abstractionists (Osvaldo Atansio Soldati, Alberto Magnelli and Luigi Veronesi) and many other artists (Lucio Fontana, Bruno Murari, Massimo Campigli, Giuseppe Migneco, Marino Marini, Ennio Morlotti, Giuseppe Santomaso, etc.).<sup>193</sup> Marinetti's essays in the periodical *Artecrizia*, introduced at the beginning of this chapter, accompanied an important lecture given in December of 1938 on the defense of Italian modern art. In a crowded *Teatro delle Arti di Roma*, the founder of the Futurist movement proclaimed:

Today it is the war against the Jews that serves your purpose. But if I have to choose between an old Jewish combatant, squadrista, legionnaire, Fascist and a pseudo-Fascist holder of several offices, money grabber and bribed servant of any man or party, as long as they are in power, I am definitely for the former.<sup>194</sup>

This pronouncement points out the seemingly opportunistic persecution of the Jews for political purposes alone. For Marinetti, the equation of modern art with Jewishness and internationalism was a worrying trend that had already begun to hamper artistic freedoms in Fascist Italy.

The importance of Marinetti's speech was immediately palpable. Licini, who had been present in the *Teatro*, wrote to his friend art critic Giuseppe Marchiori that:

Marinetti was simply magnificent, like the days of the heroic Futurism before the war. The same brutish crowd, grown stronger over the years and become adult, confronted him and he faced them with the meagre ranks of the soldiers of art, gathered in Rome to fight in "defense of a culture," for the freedom of art and the [Italian] spirit.<sup>195</sup>

Licini, who the previous year had already voiced concerns in the wake of the "Degenerate Art" exhibition in Munich, was certainly alarmed by these developments. In his description, Licini conjured up Marinetti's triumphant avant-garde manifesto of Futurism with this call to action in

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<sup>193</sup> Salaris. Ibid. 46. Here it might be important in looking ahead to Chapter 2 that Marini participated in these protests but Arturo Martini seems to have not.

<sup>194</sup> Salaris. Ibid. 46.

<sup>195</sup> Salaris. Ibid. 46 & 48.

an allusion to a renewed call for an artistic revolution. He foregrounded both the long history of advanced modern art in Italy and also the idea that true modern Italian culture should be revolutionary.

In a letter to Belli that same year, 1938, Licini wrote that he was creating two new works that explored the different metrics with which critics judged art in Italy.<sup>196</sup> The works' titles play out as characters, half-automatons, in a tragic Futurist play. He called one "Ojetti-Crack width gauges [*Ojetti-fessometri*]" and the other "Maraini-Knowledge Miners [*Maraini-scemometri*]." He described to Belli that "[i]t is a question of the infernal machine; the Ojettis, Marainis and Sofficis are useless, pure bullshit, yet still they shout till they are out of breath."<sup>197</sup> Three years later, Licini was completely exasperated. Conjuring the same revolutionary ideal for Italian modern artists, he wrote wrote: "What a disaster, Carlo Belli, this non-belligerence of Italian art today! Without adventure, without achievement, without balls—frightened by the unknown..."<sup>198</sup>

It is clear that Melotti, through his close relationship with Belli and Licini, and Marini, through his participation in the actions organized by Marinetti, both felt the stakes of the cultural shift within the Fascist state patronage of modernism. The new work Marini began to create after 1939 reflected a shift towards new subversive themes, while at the same time he continued his experimentation with media seen in works like *Icaro*. For Melotti, like his contemporaries, his sculptural ideals were no longer possible in the abstract modes that represented "Fascist Art." As will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, Marini, Melotti, and their contemporaries shifted their practice in light of the narrowing view of Fascist art and culture.

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<sup>196</sup> Licini, Osvaldo. Letter to Carlo Belli, Mar. 6, 1938, in *Archivio del '900*, R. 43/n.186 V8, MaRT, Rovereto.

<sup>197</sup> Si tratta di inoce (*sic.*) leggere machine infernali, che non presentano altra utilità che quella di misurare la fesseria di Ojetti, Maraini, Soffici, e di farli strillare a lungo. Licini, *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> "Che disastro, Caro Belli, questa non belligeranza dell'arte italiana d'oggi! Senza avventure senza gesta, senza coglioni— paurosa dello ignoto — e poi — quella sua trencende [*sic.*] assoluta mancanza d'attualità quindi di originalità." Licini, Osvaldo. Letter to Carlo Belli, 1942, in *Archivio del '900*, R. 43/n.186 V12, MaRT, Rovereto

## Sculpture and the Integration of the Arts in the Late-Fascist Period

Melotti's 1935 solo exhibition at the *il Milione* gallery in Milan had gained him much acclaim for his series of purely abstract *Sculture* series [Figure 1.6]. Throughout the 1930s, *il Milione* was one of the only galleries to continue to exhibit pure abstraction and other aesthetics increasingly being purged in official state-sanctioned exhibitions.<sup>199</sup> Italian modernists and their European companions all found a place to display and sell their work. As White outlines, “[i]n opposition to the backlash against the prewar avant-garde which swept European art circles during the 1920s, the Milione gallery mounted exhibitions by European avant-garde artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Fernand Léger during the 1930s.” He goes on to write of Fontana's particular success at *Il Milione* that

[t]his oppositional policy, combined with its location directly across the street from the Milan academy [the Accademia di Brera], made the Milione perfectly positioned for Fontana [and his contemporaries] in both a cultural and physical sense. He could use it as a venue for exploring his interest in the broader history of modern European and Italian art, as a means of challenging his artistic training.<sup>200</sup>

Like Fontana, Melotti too found a home and a viable marketplace for his work in the exciting environment of *Il Milione*. There he presented his studio work as part of the broader Fascist liberal culture of the mid-1930s.

The other important venue in Milan for sculptors like Melotti and Fontana was the Triennale. Continuing his earlier practices, Melotti partnered with a number of architects on projects for the Triennale di Milano, Italy's premier exhibition venue of applied arts and architecture. For the 1936 edition of the Triennale, Melotti created a sculptural series in collaboration with the prominent Milanese architecture firm BBPR. His *Uomo Coerenza* [also called *Costante uomo* or *Constant Man*], 1935-6 [Figure 0.4] represented Melotti's take on the Fascist

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<sup>199</sup> White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 27.

<sup>200</sup> White. *Ibid.*

“New Man.”<sup>201</sup> The Milanese architects Gianluigi Banfi, Lodovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers had founded BBPR in 1932 and they were creating groundbreaking work in the Italian Rationalist style. Installed in the *Sala della Coerenza* [*Room of Coherence*], one of a series of themed rooms at that year’s Triennale given to important Italian architecture firms, Melotti’s sculptures were framed within a debate about modernist architecture, design, and ultimately culture in Fascist Italy as well as larger international ideas about the integration of the arts.<sup>202</sup> This project was widely publicized in international architecture journals like *Architecture d’aujourd’hui*.<sup>203</sup>

By 1936, the Milan Triennale had become a center for important national and international experiments in architecture and design. The Triennale, like its fine art cognate at the Venice Biennale, became a hub for international artists, designers and architects and was organized around a central, permanent exhibition hall. In addition to the main building, architects built small temporary structures behind the *Palazzo dell’Arte* [Figure 1.7] in the garden space adjacent to the Parco Sempione. This exhibition series began in Monza, a city just outside of Milan to the North East, as the Biennale di Monza. Inaugurated in 1922, the exhibition of applied arts accompanied the programs at the Università d’Arte Decorativa (University of the Decorative Arts, or UAD) housed at the Villa Reale—the school was later renamed the Istituto

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<sup>201</sup> See: Crum, Roger J. "Shaping the Fascist "New Man" - Donatello's *St. George* and Mussolini's Appropriated Renaissance of the Italian Nation." In *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Edited by Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005. 133-44.; Zapponi, Niccolo. "Fascism in Italian Historiography, 1986-93: A Fading National Identity." *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 4 (1994): 559.; Gentile, Emilio. "The Conquest of Modernity: From Modernist Nationalism to Fascism " *Modernism/Modernity* 1, no. 3 (1994): 55-87.; \_\_\_\_\_. *La Grande Italia. The Myth of the Nation in the 20th Century*. Translated by Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009. 164-170.

<sup>202</sup> See: White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 63-84.

<sup>203</sup> "VI Triennale di Milano." *Architecture d’aujourd’hui* 7 (1936): 69-73.

Superiore Industrie Artistiche (Higher Institute of the Artistic Industries or ISIA), which was relocated to Milan in 1936.<sup>204</sup>

For its last edition in Monza, the “Third International Exhibition of Decorative Arts” was “the first moment of a critical resolution for the institution.”<sup>205</sup> According to architect and critic, Agnoldomenico Pica, alongside “Margheritta Sarfatti, artists like Mario Sironi and Carlo Carrà, architects like Gio Ponti, and men like Carlo A. Felice [were] just the men to make the [innovations happen at the] Fourth Triennale.”<sup>206</sup> This Monza exhibition was the first truly interdisciplinary. At the same time, the 1930 Triennale in Monza began to reformulate the language around the kinds of works it presented. Pica articulated that “the expressions “decorative arts [*arte decorativa*],” “artisan[*artigianato*],” began to be discussed. Decorative art, why not decoration? But why decoration—truly and solely—and not painting or sculpture?”<sup>207</sup> It is clear that from the beginning the Milan Triennale was a place where traditional boundaries of artistic media were being questioned.

As part of a larger Fascist campaign to have “mass manifestations of the Italian arts” alongside the Quadriennale and the Biennale, the Triennale received a new venue in Milan designed by architect Giovanni Muzio in 1933 [Figure 1.7]—an epic building task, it was built in

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<sup>204</sup> Dellapiana, Elena, and Daniela N. Prina. “Craft, Industry and Art: ISIA (1922-1943) and the Roots of Italian Design.” In *Made in Italy: Rethinking a Century of Italian Design*. Edited by Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. 110-13.

<sup>205</sup> Pica, Agnoldomenico. *Storia della Triennale di Milano 1918-1957*. Milan: Edizioni del Milione, 1957. 18.

<sup>206</sup> Pica. *Ibid.* 20.

<sup>207</sup> Pica. *Ibid.* 21.

just two years and Mussolini himself visited to see its progress in October 1932 [Figure 1.8].<sup>208</sup>

The architectural historian Denis P. Dorrdan writes that “[t]he great Milan Triennales of 1933 and 1936 testified to the vitality of progressive architectural ideals during the early and mid-1930s. The VIIth Triennale of 1940 was a staid affair in comparison.”<sup>209</sup> Just as had occurred with the program of the Quadriennale, the Milan Triennale likewise saw a curbing of aesthetic freedom—compare Melotti and Fontana’s installations in 1936 [Figures 0.4, 1.10] with Melotti’s in 1940 [Figures 1.11-13 & 16-19].

There had always been some constraints put on artists at the Triennale—for example Fontana’s 1936 *Vittoria* [Figure 1.10] was monochrome because a previous sculpture had been removed by the “exhibition authorities” from the 1934 Milan Aeronautics exhibition because its painted surface.<sup>210</sup> However, the later Triennale’s lacked the modernist formalism of the earlier exhibitions. Gone were Melotti’s innovative *Uomo Coerenza*, with their abstracted forms set in a rationalists internal landscape.

The 1940 Triennale reflected Melotti’s public shift to align with the Regime’s new aesthetic line. It is clear that Melotti and his contemporaries continued to work under evermore restricting aesthetic constraints, at least partially, for financial stability.<sup>211</sup> Melotti’s open-pediment sculpture

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<sup>208</sup> “Così le Triennale d’arte decorativa, affidate al fervore esemplare dei milanesi, formeranno—con le quadriennali di Roma e le Biennale di Venezia -- il ciclo delle massime manifestazioni artistiche italiane.” Saponi, Francesco. *L’Arte e il Duce*. Milano: A. Mondadori, 1932. 179. The foundation was set in 1928. The *Popolo d’Italia* reported that “On October 28, 1931-X, in the presence of the H.E. Alfieri, the Authorities, the Chairmanship and the Governing Body of the Triennale, following a speech by the Podestà, the ‘foundation stone’ of the ‘Palazzo dell’Arte’ was laid and consecrated by Monsignor Buttafava. Mrs. Maria Cernocchi Riboldi, sister-in-law of the late testator acted as patroness. Architect Giovanni Muzio cemented the parchment, dictated by Gino Rocca, in the stone which was then lowered into the foundation pit” (from the special August 1933 issue). [Figure 1.9] See: *La Triennale di Milano e il Palazzo dell’Arte*. Translated by Denis Bathish and Fulvia Tassini. Edited by Dario Marchesoni. Milan: Electa 1985. 20.

<sup>209</sup> Dorrdan, Denis P. *Building Modern Italy: Italian Architecture 1914-1936*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988. 3.

<sup>210</sup> White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and K&sch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 94

<sup>211</sup> White cites a letter that Fontana wrote to his father saying “I would like to really dedicate myself, with more peace of mind, to my pure art without being unfortunately forced to execute commissions.” White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and K&sch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 97.



depicting St. Thomas the Apostle, the patron saint of architects [Figure 1.13], welcomed visitors into the main building—the haloed figure identified as “S.THOMAS AP” at its base. In a style reminiscent of Melotti’s teacher at Brera, Adolfo Wildt, the figure presided over the oncoming crowds.<sup>212</sup> An extended bust, St. Thomas’ arms are in motion, crossing and coming to his chest, while his focused yet calm gaze falls off to the left. His garments whip up in a frenzy behind him, as if the movement of his hands has generated a heavenly gust.

The saint hovered above the festivities as an inspiration of architecture, sculpture, and catholicism. At least until the late 1930s, the relationship between the Fascist Regime and the Vatican was strong. In 1929, through the Lateran Accords, Mussolini established both the Vatican State and the Regime’s alliance with the church.<sup>213</sup> As Gentile describes, the Fascist Regime drew easy ties to the Catholic Church because the church hierarchy had already “committed to building their own myth of nation, thus accepting the existence of a unitary state.”<sup>214</sup> Furthermore, historian Claudio Fogu describes how Fascism’s central philosopher Giovanni Gentile’s idea of “history belonging to the present” was closely associated with the “Latin-Catholic notion of visual representation (*imago*).”<sup>215</sup> Fogu concludes that this

actualism offered Fascism a modernist vision of history implicitly founded on the Latin-Catholic subordination of the discursive to the visual and the encoding of real presence in all forms of representation. What this means, however, is that Fascist history-making is not to be found in Gentile’s elaborations of his actualist philosophy of history, or in the writings of actualist historians during the regime. The consolidation of the Fascist

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<sup>212</sup> This was possibly an homage to the sculptor who had died ten years previous. *Domus* published a tribute to him and his work the same year: G. "Ricordo di Wildt." *Domus*, no. 161 (1941): 53.

<sup>213</sup> See: Delzell, Charles F. "Pius XII, Italy, and the Outbreak of War." *Journal of Contemporary History* 2, no. 4 (1967): 137-8; Thompson, Doug. *State control in Fascist Italy: Culture and conformity, 1925-43*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991. 76-79.

<sup>214</sup> Gentile, Emilio. *La Grande Italia. The Myth of the Nation in the 20th Century*. Translated by Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009. 116.

<sup>215</sup> Fogu, Claudio. "To Make History Present." In *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Edited by Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005. 34-5.

historical imagery was predicated entirely on the institutionalization of a *historical mode of representation* at all levels of Fascist visual culture.<sup>216</sup>

The Regime's early incorporation of the Catholic Church into the fold of Fascism coupled with the rhetorical importance of historical imagery made catholic imagery an apt mode of Fascist propaganda—this construct was later turned on its head by artists as a critique of Fascism, for example, Renato Guttuso's *Crucifissione*, 1941 [Figure 1.14] and Giacomo Manzù's *Christ with General*, c. 1947 [Figure 1.15]. Therefore, Melotti's *San Tommaso* not only reflected the venue's theme, as the patron saint of architects, but also directly served to reinforce the Fascist ideal of making history present.

In addition to presenting the conservative view of Fascist visual culture, Melotti was at the same time making a statement about a trend from early-Fascist modernism that sought to unify the arts. The Saint's traditional attributes, a spear and a carpentry square, are transformed by Melotti. Both the perfect sphere to his left and the pyramid to his right conjure up the perfect architecture of pure geometry. Like Melotti's *Sculture* series [Figures 0.5-6, 1.6], the attributes of the saint reflect a modernist interest in pure form. The combination of modernist form and Christian imagery was typical of Italian design of the period coming out of ISIA. In their recent contribution to the volume *Made in Italy: Rethinking a Century of Italian Design*, Elena Dellapiana and Daniela N. Prina write that, "unlike the Bauhaus, the UAD/ISIA sought to communicate an understanding of the cultures of artistic practices and their languages and espoused historical styles as an indispensable repository of knowledge for the artist and the designer."<sup>217</sup> Within the contexts of the Triennale and the Milanese art scene, Melotti was in close dialogue with these trends.

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<sup>216</sup> Fogu. *Ibid.* 35. [Emphasis original to text.]

<sup>217</sup> Dellapiana, Elena, and Daniela N. Prina. "Craft, Industry and Art: ISIA (1922-1943) and the Roots of Italian Design." In *Made in Italy: Rethinking a Century of Italian Design*. Edited by Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. 114.

Melotti's friend and Italian modernist sculptural patriarch, Arturo Martini had worked at the UAD/ISIA between 1929-32.<sup>218</sup> Marino Marini too had a studio in the "casa degli artisti" from 1929 on and taught there between 1930-1940, before transferring to the Accademia di Brera.<sup>219</sup> In particular, Arturo Martini's professorship at ISIA had a profound effect on the state of both sculpture and applied arts during the Fascist period and after. Martini's work strove to create a deeper dialogue between the arts. As Elena Pontiggia describes, Martini set up his studio in an unconventional way, opening the doors and holding lessons in the space.<sup>220</sup> By this time, Martini was already well known in Milanese circles for his sculptural contributions, having exhibited with the *Valori Plastici* and Sarfatti's *Novecento* group though he did not remain allied with either group for long.<sup>221</sup> In his UAD studio, he worked on sculpture while his students experimented with formalist approaches to ceramics. Through this pedagogical technique, Martini helped his students turn away from merely recreating the Mallorca style. His own new use of the ceramic medium became for sculptors, artisans and designers alike a reflection of the Fascist integration of the arts—an idea heavily supported by Gio Ponti and his magazine *Domus*, so much so that it was recuperated and championed in the postwar period that will be described in Chapter Three.<sup>222</sup>

Melotti's other contributions to the 1940 Triennale reflected a more conservative subject matter but no less reflected a bringing together of the arts [Figures 1.12, 1.16-19]. His quartet of

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<sup>218</sup> Pontiggia, Elena. "Martini a Milano." In *Arturo Martini*. Edited by Claudia Gian Ferrari, Elena Pontiggia and Livia Velani. Milan: Skira, 2006. 28-29.

<sup>219</sup> Fabi, Chiara. *Marino Marini: La collezione del Museo del Novecento*. Milan: Silvana, (forthcoming). np.

<sup>220</sup> Pontiggia, Elena. "Martini a Milano." In *Arturo Martini*. Edited by Claudia Gian Ferrari, Elena Pontiggia and Livia Velani. Milan: Skira, 2006. 29.

<sup>221</sup> Pontiggia. *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> For examples, see: Ponti, Gio and Bega, Melchiorre. "Problemi attuali d'arte - corporazioni e arti applicate." *Domus* 46, no. 85 (1935): 25-26.; Bottai, Giuseppe. "Le arti popolari nell'azione per l'arte contemporanea." *Domus*, no. 157 (1941): II-VI.; Felice, C. A. "Gli artisti e l'arte decorativa." *Domus*, no. 167 (1941): 34-35.; Ponti, Gio. "Prefazione." In *Ceramica alla 9a Triennale di Milano*. Edited by Zetti e Spreafico. Vol. 4. Milano: Editoriale Domus, 1953 (1951). 5-8.

arts' personifications highlighted the affinity of arts through allusions in their allegorical attributes. In *La Pittura* [Painting, Figure 1.16], the figure holds a paint brush but her canvas is not flat. In a format that recalls Gustav Courbet's *Origin of the World* (1866), the painting comes into being from between the figure's legs. With this, Melotti referenced the idea of painting's ability to create worlds. At the same time, it makes the painting into an actual three-dimensional space. Her legs become the architecture, the walls in which the muralists paints.<sup>223</sup>

Melotti's *L'Architettura* [Architecture, Figure 1.17] likewise juxtaposed modes of creation and architectural space. A classical temple, like that of the Vestal Virgins in the Roman Forum, sits upon her head as a crown. On her lap, stands a small female nude. Her hands lifted in the air, she represents the three-dimensional space that is occupied within a structure. At the same time, she is a little sculpture. As a sculpture, the small figure plays the part of the humanist scale to architectural constructions.

For *La Scultura* [Sculpture, Figure 1.18] and *La Decorazione* [Decorative Arts, Figure 1.19], Melotti abstracted the personifications' attributes. As with *San Tommaso*, the personifications hold geometric forms: a sphere and a ring. With *La Scultura*, a Brancusi-like head also sits on her lap, looking like Brancusi's *Sleep* (1910) and at the same time like a fragment of a toppled statue. *La Decorazione*, like *L'Architettura*, is crowned. In contrast, *La Scultura* is the only figure in the group who wears a shroud. Her head covered, she looks down, away from the hands emanating from behind her head. This possibly points to Melotti's continued struggle to reach his own sculptural ideal and the sculpture's ability to convey the divine knowledge expressed in God's hands.

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<sup>223</sup> See Romy Golan's chapter on Mario Sironi and the importance of mural painting in Italy in her book *Muralnomad*. Golan, Romy. *Muralnomad: the paradox of wall painting, Europe 1927-1957*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. 82-121.

Melotti's success in his collaborative sculptural projects at the Milan Triennale no doubt led to his successful bid to work at E 42 [*Esposizione universale di Roma 1942*/Universal Exposition of 1942]. This work took him down to Rome, where he would reside throughout much of the war. Melotti's E42 work also represented his ultimately failed attempts at monumental Fascist sculpture. This work was important in contrast to the new set of simultaneously created studio works that would remain unexhibited until well after the end of WWII. The private studio production, as I will describe in the next chapter, reflected his growing dissatisfaction with how the sculptural medium functioned to convey meaning and his growing reevaluation of modernism in the wake of late-Fascism.

Italy won the bid to hold the next general exposition from the Bureau International des Expositions in Paris in November 1935.<sup>224</sup> Meant to be held in 1940, following the six-year program plan, it was eventually pushed back to 1942 in order to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of Mussolini's ascension to power. In line with this, Mussolini claimed that the exhibition would present the past, present, and future of the Italian civilization in an "Olympics of Civilizations [*Olimpiade delle Civiltà*]." <sup>225</sup> It was to present the best of Italian Fascist culture for the world to see, beyond what the Triennale and the Biennale were able to offer.

These grandiose program quickly expanded into plans for a huge series of temporary and permanent buildings in which the Regime would later refurbish to create the new civic center of the city of Rome and the Empire of Fascist Italy. With this basic outline from Mussolini, Vittorio Cini, Commissario Generale of the new E 42 project, drafted a ten-volume, six-thousand page

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<sup>224</sup> Ciucci, Giorgio, and Jessica Levine. "The Classicism of the E42: Between Modernity and Tradition." *Assemblage*, no. 8 (1989): 80.

<sup>225</sup> Ciucci, et al. *Ibid.* 80

document outlining his plans in 1937.<sup>226</sup> A site plan was devised in 1938 through a collaboration between architects: Giuseppe Pagano, Marchello Piacentini, Luigi Piccianto, Ettore Rossi, and Luigi Vietti [Figure 1.20]. Along a central axis, the new course of Via Imperiale would connect the Porta Imperiale, the Foro Mussolini (now known as the Foro Italico), E 42, the Roman ruins of Ostia Antica and the sea.<sup>227</sup> Along this central axis, new and old were connected—uniting the “brain and the heart of the city.”<sup>228</sup> This was meant to become Mussolini’s new Rome, the “Third Rome,” the seat of his empire.

Cini’s plan also outlined stylistic criteria that would need to be followed for the art and architecture of the E 42:

The Exposition of Rome will try to create the definitive style of our era: that of the year XX [1942] of the Fascist Era, the style ‘E 42.’ It will obey criteria of grandeur and monumentality.

The meaning of Rome, which is synonymous with eternal and universal, will prevail—it is to be hoped—in the inspiration and execution of constructions destined to endure, so that in fifty or one hundred years their style will not have aged or, worse, been degraded.

Vice versa, in the pavilions destined to be demolished, artists will attempt daring and even futuristic solutions.<sup>229</sup>

This outline led the jury, which included Oppo (project president), Giuseppe Pagano (architect and Gruppo Sette member), Marcello Piacentini (architect), Giovanni Michelucci (Fascist Party, PNF elected representative), Pietro De Francisci (Minister of National Education), Piero Portaluppi (National Syndicate architect) and Giuseppe Caffarelli (National Syndicate engineer).<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Guidoni, Enrico. "L'E 42, città della rappresentazione. Il progetto urbanistico e le polemiche sull'architettura." In *E 42: Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Edited by Maurizio Calvesi, Enrico Guidoni and Simonetta Lux. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Venice: Cataloghi Marsilio, 1987. 18.

<sup>227</sup> Ciucci, Giorgio, and Jessica Levine. "The Classicism of the E42: Between Modernity and Tradition." *Assemblage*, no. 8 (1989): 81-2.

<sup>228</sup> Ciucci, et al. *Ibid.* 82.

<sup>229</sup> Ciucci, et al. *Ibid.* 83 English translation in Ciucci and Levine. Original text in Italian cited as being reproduced in Italo Insolera and Luigi Di Majo, *L'EUR e Roma dagli anni Trenta al Duemila*. Rome and Bari: Editori Latexa, 1986. 47.

<sup>230</sup> Muntoni, Alessandra. "III / Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana: Il Progetto." In *E 42: Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Edited by Maurizio Calvesi Enrico Guidoni, and Simonetta Lux. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Venezia: Marsilio S.p.A., 1992. 353.

Under Cini's direction, avant-garde artists and architects collaborated during the early planning phases for the temporary exhibition halls. For example, BBPR was asked to develop plans for one of these temporary pavilions: the *Mostra della Civiltà italica dai tempi di Augusto ai tempi di Mussolini* (*Exhibition of the Italic civilization from the times of Augustus to the times of Mussolini*).<sup>231</sup> A series of drawings were presented, each inscribed with a combination of pragmatic and propagandistic language. In its front elevation [Figure 1.21], the huge steel and glass temporary exhibition space recedes into space. Through the glass, the ghostly images of monumental figures and exhibition components can be seen, showcasing the archaic modernism that was exemplified in the work of Martini and the painter Mario Sironi. This conception would have come from earlier juxtapositions between Rationalist architecture and painting and sculpture by Martini and Sironi because BBPR would have been very familiar with Giuseppe Pagano's collaboration with these two artists for the Italian pavilion at the 1937 Exposition in Paris.<sup>232</sup>

Contrasting the modernity of the exhibition space, in the right foreground, BBPR represented a collection of ancient artifacts alongside a traditionally Roman cypress tree. These small details signaled the viewer to the specificity of Italian modernity; the pictured exhibition space with its sleek sheet-glass façade and industrial feeling was contextualized through both its interior displays (seen in this image and also in further sketches detailing the interior exhibition programs not reproduced here) and also the external signifiers that constantly reminded the viewer to make ever repeating juxtapositions between modern and ancient in the presentation of the Fascist *Italianità*.

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<sup>231</sup> Guidoni, Enrico. "L'E 42, città della rappresentazione. Il progetto urbanistico e le polemiche sull'architettura." In *E 42: Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Edited by Mauricio Calvesi, Enrico Guidoni and Simonetta Lux. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Venice: Cataloghi Marsilio, 1987. 20.

<sup>232</sup> See: Golan, Romy. *Muralnomad: the paradox of wall painting, Europe 1927-1957*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. 86-94.

The entire project was meant to create a highly constructed view of Fascism as a fully realized totalitarian empire.<sup>233</sup> Mussolini wanted it to rival the great world's fairs of London and Paris and sent Oppo back to New York in 1939 to visit their World's Fair.<sup>234</sup> Importantly, he dined with director of the New York Fair, Grower Whalen. At the dinner, two models were

placed at the center of the table: a tower and a sphere, the symbol of the New York Fair, and the arch designed by Adalberto Libera for the 1942 Esposizione universale (E42). In November [1939,] Whalen arrived in Italy and made a statement to the press expressing his appreciation of the preparations for the E42.<sup>235</sup>

Oppo's trip was wildly successful in gaining the international recognition he had started to lose with the Quadriennale, due to the new Fascist restrictions on culture. Though war was declared during his visit, Oppo stayed on making connections and was awarded honorary New York citizenship.<sup>236</sup> Even though Oppo lost some of his autonomy with the Quadriennale, he continued to champion Italian artists at home and abroad.

As the architects worked, artists were also solicited. Arturo Martini, for instance, designed a series of decorations to frame the stairs leading to the Piazza delle Corporazioni [Figure 1.22]. Melotti's contribution was for a series of sculptures to stand in front of the Palazzo delle Corporazioni. He was brought onto the project after the Palazzo's architect, Gino Pollini, who was married to Melotti's sister Renata, asked Oppo to coordinate the search for artists in 1938.<sup>237</sup> Melotti's task was to create a group of marble sculptures, about 500cm tall, to stand in the

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<sup>233</sup> Ciucci and Levine argue that the new Empirical aspirations were used to justify such a huge project. See: Ciucci, Giorgio, and Jessica Levine. "The Classicism of the E42: Between Modernity and Tradition." *Assemblage*, no. 8 (1989): 80.

<sup>234</sup> Salaris, Claudia. *La Quadriennale. Storia della rassegna d'arte italiana dagli anni Trenta a oggi = History of the Exhibition of Italian Art from the Thirties to Today*. Translated by Felicity Lutz. Edited by Fondazione La Quadriennale di Roma. Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2004. 44.

<sup>235</sup> Salaris. *Ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> Salaris. *Ibid.* 45.

<sup>237</sup> Cristallini, Elisabetta. "Piazza ed edifici delle forze armate. Mostra dell'autarchia, del corporativismo e delle previdenze sociali." In *E 42: Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Edited by Maurizio Calvesi, Enrico Guidoni and Simonetta Lux. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Venice: Cataloghi Marsilio, 1987. 431-32.



courtyard in front of Pollini's structures. The first *Si redimono i campi* was finished in marble, but the second group *Si fondano le città* never left the maquette stage.

The subject matter *Si fondano le città* [*They Founded Cities*, Figure 1.23-24] originated from a speech Mussolini made in 1933 regarding land reclamation.<sup>238</sup> The reclamation of swamp lands, especially those surrounding the capital, was a major propaganda campaign throughout the Fascist period.<sup>239</sup> The development of the E42 site was itself part of this project.

The changes between the two versions of *Si fondano le città* show Melotti's search to reconcile the traditional forms of Fascist monumental statuary and his abstract modernism. From small maquette to larger clay model, Melotti gave the figures a more classicising form. Their strong and smooth bodies are juxtaposed with the unfinished column, whose interior structure hovers between the man's hands. Melotti's correspondences reveal that certain changes compensated for "a major development within the architectonic motifs."<sup>240</sup> While the allegorical figure on the right holds the key to the city, the male figure on the left, a classical nude, is not the builder of that city, though he holds up a column. He is the personification of the architect, whose vision brought the city into being. As with his works for the Triennale, Melotti was always concerned with the relationship between the various forms of three-dimensionality, bringing into dialogue the various artistic endeavors.

The completed work, *Si redimono i campi* [*They Reclaimed the Fields*, Figures 1.25-29] used a traditional vocabulary of the holy family. Initially, the woman lay on a bed in the manner of Etruscan funerary images [Figure 1.25], but then Melotti shifted the composition to give a more

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<sup>238</sup> Cristallini. Ibid. 432.; Mussolini, Benito. "Discorso del XIV novembre per lo stato corporativo (1933)." In *Scritti e Discorsi dal 1932-X-XI al 1933-XI-XII*. 8 vols. Vol. 8, Scritti e Discorsi di Benito Mussolini. Milan: Ulirco Hoepli Editore, 1934. 257-73.

<sup>239</sup> Duggan, Christopher. *A Concise History of Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 214-21.

<sup>240</sup> Cristallini, Elisabetta. "Piazza ed edifici delle forze armate. Mostra dell'autarchia, del corporativismo e delle previdenze sociali." In *E 42: Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Edited by Maurizio Calvesi, Enrico Guidoni and Simonetta Lux. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Venice: Cataloghi Marsilio, 1987. 434.

vertical orientation to the figure. At the same time, the child is enlivened and holds geometric shapes in the final iteration [Figure 1.26-29]. Unlike *Si fondano le città*, this work lacks the same dynamic, active nature. Though the two figures, perhaps allegories of abundance and labor, are beautiful classical bodies they do not seem to be in the process of actively reclaiming the fields but instead at rest after the process has been completed.

Melotti's E 42 projects reflected the ever shifting target for an official Fascist art, one that became a somewhat flat neoclassicism. Under the constraints of a patron whose goal was a global and eternal empire, Melotti's innovative abstract ideas were quieted. At this same moment, however, Melotti's new studio experiments began to look to a new modernist sculpture outside the strict Fascist rhetoric of war period. His *Teatrini*, as I will describe in the next chapter, and his other experiments with the ceramic medium, that will be discussed in Chapter Three, reflect his desire to distance himself from Fascism.

During the war-time years (1939-43), both Melotti and Marini, along with their contemporaries like Licini, Fontana and Manzù, began new work in the studio. As I will elaborate in the next chapter, these works were both a culmination of a redevelopment of sculptural modernism but also the reaction against the Fascist totalitarian control of culture that I have described here. Pragmatically, for artists who had experienced the space to create new and innovative work in the first decade of Fascism, the Regime's turn towards a stricter totalitarian control of culture affected their livelihood. Some, like Melotti, acquiesced and began to make classical-inspired monumental sculpture for Fascist commissions. Marini, on the other hand exhibited outside the country. Ideologically, their modern aesthetics that had faithfully reflected

the Fascist “totalitarian modernity” had been corrupted and made into mere propaganda spectacle.

Artists and intellectuals in Italy felt that they had been betrayed by the government that they had supported. Some fled, while others tried to work within the new framework of aesthetic controls. It is clear that the voices calling for the continued open culture of early-Fascism, like Bottai and Oppo, were justified in their fears that a controlled Fascist culture would produce lackluster results. Melotti’s monuments for the E 42 clearly reflect this outcome. However, this did not squash all artistic freedoms. Even those who stayed throughout the war years continued to experiment and create new and exciting work inside the still-free spaces of their private studios. This work would come to represent a post-war reawakening. It was a continuation of the modernist and avant-garde projects both tainted by and subsequently subjugated by the Fascist Regime in the late 1930s. Yet, it was new in its style with new form and aesthetic properties. This new modernist sculpture was a revitalized version of Italian modernism, developed during WWII, and was central to the post-war popularity on the international art scene after the fall of Fascism.

## Chapter 2

### **Reframing of Modernist Sculpture in Italy After Fascism for a New National and International Audience: 1943-1952**

In the aftermath of the Second World War, artists who had stayed in Italy, like Melotti, and those who had left, like Marini, all found themselves in a country devastated by war. The physical damage was great. Artists were acutely affected in Italy because many lived and worked in the neighborhoods near the industrial installations targeted in bombing raids. In Milan, however, the bombing was more widespread because the city's historic center was targeted in an early Allied ploy to push Mussolini to surrender and join the American and British forces against Germany.<sup>241</sup> Both Melotti's and Marini's Milanese studios were destroyed during the 1942-43 bombing campaign on the city, even though their studios were in very different parts of the city.

As in cities all over Europe, the destruction in Italy of schools, museums, theaters, and churches was pervasive. In Milan, the city's most important cultural heritage sites were all but decimated. For example, the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie suffered a direct hit; a hastily-built wall of protective sandbags was the only thing that saved Leonardo's famous *Last Supper* (1495-97) fresco from being lost [Figure 2.1]. The physical destruction of war was amplified with the damage to cultural heritage sites. Therefore, the real, physical effects of war simultaneously brought into focus the ideological effects of the conflict. After WWII, the physical rebuilding

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<sup>241</sup> Giannini, Marco, and Giulio Massobrio. *Bombardate l'Italia. Storia della guerra di distruzione aerea 1940-1945*. Milan: Rizzoli, 2007. 196-200.

coincided with an effort to reconstruct an unified Italian culture after the betrayal of the Fascist Regime.

Unlike other combatant countries during the Second World War, there was little fighting on the peninsula until very late in the conflict; U.S. and British troops landed in Sicily only in 1942. As a result, Italy had continued its broad cultural output throughout WWII. As historian Lucio Ceva explains, even with wartime hardships in major cities like Milan, newspapers, magazines, cinema, and theater remained vibrant until the major Allied bombardment commenced.<sup>242</sup> Milan's famous La Scala opera house even held a 1942-43 season, only halting when the building was almost completely destroyed by an Allied bomb in August 1943.<sup>243</sup>

The majority of public life in Milan ended when “the Second World War truly exploded [there] at 5:55pm on Saturday the 24th of October 1942.”<sup>244</sup> Unlike most other bombing offensives during the war, the first raids on Milan scattered bombs indiscriminately over the historic center of the city.<sup>245</sup> Populated with residential neighborhoods, retail businesses, and cultural venues, the city and its occupants were taken by surprise during a rare daytime raid. The early-evening bombardment, carried out by the Royal Air Force [RAF], was “even more dangerous than a nighttime raid” because it caught people out on the streets.<sup>246</sup> The raid on Milan had no objective other than terror—there were no conventional military targets in the areas that were bombed in October of 1942. For the residents of Milan, the target, the Duomo, was meant to hit a moral chord more than a physical one. Unlike earlier bombings of Turin and Genoa, whose targets were munitions plants and airplane factories, the first bombings of Milan

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<sup>242</sup> Ceva, Lucio. "Milano in guerra 1940-45. Notizie e ricordi." In *Bombe sulla città: Milano in guerra 1942-1944*. Edited by Rosa Auletta Marrucci, Massimo Negri, Achille Rastelli and Lucia Romaniello. Milan: Skira, 2004. 4-30.

<sup>243</sup> Ceva. *Ibid.* 29

<sup>244</sup> “A Milano la seconda guerra mondiale scoppia davvero alle 17 e 55 di sabato 24 ottobre 1942.” Ceva, *Ibid.* 21

<sup>245</sup> Giannini, Marco, and Giulio Massobrio. *Bombardate l'Italia. Storia della guerra di distruzione aerea 1940-1945*. Milan: Rizzoli, 2007. 199.

<sup>246</sup> Giannini, et al. *Ibid.* 197.

reflected a new tactic adopted by the Allies in a push to end the war. They focused on the destruction of cultural heritage sites. As justification, allied forces claimed that these bombardments would expedite Mussolini's and King Vittorio Emanuele III's surrender.<sup>247</sup> In the end, the tactic worked.

Marini's home and studio, not far from the city center on via Uberto Visconti di Modrone, was destroyed in the first bombings of the city in 1942, destroying many of his early works housed there.<sup>248</sup> The destruction of his Milanese home and his studio at the Villa Reale in Monza was the impetus for Marini to take his new wife and leave for her-native Switzerland for the duration of the war.<sup>249</sup> Melotti's studio on via Giacomo Leopardi was bombed in 1943—likely during one of the four raids (14 February and 8, 14 and 16 August) that damaged the Castello Sforzesco to the North and, to the South, the Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio that housed Leonardo's *Last Supper* [Figure 2.1].<sup>250</sup> The damage to Melotti's studio was documented in a photograph taken upon his return to Milan shortly after the end of the war, having been in Rome during the fight for liberation [Figure 2.2].

For many artists, their destroyed studios became sites of a larger discussion about post-war Italian culture. Close by the remains of Melotti's bombed studio, Lucio Fontana's studio also lay in ruin. In the now famous photograph [Figure 2.3], Fontana explored the shell of the space where his studio once stood. As art historian Sharon Hecker describes, Fontana traversed the

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<sup>247</sup> Gioannini, et al. Ibid. 200.

<sup>248</sup> Picciau, Maura. "Marino Marini." In *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*. Edited by Massimo Bray. Vol. 70. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2009. 477.

<sup>249</sup> Picciau. Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Picciau, Maura. "Fausto Melotti." In *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*. Edited by Massimo Bray. Vol. 73. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2009. 381.; "Schede degli edifici bombardati." In *Bombe sulla città: Milano in guerra 1942-1944*, edited by Rosa Auletta Marrucci, Massimo Negri, Achille Rastelli and Lucia Romaniello, 196-307. Milan: Skira, 2004. 226, 236, & 242

physical destruction of his studio in order to represent the hope after war's devastation.<sup>251</sup> She writes:

This type of aesthetic response to tragedy is particularly Italian. Throughout history, Italy has relied with pride on its artistic and cultural patrimony, often to legitimise an otherwise crumbling political identity. Interpreting 'rebuilding' as 'rebirth' (building anew rather than recreating what was) was part of Milan's unique identity as Italy's 'modern' city, a way to recapture the Futurist rhetoric and recall the city's historic exposure to foreign influence. Twin forces propelled Milan's artistic rebirth: its artisanal tradition and capitalisation on nineteenth-century industrialisation.<sup>252</sup>

Therefore, the practical reconstruction equally held ideological import; it represented the cultural reconstruction of Italy.

As photography historian, Silvia Paoli describes, the use of photography in this post-war reconstruction was in itself a marker of a new Italian modernity. Therefore, Fontana's photographic staging was an example of a new "modern" photography that emerged from the ashes of Milan's destruction.<sup>253</sup> This new photographic style was "modern" because it no longer looked to painterly traditions but instead created a new form of aesthetic expression that looked to traditions of reportage and journalistic photography.<sup>254</sup> Inherent in Paoli's argument is also a current of modernist medium specificity, looking to traditions internal to the medium even if they are outside of the artistic canon.

Both Hecker and Paoli's studies shed light on some of the inherent contradictions in seeing the post-war period as a clean break. However, the contradictions were operative because a continued looking back to modern and avant-garde precedents worked to avoid alienation.

Artists rehearsed the Futurist rhetoric of generative destruction, from the old, dead culture a new

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<sup>251</sup> Hecker, Sharon. "Servant of Two Masters': Lucio Fontana's Sculptures in Milan's Cinema Arlecchino (1948)." *Oxford Art Journal* 35, no. 3 (2012). 340.

<sup>252</sup> Hecker. *Ibid.* 342.

<sup>253</sup> Paoli, Silvia. "Milano 1943: la fotografia 'moderna' tra cronaca e reportage." In *Bombe sulla città: Milano in guerra 1942-1944*, edited by Rosa Auletta Marrucci, Massimo Negri, Achille Rastelli and Lucia Romaniello. Milan: Skira, 2004. 79-87.

<sup>254</sup> Paoli. *Ibid.* 79-80.

Italian culture would rise reborn. Since the destruction of the old culture had been accomplished with Allied bombings, the new, or more accurately the modern, culture no longer had to deal with the historical past. The new modern Italian aesthetic culture found its roots in early-twentieth century modern and avant-garde culture, rather than a Renaissance or Classical one.

The culture that came with this modern rupture was complicated, however. It grew over the course of the war and was further shaped at a moment of major political and social upheaval in Italy. Additionally, the new post-Fascist state relied heavily on culture to define a new sense of “Italy.” Just as under Fascism, artists were again tasked with creating a set of terms in which to understand the nation-state. Not just in Italy but all over Europe, the U.S.S.R. and the United States, culture was foregrounded as a powerful tool in which to understand a post-WWII world. As historian Jessica Gienow-Hecht elaborates,

[i]n the United States, C.D. Jackson, a former special assistant to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, claimed that culture “is no longer a sissy word... [now the] tangible, visible and audible expression of national idealism is culture.” ...At the same time, the culture of the Cold War in Europe spawned antigovernment tendencies on both sides of the Iron Curtain.<sup>255</sup>

Culture continued to represent the prowess of the nation-state as well as its weakness. As part of this cause of rebuilding Italian culture, *Italianità* would be reinvented in order to situate the new modern Italian culture within a larger ever-globalizing context. Modern artists reclaimed their place in Italian culture but again their production would represent a new nationalist culture in the burgeoning Cold War.

The reconstruction of a culture separate from a Fascist one had already begun during the war, as I outlined in the previous chapter. Since artists experienced the Regime’s turn away from what they saw as a true modern Italian culture during the late-Fascist period, many had already

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<sup>255</sup> Gienow-Hecht, Jessica C.E. "Culture and the Cold War in Europe." In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume 1*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, 398-419. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 400.



begun to search for alternatives to the Fascists war-time totalitarian culture. The reestablishment of a modern Italian culture likewise had to deal with the continued, broader debates about modernism itself. For sculptors in particular, an ideological blow came in 1945 with Arturo Martini's treatise *La Scultura lingua morta* [*Sculpture: Dead Language*]. This poetic text, published just two years before the sculptor's own untimely death, gave a detailed account of the shortcomings of modern sculpture as a living art. Martini's treatise was a denunciation of sculpture as a medium of advanced aesthetic production that he claimed was still possible in the other arts.

For Melotti and Marini, the issues that Martini outlined in *La Scultura* reflected their own war-time re-evaluation of sculptural modernism and, at the same time, marked a continued unease with modernist projects. The proclamation of the medium's death by the preeminent Italian sculptor of the period hit hard. In this chapter, I will investigate the differing ways in which Marini and Melotti had already taken the challenge to give life to a new kind of modernist sculpture.

During the period of transition in the late-1940s and early-1950s, Marini and Melotti, among a number of sculptors, defined the multiplied forms of Italian modernist sculpture that had begun to develop under late-Fascism. Marini battled with the problem of sculpture as statue or monument while continuing his own focus on formal innovation. His canonical imagery, like in the equestrian *Cavaliere*, signaled the sculptural canon and yet overturned its internal hierarchy through a new material handling and formal representation. For Melotti, his return to the figure in the ceramic and terracotta works, in works like the *Teatrini*, marked not only a continued interest in intersections between sculpture and craft but also strove to secure sculpture's ability to convey meaning to its viewer. Melotti's figures were allegorical, personifying parts of his sculptural drama.

Like Fontana's photograph, Martini's *La Scultura lingua morta* was not only a document of destruction but also a championing of a rebirth—Martini's post-war proclamation signaled a continuation of a modernist project as much as its death. As his contemporaries who had already begun to create a new series of works during the war years, Martini's treatise shed light on the rebirth of modernist sculptural experiments begun earlier. For Melotti, his development of a broad practice in ceramics continued the expansion of sculptural language while at the same time searched for a new way for sculpture to convey pure knowledge in a way uniquely specific to the medium. For Marini his appropriation of canonical sculptural themes continued his interest in both a formalist agenda and a critique of the tradition of statuary. These sculptors and many of their contemporaries strove to reinvigorate modern sculpture, while at the same time understanding the needed break from the modern themes supported under the Fascist regime.

### **Italy's Transition from Fascist to Democratic and its New *Italianità***

When il Duce, Benito Mussolini, was deposed by King Vittorio Emanuele III on the 25th of July 1943, many in Italy thought the war would soon be over. However, what immediately followed has been dubbed the "Forty-Five Days."<sup>256</sup> Initially, popular celebrations championing the end of Fascism reflected the Italians' war fatigue. Yet, without a clear path forward for the monarchy or new Fascist leader, Marshal Badoglio, these demonstrations found a violent response from Italian authorities.<sup>257</sup> This period of uncertainty ended with a secret armistice between Italy and the Allies on 3 September 1943. However, as historian Christopher Duggan outlines,

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<sup>256</sup> Ginsborg, Paul. *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 12.

<sup>257</sup> Ginsborg. *Ibid.* 12

by the time an armistice was signed on 3 September, the Germans had poured reinforcements into the peninsula [and occupied Rome]. ...This left Italy divided. The king and his government fled Rome to escape the Nazis, and set up residence in Brindisi: an act easily constructed as cowardice, which sealed the fate of the monarchy in 1946.<sup>258</sup>

The new Italian leadership failed to understand that Nazi Germany would not relent once the King switched sides. Instead, Hitler made it clear that he still controlled the Italian peninsula. The Germans liberated Mussolini from prison and subsequently installed him at the head of the puppet government in the north, called the Republic of Salò—named for their base city on Lake Garda. Returning to the brutality of the early Fascist Black Shirts, the Republic of Salò hired troops of criminals as a private police force.

The Salò violence paled in comparison to that of the German forces who controlled the Northern regions; they went as far as exterminating entire villages thought to have been harboring partisans.<sup>259</sup> Though most histories focus on the Italian partisan resistance, many Italians, either still loyal to Mussolini or, in some reasoning, disloyal to the Allied alliance, fought for the German intelligence. In Milan, major gallerists and art collectors turned over Jewish and partisan artists and architects to the Germans.<sup>260</sup> Therefore, everyday Italians, including artists, took sides in what had become a civil war between the Fascists in Salò and those allied with the King and the Allies.

With a strong German presence, even south of Rome, the slow-moving Allied forces found more fighting than they had anticipated. This delay in Allied liberation fostered a movement that would become “very important for Italy’s political future.”<sup>261</sup> As historian Paul Ginsborg describes,

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<sup>258</sup> Duggan, Christopher. *A Concise History of Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 240.

<sup>259</sup> Ginsborg, Paul. *A History of Contemporary Italy. Society and Politics 1943-1988*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 55.

<sup>260</sup> See: Zevi, Bruno B. "Letter to Alfred H. Barr, Jr.," Feb. 17, 1947, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153.

<sup>261</sup> Duggan, Christopher. *A Concise History of Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 241.

the September armistice also marked a watershed in Italian history. At the blackest moment in the whole history of the unified state, with the peninsula invaded from both north [by the Germans] and south [by the Allies], there are innumerable testimonies to a new spirit being born among certain, as yet restricted, minorities of the Italian population.<sup>262</sup>

This sense of a new post-Fascist Italian spirit, one that had been brewing ever since the Pact of Steel exploded to the fore of a reunified sense of Italian culture.

After the end of the war, a “new order in Italy would be built upon the ‘values of the Resistance’: democracy, freedom, honesty, accountability, openness, and modernity.”<sup>263</sup> However, this anointing of the Partisan ideal contrasted starkly with the realities of post-war justice. The majority of the Fascist perpetrators of atrocities, both members of the Republic of Salò and regular citizens who had supported the deposed Mussolini, received amnesty, while Partisans were prosecuted in huge numbers, often for petty crimes.<sup>264</sup> In this sense, the idea of the partisan outweighed the reality in the service of a new sense of Italian culture.

The heroics of the resistance fighters vividly came to life in the first of the so-called *Neorealist* films, Roberto Rossellini’s *Roma città aperta* [*Rome Open City*] in 1945.<sup>265</sup> This film vividly illustrated what historian Filippo Focardi describes as Italy’s new collective memory. He writes,

[t]he key features of this [new public memory] narrative were a portrayal of the Italians as ‘victims’ of Fascism and of a war desired by Mussolini, a re-dimensioning of Italian responsibilities in the Axis war, the blame for which was laid entirely upon the Duce and the former German ally, and, finally a glorification of the role played by the Italian people in the struggle against Nazi Germany and its fascist allies after the armistice.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Ginsborg, Paul. *A History of Contemporary Italy. Society and Politics 1943-1988*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. p. 14

<sup>263</sup> Duggan, Christopher. *A Concise History of Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 244.

<sup>264</sup> Duggan, Christopher. "Italy in the Cold War Years and the Legacy of Fascism." In *Italy in the Cold War. Politics, Culture and Society 1948-58*, edited by Christopher Duggan and Christopher Wagstaff, 1-24. Oxford & Washington D.C.: Berg Publishers Limited, 1995. p. 4 and Focardi, Filippo. "Reshaping the Past: Collective Memory and the Second World War in Italy, 1945-55." In *The Postwar Challenge. Cultural, Social, and Political Change in Western Europe, 1945-58*, edited by Dominik Geppert, 41-63. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. p. 57

<sup>265</sup> It was also one of the very first films shown on Italian television. See: Forgacs, David. "Rossellini's Pictorial Histories." *Film Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (2011): p. 31.

<sup>266</sup> Focardi, Filippo. "Reshaping the Past: Collective Memory and the Second World War in Italy, 1945-55." In *The Postwar Challenge. Cultural, Social, and Political Change in Western Europe, 1945-58*, edited by Dominik Geppert, 41-63. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. p. 41

Films like *Rome Open City* separated Italy from the history of Fascism, WWII, and German Nazism. For international audiences, Rossellini's films became international icons of the Italian resistance, of the so-called "Second Risorgimento."<sup>267</sup>

As film historian Peter Bondanella describes, *Rome Open City* "so completely reflected the moral and psychological atmosphere of the moment [in which] it was created..."<sup>268</sup> Its very production seemed to mimic the clandestine activities of the partisans. Rossellini sourced film from the black market and production started almost immediately after the Allies took Rome from the Germans.<sup>269</sup> This film, like the photograph of Fontana in his bombed studio, was simultaneously a document of destruction and regeneration.

Though there is a large scholarly dialogue about how and to what effect "realism" plays a role in this film, the first in Rossellini's "War Trilogy" (*Rome Open City*, 1945; *Paisan*, 1946; *Germany Year Zero*, 1948),<sup>270</sup> the narrative still offers an illustration of some of the mess that was Italy in the final years of WWII. As Bondanella puts it,

Rossellini captured forever the tension and the tragedy of Italian experiences during the German occupation of Rome and the beginnings of the partisan struggle against the Nazi occupiers. [...] While he fuses Catholic and Communist elements of the Resistance into a coherent storyline, he never avoids the hints of tension between the two groups who will oppose each other when the struggle against the Nazis has ended.<sup>271</sup>

Though there were casualties, as many as 100,000 partisans, this film captured the sense that despite this the "sacrifices of the Resistance were not made in vain [because they] did much to salvage Italy's tarnished image and give the Italians new faith in themselves."<sup>272</sup> Like the

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<sup>267</sup> Focardi. Ibid. 44.

<sup>268</sup> Bondanella, Peter. *A History of Italian Cinema*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009. p. 67.

<sup>269</sup> Bondanella. Ibid. 67.

<sup>270</sup> See: Pacifici, Sergio J. "Notes towards a Definition of Neorealism." *Yale French Studies*, no. 17 (1956): 44-53.; Brunette, Peter. "Rossellini and Cinematic Realism." *Cinema Journal* 25, no. 1 (1985): 24-49.; Marcus, Millicent. "Pina's Pregnancy, Traumatic Realism, and the After-Life of Open City." *Italica* 85, no. 4 (2008): 426-38.

<sup>271</sup> Bondanella, Peter. *A History of Italian Cinema*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009. 67.

<sup>272</sup> Duggan, Christopher. *A Concise History of Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 70.

destroyed cultural heritage sites, the sacrifice would be operative in serving to represent a new Italian culture.

The reconstruction of Italian culture and the Italian state was at stake and these issues never left the minds of each combatant. Germany, Italian Fascists, Italian Monarchists, Americans, and the British all had different visions of what Italy might look like after the war. As the Allies began to take hold of the peninsula, the British felt a kind of ownership over the country since “the Mediterranean was traditionally a strategic aim of the British.”<sup>273</sup> However, the shift to the post-war period of peace would move the nation’s alliance from the British to the Americans.<sup>274</sup> This happened first with the new anti-monarchical Prime Minister, Ivone Bonomi, replacing Churchill-backed Pietro Badoglio,<sup>275</sup> and was firmly settled with the 1946 referendum that changed Italy from a monarchy to a republic—a somewhat narrow victory of 12.7 to 10.7 million.<sup>276</sup>

As Duggan aptly describes, “[m]uch of the character of this period [resistance, reconstruction and the economic miracle] was determined, inevitably, by the experiences of Fascism and the war.”<sup>277</sup> Even with the birth of the new Italian republic, the Fascist infrastructure remained intact on many levels.<sup>278</sup> This was true for many cultural institutions: the Venice Biennale and Rome Quadriennale almost immediately resumed their exhibition cycles under new direction. Even more important to the present study, many artists who were championed

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<sup>273</sup> Ginsborg, Paul. *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 39.

<sup>274</sup> “The monarchy lived out the war at the behest of Churchill and the British, and other threatened groups [the elites and the church] turned to their natural allies in the United States.” Harper, John Lamberton. *America and the Reconstruction of Italy, 1945-1948*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986. 12.

<sup>275</sup> Duggan, Christopher. *A Concise History of Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 243.

<sup>276</sup> Duggan. *Ibid.* 248

<sup>277</sup> Duggan, Christopher. "Italy in the Cold War Years and the Legacy of Fascism." In *Italy in the Cold War: Politics, Culture and Society 1948-58*, edited by Christopher Duggan and Christopher Wagstaff, 1-24. Oxford & Washington D.C.: Berg Publishers Limited, 1995. 1.

<sup>278</sup> Duggan. *Ibid.* 2-3

under the Fascist Regime continued to produce and exhibit work after the war. Artists who had advanced modernist and avant-garde aesthetics under early-Fascist liberal culture, Marini and Melotti among them, found it easy to transition into a post-Fascist art scene with the new body of studio work that they had been creating since the mid-1930s.

As with Rossellini's films, the real history of the Regime was whitewashed in the service of easy transition into a post-war Italy. For example, Italy did not see the same political purge as in Germany. This had long reaching effects on culture as well as politics. As historian Christopher Duggan elaborates,

the failure to tackle squarely the issue of responsibility for Fascism had far-reaching consequences [and] resulted in a curiously schizophrenic climate in Italy in the late 1940s and 1950s, in which calls for change and a renunciation of the immediate past jostled uneasily with many indications that a large part of the country's former political baggage—both material and ideological— had simply passed unchanged into a new constitutional wrapper.<sup>279</sup>

Therefore, a call for the new coincided with a continuation of the old. Like the cultural reconstruction that was allegorized in photography and film, a paradox operated in this new post-war Italy. Importantly, it relied on a disavowal of guilt by the “new” participants in politics and culture.

Even more telling with regards to the historiography of Italian modern art, is that “[m]any liberal intellectuals felt that Fascism should be regarded as an historical ‘parenthesis’.”<sup>280</sup> The effects of the “schizophrenic” atmosphere of post-Fascist Italy and the “parenthesis” put around the Fascist moment—or, more accurately, around any Fascist influence on intellectual development—allowed the Fascist era aesthetic production by artists to be considered and praised

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<sup>279</sup> Duggan. *Ibid.* 3

<sup>280</sup> Duggan. *Ibid.* 3

without difficulty. The Italian situation allowed for a continuing of business as usual for artists, critics, gallerists, collectors, and national-exhibition organizers.

While “[m]ost people in 1945 wanted to forget, to draw a veil over the war and Fascism and carry on as if nothing had really happened,”<sup>281</sup> there were others who pointed to the lasting ideological damage that the Regime had inflicted on Italian culture. There continued to be an unease over a possible neo-Fascist revolution until the early 1950s.<sup>282</sup> Along with the fears of a return of a dictatorship, for many intellectuals the ripple effects of Fascist culture did not sit well despite pleas to forget. This was no more the case than with Arturo Martini when he published his *Scultura lingua morta* in 1945.

### **Arturo Martini’s Proclamation of Sculpture’s Death**

Born in August of 1889 in Treviso, a small city north of Venice, Arturo Martini lived through two world wars. Over the course of his career, he participated in all of the major national exhibitions in Italy, and, in 1931, he won the Premio for sculpture at the Quadriennale.<sup>283</sup> By the time he published his treatise *La Scultura lingua morta* [*Sculpture: dead language*] in 1945, he was Italy’s most important sculptors. Through Martini’s poetic-prose, *La Scultura* had a profound impact on sculptural discourse in the post-war period in Italy and abroad.

Martini was central to the Milanese art scene and knew both Marini and Melotti well. Throughout the Fascist period, Martini had worked alongside Marini at UAD/ISIA and then at the Accademia di Brera. Likewise, during the war, Martini utilized Melotti’s studio kiln to create

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<sup>281</sup> Duggan. *Ibid.* 7.

<sup>282</sup> Duggan. *Ibid.* 10

<sup>283</sup> Salaris, Claudia. *La Quadriennale. Storia della rassegna d’arte italiana dagli anni Trenta a oggi = History of the Exhibition of Italian Art from the Thirties to Today*. Translated by Felicity Lutz, Fondazione La Quadriennale di Roma. Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2004. 24.



his final sculptures.<sup>284</sup> Martini had close personal and professional connections with not just Marini and Melotti but also with most of the young sculptors working in and around Milan. In addition, Martini's national and international prestige as Italy's top inter-war sculptor made the weight of this indictment even more impactful; and its reverberations would be long lasting.

*La Scultura* added to a larger international dialogue about sculpture and sculptural theory. Martini was part of a complex web of connections with prominent sculptors, artisans, and architects of the period. After its initial publication in 1945, there were numerous editions of *La Scultura*. The treatise was republished in 1948, coinciding with the retrospective at the Venice Biennale to commemorate the recently-passed artist.<sup>285</sup> It was again published alongside a number of earlier writings by Martini in 1958. In 2007, it was included in English translation, in the most important compilation of primary texts on modern sculpture to date.<sup>286</sup> Through the first English translation came almost fifty years later, his treatise was discussed in journals across Europe having a wide reach despite not having been translated contemporaneously. As a result, it became iconic of the paradigm shift in modern sculpture more broadly in the immediate post-war period. Parallel to the drastic aesthetic shifts that some sculptors made at this moment, most notably Alberto Giacometti, Martini's *La Scultura* gave voice to an anxiety that had been building for a number of years, really throughout WWII.

Martini's early professional work was in the field of applied arts. After making portrait medallions for the goldsmith Schiesari, in 1905 Martini started as an apprentice to the ceramicist

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<sup>284</sup> Zampa, Giorgio. "Se è spento a 85 anni lo scultore Fausto Melotti. Sottili Armonie di Fil di Ferro." *Il Giornale*, June 23, 1986, 3.; Sullivan, Marin R. "Lucio Fontana and Fausto Melotti: Divergent but Parallel." In *Return to Earth: Ceramic Sculpture of Fontana, Melotti, Miró, Noguchi, and Picasso 1943-1963*. Edited by Jed Morse. Dallas: Nasher Sculpture Centre, 2013. 10-31.

<sup>285</sup> Martini, Arturo. *La Scultura Lingua Morta*. Verona: Editiones Officinae Bodoni, 1948 (1945).

<sup>286</sup> Martini, Arturo. *La Scultura lingua morta: Pensieri*. Verona: Bodoni, 1958.; Martini, Arturo. "Sculpture Dead Language 1945." In *Modern Sculpture Reader*, edited by David Hulk, Jon Wood, and Alex Potts. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007. 165-79.

Nicolò Sebellin at the Cacciapuoti & Sebellin studio.<sup>287</sup> At the same time, he worked in the studio of the painter, sculptor, and ceramicist, Antonio Carlini. Like a number of his contemporaries who started in ceramic and porcelain studios, Martini's work in ceramics would not only influence his later work in the medium but also his position at UAD/ISIA. He occupied a place in between *arte plastica* and *arte applicata*, studying with a number of other artists in these early years: sculptor Urbano Nono (1849-1925) in Venice under the auspices of the Commune di Treviso, and painter Gino Róssi (1884-1947) in Burano.<sup>288</sup> In 1909, Martini traveled with Róssi to Munich, Germany.<sup>289</sup> The young sculptor also traveled extensively. The common understanding is that Martini briefly studied under Adolf von Hildebrand (1847-1921) during his time in Munich—this connection has remained a central point of reference for the scholarship on Martini.<sup>290</sup> However, as collector and gallerist Claudia Gian Ferrari points out, there is no archival evidence that Martini studied in Hildebrand's studio though he likely met the great German sculptor, or at least saw his work, while in the Bavarian city.<sup>291</sup> Whether Martini studied

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<sup>287</sup> Ferrari, Claudia Gian. "Arturo Martini: le opere e i giorni." In *Le lettere di Arturo Martini*, edited by Mario De Micheli, Claudia Gian Ferrari and Giocanni Comisso. Milan: Charta, 1992. 13.

<sup>288</sup> Ferrari. Ibid. 13.

<sup>289</sup> Ferrari. Ibid. 14.

<sup>290</sup> Bontempelli, Massimo. *Arturo Martini*. (Arte Moderna Italiana N. 23, a cura di Giovanni Scheiwiller. Serie B – Scultori N. 5) Milano : Urico Hoepli– Editore, 1948. 12. & Argan, G. *Martini*. Edited by A.M.Hammacher, Universe Sculpture Series. New York: Universe Books, Inc., 1959. 2.

<sup>291</sup> Ferrari recounts that though there is clear documentation that Marini went to Munich, there is not proof that Martini neither met nor studied under Hildebrand—"Il 1909 è l'anno di un luogo soggiorno a Monaco, da marzo a fine anno, finanziato da Gregorio Gregorj, propretario in Treviso di uno stabilimento di ceramica dove Martini aveva cominciato a lavorare, e al quale invierà bozzetti in gesso, schizzi e progetti da realizzare. Non ci sono documenti che testimonio con certezza la sua frequentazione dello studio di Adolf Hildebrand, ma essendo questi una personalità considerata all'avanguardia non può certamente Martini non avere incontrato lui o la sua opera, così come quella di un altro importante scultore, Ivan Mestrovic." Ferrari, Ibid. 14 For art historian Abraham Hammacher, who argued that Hildebrand's influence became almost immediately evident when Martini began frequenting Paris in 1911 and 1912, he was setting up a particular sculptural lineage for Marino Marini. Hammacher, Abraham. *Marino Marini: sculpture, painting, drawing* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1970. 12.

with him or not, Hildebrand's ideas were being promulgated in Italy by the nineteen-teens through the writings by the influential philosopher Benedetto Croce.<sup>292</sup>

Understanding Martini's connection to Hildebrand is important because it situates his work within larger contemporary debates about sculptural medium specificity. At the end of the 19th century, Hildebrand and his contemporary-rival August Rodin were embroiled in heated debates around the perception of sculpture and how its making played a role in understanding the medium. Hildebrand, in particular, had a close connection to Italy and headed a circle of artists and thinkers congregated in Florence.<sup>293</sup> He had settled in a palazzo in the heart of the Tuscan capital by 1872, while keeping a studio back in Munich, and completed a number of important commissions in both countries.<sup>294</sup> The work produced during this time was considered by historians like Heinrich Wöfflin and theorists like Konrad Fiedler to be "faithful to the immutable laws of art."<sup>295</sup> In this estimation, Italy helped Hildebrand reach the peak of his oeuvre.

Hildebrand began to formulate ideas for his 1893 book *Das Problem der Form* [*The Problem of Form in Fine Arts*] during his time in Florence.<sup>296</sup> Like the Neoclassical themes of many of his works, such as *Dionysus*, 1890 [Figure 2.4], his description of the creation of sculpture

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<sup>292</sup> Emily Braun states that Martini would have either read Hildebrand's treatise or Croce's 1911 essay "La teoria d'arte come pura visibilità." Braun, Emily. "Bodies from the Crypt and Other Tales of Italian Sculpture between the Wars." In *Chaos & Classicism: Art in France, Italy, and Germany, 1918-1936*. Edited by Kenneth E. Silver. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2010. 146.

<sup>293</sup> Braunfels, Wolfgang. "Adolf von Hildebrand 1847-1921." In *Arnold Böcklin e la cultura artistica in toscana: Hans von Marées, Adolf von Hildebrand, Max Klinger, Karl Stauffer-Bern, Alberto Welti*, edited by Cristina Nuzzi. Fiesole: De Luca Editore, 1980. 42.

<sup>294</sup> Burmeister, Joachim. "Adolf von Hildebrand." In *Arnold Böcklin e la cultura artistica in toscana: Hans von Marées, Adolf von Hildebrand, Max Klinger, Karl Stauffer-Bern, Alberto Welti*, edited by Cristina Nuzzi. Fiesole: De Luca Editore, 1980. 132.

<sup>295</sup> Braunfels, Wolfgang. "Adolf von Hildebrand 1847-1921." In *Arnold Böcklin e la cultura artistica in toscana: Hans von Marées, Adolf von Hildebrand, Max Klinger, Karl Stauffer-Bern, Alberto Welti*, edited by Cristina Nuzzi. Fiesole: De Luca Editore, 1980. 42.

<sup>296</sup> Braunfels. *Ibid.* 42.

paraphrased Giorgio Vasari's description the Florentine Renaissance master Michelangelo.<sup>297</sup> He wrote:

Michelangelo characteristically described this process of working in marble when he said that one must think of the work as an image submerged in water, which gradually recedes so that the figure emerges above the surface little by little until it is completely free. What results for the eye is a form defined by the notion in the artist's mind, such that the individual forms are conceived in terms of the surface layers that they share. The individual forms thereby acquire a relationship or unity that exists only for the eye and has no organic basis. This *tacit cohesion* is of the greatest importance for the observer's natural process of perception, for it supplies him with the image in stages and within a definite arrangement, that is, as large and simple surface masses.<sup>298</sup>

Not only was Hildebrand, like his Renaissance icon, partial to direct carving—more plainly: sculpting in stone—but he based his ideas on the notion that the material of stone uniquely lent itself to the correct mode of sculptural creation.<sup>299</sup> He understood that successful sculpture came from the sculpture's ability to be seen correctly by the viewer. Through direct carving, this viewing experience, Hildebrand explained, is self-evident because of the way in which direct carving creates a three-dimensional object.

At the same time, the mode of sculpting that Hildebrand championed, attributed to a lineage from Michelangelo, was a process from which the figure emerged with an inherent frontality. The three-dimensional surface emerged as if the surface was being revealed bit by bit so as to uncover the most effective frontal view. As in Vasari's description of Michelangelo's

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<sup>297</sup> "The method of proceeding is to take a figure of wax, or other firm material, and lay it in a vessel of water, which is of its nature level at the surface; the figure being then gradually raised, first displays the more salient parts, while the less elevated still lie hidden, until, as the form rises, the whole comes by degrees into view. In the same manner are figures to be extracted by the chisel from the marble, the highest parts being first brought forth, till by degrees all the lowest parts appear; and this was the method pursued by Michelagnolo [*sic.*], in these figures of the Captives, which his Excellency would fain see adopted as models by his academicians." Vasari, Giorgio. *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*. Translated by Mrs. Jonathan Foster. Vol. vol. 5. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1852. 337.

<sup>298</sup> Hildebrand, Aldof von. "from *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts* 1893." In *Modern Sculpture Reader*, edited by David Hulk Jon Wood, and Alex Potts,, 1-12. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute 2007. 8. Emphasis original to text.

<sup>299</sup> Also see: Wilenski, R.H. "from *The Meaning of Modern Sculpture* 1932." In *Modern Sculpture Reader*, edited by David Hulks & Alex Potts Jon Wood. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007. 106-08.

sculptural practice, Hildebrand envisioned sculpture as a process of surfacing—not just physically but emerging to the vision of the viewer.

For Hildebrand, the process of seeing a three-dimensional work of art, in contrast to a two-dimensional one, relied on what he termed to be a “kinesthetic [*Bewegunsvorstellungen*]” way of viewing.<sup>300</sup> This kinesthetic viewing “suppl[ied] the material for an abstract vision and idea of form.”<sup>301</sup> Viewing a three-dimensional work of art entailed an apperception of the object through a “temporal sequence of images.”<sup>302</sup> Therefore, sculptors needed to be keenly aware of this kind of destabilizing viewing and create a work that anchored the viewers seeing to a frontal point of view.

As art historian Alex Potts explains, Hildebrand took on a theory of sculpture from the point of view of a practicing sculptor. He writes that Hildebrand,

at some level [was] seeking to legitimise sculpture by assimilating it to the formal logic of the latest painting-based aesthetic, and at another vividly aware of those aspects of the viewing of sculpture that disrupted a purely painterly apprehension of artistic form, [making] his analysis particularly fascinating and significant.<sup>303</sup>

Potts highlights that the sculptor’s project was centrally concerned with legitimizing sculpture as a viable modern medium. In addition, Hildebrand’s analysis of the sculptural drew on contemporary scientific theories of visual perception and was a precursor to later theories by Clive Bell and Clement Greenberg—Greenberg would later strongly affect the legacy of Italian sculptors like Marino Marini in the late 1950s and 1960s, as I will detail in Chapter Four.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Hildebrand, Aldof von. "from *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts* 1893." In *Modern Sculpture Reader*, edited by David Hulk Jon Wood, and Alex Potts,. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute 2007. 2.

<sup>301</sup> Hildebrand. *Ibid.* 2

<sup>302</sup> Hildebrand. *Ibid.* 2

<sup>303</sup> Potts, Alex. *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*. 2nd ed. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000. 61-62.

<sup>304</sup> Hildebrand, Aldof von. "from *The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts* 1893." In *Modern Sculpture Reader*, edited by David Hulk Jon Wood, and Alex Potts,. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute 2007.1.

What Hildebrand's *Das Problem* outlined is not only a theory of sculpture but also prescribed a kind of best-practice for making sculpture. Hildebrand legitimized sculpture and set the parameters for appropriate media and its handling. Stressing a systematic and formally rigorous procedure of sculptural carving, Hildebrand set up a narrow definition of successful modern sculpture.

Like Hildebrand's *Das Problem*, Martini's *La Scultura lingua morta* was concerned, at its heart, with the future of the sculptural medium. However, by this point in the 1940s, Martini had turned away from Hildebrand's prescriptions. In fact, it seems that Martini's treatise was a renunciation of the principles that Hildebrand applauded. At the same time, it is clear that Hildebrand's ideal for modern sculpture had also been Martini's. In the deeply personal narrative, Martini outlined the death of sculpture by writing:

[a]s for me, after forty working years I have become as transparent as the silk worm, and on raising my head I have seen that the time and opportunity to perform a miracle in sculpture have gone forever. ...I will simply say that of course, for forty years I have accepted with a deep-rooted faith all the constraints and weaknesses which I today deplore and reject: the greatest proof of this is *my sculpture*.<sup>305</sup>

This example not only highlights Martini's commitment to his ideas but also makes clear that this was far from being merely as an intellectual exercise. Martini's *La Sculture* represented a culmination of his own personal private and public discourse of the late-Fascist era of "totalitarian" art. In this vein, his close colleagues and contemporaries, Marini and Melotti included, would have anticipated some, if not all, of Martini's denunciations.

Martini organized his treatise into a number of sections of highly poetic, allegorical prose: A Question of Aesthetics [*Domanda all'estetica*], Image [*Immagine*], Rhythm [*Ritmo*], Metaphor [*Metafora*], The Naming of Sculpture [*Nomi della scultura*], Repetition in Statues

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<sup>305</sup> Martini, Arturo. "Sculpture Dead Language 1945." In *Modern Sculpture Reader*, edited by Jon Wood, David Hulk and Alex Potts. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007. 166. Emphasis added to text.

[*Ripetizione della statua*], Language [*Linguaggio*], Fullness and Voids, Concave and Convex [*Vuoti e piene - concavi e convessi*], Topic [*Topica*], Anonymity [*Anonimia*], Inspiration [*Ispirazione*], Sensitivity [*Sensibilità*], Criticism [*Critica*], Dead Language [*Lingua morta*], Shadow [*Ombra*], The Art of the Blind [*Arte dei ciechi*]. Martini's narrative rose and fell, generating itself from his own perceived failures.

In the first few sections, Martini set out the prevailing definition for sculpture. Similar to Melotti's and Belli's earlier writings about abstraction, Martini wrote that nature (importantly, not in terms of naturalism) was the "source of inspiration."<sup>306</sup> Then moving into a discussion of subject matter, he concluded that sculpture must adhere to the depiction of animate beings. Yet this continued to result in the repeated creation of the heroic "statue."<sup>307</sup> The terminology played an important role in his critique. His use of *statua* [statue] rather than *scultura* [sculpture] was not a matter of semantics<sup>308</sup> Sculpture succeeded in representing the animate while statues resisted animation. For Martini, sculptors' work suffered a debilitating blow by its debasement as statuary.

In addition to his concern with the possible subject matter for true and valuable sculpture, Martini's description clearly contrasted with Hildebrand's ideas about sculpture's creation. Martini wrote that, no matter the importance of subject matter, for a sculpture to be animate "rhythm" is required to create a unique work of art.<sup>309</sup> The "artist extracts it from the bottom of his heart, purifying the image which he has taken from reality with a wavelength and lyrical phrase which are his own."<sup>310</sup> Therefore, sculpture was not formed through a visual process of

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<sup>306</sup> Martini, Arturo. "Sculpture Dead Language 1945." In *Modern Sculpture Reader*, edited by Jon Wood, David Hulk and Alex Potts. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007. 167

<sup>307</sup> Martini. *Ibid.* 167

<sup>308</sup> Italian terminology taken from the second publication of Martini's treatise in 1948, See: Martini, Arturo. *La Scultura Lingua Morta*. Verona: Editiones Officinae Bodoni, 1948. 12.

<sup>309</sup> Martini, Arturo. "Sculpture Dead Language 1945." In *Modern Sculpture Reader*, edited by Jon Wood, David Hulk and Alex Potts. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007. 167.

<sup>310</sup> Martini. *Ibid.* 167.

extracting stone to reveal the true form, as Hildebrand described. Instead, sculpture's formation needed to rely on the artist's apperception of the rhythm generated by the subject matter to be represented—"rhythm is very important as it exists already in the subject which is to be represented"<sup>311</sup>—and combined with the sculptor's own rhythm.

Martini's true distrust of the vitality of sculpture hinged on its very contribution to the progress of aesthetics. Sculpture's "absurdity," therefore, showed through because its most productive medium created nothing but statuary.<sup>312</sup> It contributed "neither volumes nor forms" but instead led to the medium disallowing "any change of the use of metaphor," one susceptible to repetition.<sup>313</sup> Similar to Hildebrand here, Martini pointed to the innovations in modeled sculpture as leading down this path.<sup>314</sup> Sculpture's enslavement as statuary could do nothing but be an "the eternal repetition of statues [... living] the life of a parasite."<sup>315</sup>

Sculpture's failure simultaneously came from a number of varying inadequacies; for example: lack of backdrop, nostalgia for Renaissance and Ancient sculptors' greatness and repetition of their conventions, the lack of anonymity resulting from the artists inventiveness, the insensitivity to true emotion that leads to a kind of kitsch, lack of the sculptural object's consistency, the adherence of sculptural criticism to markers of beauty, the lack of a vernacular sculptural language, and its inward narcissist repetition of its own shadowy reflection.<sup>316</sup> It was in fact, sculpture's heteronomy that signaled its death as a language of aesthetic ideas.

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<sup>311</sup> Martini. Ibid. 167.

<sup>312</sup> Martini. Ibid. 169.

<sup>313</sup> Martini. Ibid. 169 & 168 (respectively).

<sup>314</sup> Martini. Ibid. 169.

<sup>315</sup> Martini. Ibid. 169.

<sup>316</sup> I use the term "kitsch" intentionally. Martini's description of sculptor's typical sensitivities—"an undefined technique to make a vague impression like a fuzziness in photos; a 'stagnant' style, rustic, which creates an atmosphere; and the fragment"—has resonances with Greenberg's definition in *Avant-Garde and Kitsch* as "debased and academicized simulacra of genuine culture." Martini also quotes Baudelaire to this end: "With such art, any old amateur can pass as an artist." Martini. Ibid. 174, 171-177.



In the treatise's last section, titled "The Art of the Blind," Martini defined the heart of the problem: sculpture has lacked the insight into absolute truths that have been accessible in other forms of art. He wrote that "The Art of the Blind," coined "[about] thirty years ago" by either himself or someone else, he cannot remember who, represented the seed of hope for a new sculptural renaissance.<sup>317</sup> Here Martini's treatise most sharply and importantly deviated from Hildebrand's hierarchy of sight. Looking forward, Martini felt that the sense of touch alone possessed the power to revitalize sculpture's future. Touch transformed ideas into shapes "unencumbered by utilitarian constructions, sculpture would use them freely beyond the requirements of states and their attributes."<sup>318</sup> Something "eternal" could be possessed by this enlivened sculpture that was unencumbered by the historical, visual restraints put on the medium as statuary.

Overall, Martini's *La Scultura lingua morta* voiced a need for the continued questioning of what sculpture should do, what it should look like, and how it should be made. Rehashing debates begun in the late-19th century by Rodin and Hildebrand, debates that would continue on through the 20th century, Martini signaled that the modernist project had not yet been fulfilled. Alongside this, he articulated the specific need to deal with the medium's history, historical and recent, as statuary. As Penelope Curtis aptly points out, Martini's involvement in creating Fascist monuments was likely at least one of the motivating factors for this rejection of the mimetic in statuary in particular.<sup>319</sup> The use of the medium for explicitly propagandistic ends no doubt shaded Martini's zealous declaration of sculptural death in general.

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<sup>317</sup> Martini. Ibid. 178.

<sup>318</sup> Martini. Ibid. 178.

<sup>319</sup> Curtis, Penelope. "Modernism & Monumentality / Modernismo & Monumentalità," *Scultura Lingua Morta: Sculpture from Fascist Italy (Scultura nell'Italia Fascista)*, Leeds : Henry Moore Institute, 2003. 29.

The reverberations of Martini's treatise were felt for the generation of artists and critics who gained prominence in the post-war moment. In a showcase article on Marino Marini for *Horizon* magazine, critic Lamberto Vitali foregrounded Marini's new sculptural production with an extensive discussion of Martini's "short book."<sup>320</sup> The text's widespread acknowledgement as a legitimate critique of sculptural modernism by artists and critics alike had already been established by the time Vitali wrote to the English speaking audience of *Horizon* in 1948. Vitali's opening lines stated:

When a sculptor who has reached intellectual as well as physical maturity realizes, or thinks he realizes, that the art for whose sake he has spent his life as irrevocably dead, he presents the critic with a case too challenging to be denied. The short book by Arturo Martini, published almost clandestinely in 1945 and reprinted beautifully by Mardersteig with the unchanged title: *La Scultura lingua morta* (*Sculpture, a dead language*) is something more than an artist's desperate and moving confession.<sup>321</sup>

Vitali took Martini's critique seriously. He went on to write that Martini's "statements raise a problem and involve the whole of the contemporary position of sculpture."<sup>322</sup>

Vitali recommended that the critiques and claims in Martini's treatise be considered seriously. However, he concluded that "Martini's conclusions can and ought to be rejected" in the end.<sup>323</sup> Citing Delacroix's claim that "*La nouveauté est dans l'esprit qui crée, et non pas dans la nature qui est peinte,*" Vitali acknowledged that Martini's treatise was symptomatic of a paradigm shift in sculpture and that "just as the revolutions in painting are violent and noisy and arouse furious reactions and resentments ...in the plastic arts changes just as decisive happen in silence."<sup>324</sup> This characterization of Martini's *La Scultura* pointed to a perceived, but ultimately illusory, lack in

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<sup>320</sup> Vitali, Lamberto. "Contemporary Sculptors: VII-Marino Marini." Trans: Bernard Wall, *Horizon* 17-18, no. 105 (1948): 203-07.

<sup>321</sup> Vitali. *Ibid.* 203.

<sup>322</sup> Vitali. *Ibid.* 203.

<sup>323</sup> Vitali. *Ibid.* 203.

<sup>324</sup> Vitali. *Ibid.* 203. Reproduced in French without translation in Vitali's text— in English: "Innovation is in the spirit of the creator and not in the nature of what is painted."

sculpture as compared to painting (i.e. Baudelaire's *limitations barbares*).<sup>325</sup> With the widening divide between statuary and sculpture—akin to Greenberg's later descriptions of sculpture's contemporary development—Vitali argued that the “painter-sculptors” had been the most innovative while the true sculptors remained “custodians of a traditional or better of an occupation ever increasingly debased.”<sup>326</sup> Therefore, for Vitali, Martini's treatise reflected a difficult “revolution” that strove to reinvigorate sculptors' sculpture by “rediscovering pure plastic values.”<sup>327</sup>

Vitali's idea that Martini was naming a battle for new sculptural values rather than merely proclaiming the medium's death seems to have been universally understood fairly quickly. For example, Giovanni Mardesteig, in a letter about his choice to republish Martini's *La Scultura* at his publishing house Officine Bodoni in 1948, wrote that he chose not to amend the text, even in the wake of the sculptor's death in March 1947, because the title of the volume in itself implied a conclusion that “La statuaria è morta, ma la scultura vive [Statuary is dead but sculpture lives].”<sup>328</sup> As art critic and historian Luciano Caramel argues, Martini had a clear idea that some of his contemporaries were creating living sculpture.<sup>329</sup> Furthermore, Caramel shows that Martini saw in some of his colleagues, particularly Alberto Viani, Fontana, Marini and Melotti, the sculptural qualities he wanted to champion. Therefore, while *La Scultura* may have been a description of his perceived personal defeat, Martini did not see all sculpture as “dead.”

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<sup>325</sup> Vitali. Ibid. 203-4.

<sup>326</sup> Vitali. Ibid. 204. Also see: Greenberg, Clement. "Modernist Sculpture, Its Pictorial Past." In *Art and Culture*, 171-74. London: Thames and Hudson, 1973 (1949). & Greenberg, Clement. "Cross-Breeding of Modern Sculpture." In *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, edited by John O'Brian, 107-13. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986-1993 (1952).

<sup>327</sup> Vitali. Ibid. 204.

<sup>328</sup> Undated quotation found in: Caramel, Luciano. "La scommessa di Martini." In *La Scultura lingua viva. Arturo Martini e il rinnovamento della scultura in Italia nella seconda metà del Novecento*, edited by Luciano Caramel. Milan: Edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta, 2002. 11. This essay makes a larger argument towards this point that Martini's objective was to mark the new life possible for sculpture. For Caramel, the earlier writings of the sculptor, only published in 1960, shed light on this intention.

<sup>329</sup> Caramel. Ibid. 24-27.

For Martini, a kind of *scultura viva* existed but was so outnumbered by dead statuary, including his own production, that he needed to sound the alarm. This vital work being created by the young generation of sculptors had begun to rise to prominence in the Fascist period just before the Pact of Steel (1939). With, Marini and Melotti among its producers, new modernist sculpture offered a look forward past statuary, past propaganda, past Fascism.

### **Fausto Melotti's *Teatrini*: Figuration After Pure Abstraction**

Melotti's early works of high abstraction [e.g. *Scultura n. 15* and *Scultura n. 23*, both 1935: Figures 2.5 & 2.6] have become iconic in the scholarship on the sculptor. Not only had he begun to create large monumental figurative sculpture for Fascist commissions in the late-1930s, but his studio work also flourished with a diversity of objects in ceramics and terracotta. In stark contrast to the statuary he created for the Regime, Melotti's studio work reflected a reengagement with sculpture with concerns that parallel those described in Martini's *La Scultura*. These small works were like productive sketches. Alongside a number of poems and other writings, for example his small book *Linee* [*Lines*], Melotti's studio sculpture and other work in ceramics of this period showed a complex return to the figure in order to create a new version of Italian modern sculpture.<sup>330</sup>

As art historian Abraham Hammacher wrote in 1981, “[a]t the end of the war, Melotti matured from the experience and felt that he still had something to say either as an artist or a poet; he began again his work from the beginning.”<sup>331</sup> This series of work, most prominently his *Teatrini* [*Little Theaters*, Figures 2.7-9, 2.11-12], allowed Melotti a private space to work through

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<sup>330</sup> Melotti, Fausto. *Linee*. Milan: Adelphi Edizioni, 1981. *Linee* was originally published in 1974, the again in 1978 and 1981. However, Melotti had drafted the text much earlier in the immediate post-war moment.

<sup>331</sup> “Alla fine della guerra, Melotti, maturato dall’esperienza, sentì che aveva ancora qualcosa da dire sia come artista che come poeta, e ricominciò da capo.” Hammacher, A.M.. “Spazio e tempo in Melotti e l’astrattismo del XX secolo,” *Melotti*. Firenze : Electa Firenze s.r.l., 1981. 15.

important theoretical issues that he felt could no longer be so easily resolved, despite his 1935 assertions.<sup>332</sup> Melotti's ceramics, in this period, reflected a constant engagement with sculptural meaning rather than a hiatus from sculptural production, as he later claimed.<sup>333</sup>

Echoing what Martini had said in his *La Scultura lingua morta*, Melotti understood sculpture as a conveyer of eternal meaning. Working within a larger international reevaluation of abstraction in art during WWII, Melotti's return to the figure should not be seen as a disavowal of his earlier principals. For example in his 1946 *Dopoguerra* [Figure 2.13], Melotti brought together figuration and the craft medium with the monochromatic abstract formalism of his earlier work. Melotti's cousin and art theorist, Carlo Belli wrote that Melotti's art was "a mathematical institution."<sup>334</sup> For Belli, Melotti's *scultura viva* exhibited both a direct connection to truth (i.e. mathematics) and a clear formal program. Therefore, like Hildebrand and Martini, Belli saw sculpture as a rigid set of prescriptions—though the rules for sculpture in Belli's treatise on abstract art, titled *Kn*, remained ambiguous as compared to painting.<sup>335</sup> Allied with Martini's description of sculpture in *La Scultura lingua morta* however, Belli's description focused on Melotti's move beyond the kind of visuality promoted by Hildebrand. Instead ideal sculptural meaning was that of a mathematical truth—mathematical here, however, referred to absolutes rather than arithmetic or geometric and was connected to a larger discussion of music.<sup>336</sup> Therefore, Melotti's abstraction was not defined as anti-figuration, but rather by its ability to convey absolute

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<sup>332</sup> Melotti, Fausto. "Presentazione della mostra personale di opere del 1934 e 1935 (1935)." In *Sculture astratte di Fausto Melotti: 1934-1935 e 1962*. Edited by Giovanni Scheiwiller. Vol. 53. Milano: All'insegna del Pesce D'oro, 1967. 11-13.

<sup>333</sup> For an apt parallel example in Melotti's friend, that I have already described above, Lucio Fontana, see: Hecker, Sharon. "'Servant of Two Masters': Lucio Fontana's Sculptures in Milan's Cinema Arlecchino (1948)." *Oxford Art Journal* 35, no. 3 (2012): 337-61.

<sup>334</sup> "L'arte è una istituzione di matematica. [...] Questa chiara affermazione di Melotti porta avanti di un altro piano il nostro lavoro." Belli, Carlo. "Da Quadrante, 1935," in *Fausto Melotti*, Ed. Maurizio Calvesi. Parma : Università di Parma, 1976. p. 27

<sup>335</sup> Originally published in 1935. See: Belli, Carlo. *Kn*. Milan: Pesce d'oro, 1974.

<sup>336</sup> See: Colazzo, Cosimo. "Carlo Belli, teorico dell'arte astratta in Italia negli anni '30, e la musica." In *Conto aperto. Scritti sulla musica del '900*. Edited by Cosimo Colazzo. Trento: Conservatorio di musica F.A. Bomperti,, 2002. 93-108.

truths to the viewer. This can be more broadly connected to Fontana's contemporary move towards figuration in the wake of Fascist cooptation of sculptural abstraction in its propaganda.<sup>337</sup> With Melotti's ideal that sculpture was a conveyer of abstract mathematical truths, sculptors had freedom in all other aspects. Therefore, Melotti was not constrained by medium or style in order to fulfill his project.

During the so-called "silent" period between 1936 and 1962, the sculptor worked prolifically in ceramic and terracotta media, creating both sculpture and more traditional forms of ceramics.<sup>338</sup> For the most part, Melotti supported himself during these years through the sale of ceramic pieces, made in addition to his ceramic sculpture, and large-scale collaborative projects with architects. In the series of new sculptures created during this period, in particular, he returned to the figure. Even though none of these works were exhibited publicly at the time of their creation, looking back in 1981, Melotti said that he "kept dreaming" up new sculptures during this period and made them in his studio.<sup>339</sup> Melotti's series of *Teatrini* represented an investigation of, rather than a respite from, his serious sculptural project. With designs originating as early as the 1920s, Melotti's *Teatrini* created sculptural allegories that strove to find a path to a *scultura viva* that could represent a new modern, post-war Italian culture.<sup>340</sup>

As Vitali articulated in 1948, a "revolution" was already being mounted by sculptors during the first half of the twentieth century in the search for an adequate definition of their

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<sup>337</sup> See: White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 61-123.

<sup>338</sup> Fagiolo, Maurizio. "Melotti: profezia della scultura." In *Melotti: profezia della scultura*. Turin: Notizie, 1968. 1.

<sup>339</sup> "Ho anche cercato di vivere di far vivere la mia famiglia e per questo facevo il ceramista, piastrelle da pavimenti e di rivestimento. Però nel mio studio di Milano c'è sempre stato spazio anche per la scultura, per i miei sogni. Da un certo anno in poi la pila della piastelle ha cominciato a scendere e quella delle sculture a salire. Ho sempre continuato a sognare. A proposito, lei che è di teatro, sa che anche allora facevo i miei "teatrini"? Ne ho fatti parecchi, nessuno li guardava. Adesso li guardano e sono diventati anche costosi." Cirio, Rita. "Intervista con Fausto Melotti. Il mio maestro? Si chiama Brahms." *L'Espresso Roma* (1981): 130.

<sup>340</sup> D'Amico, Fabrizio. "I "Teatrini": appunti per una storia ininterrotta / The "Teatrini": Notes on an Uninterrupted Story." In *Fausto Melotti: Teatrini 1931-1985*, Translated by Doriana Commerlati Ursula Barr Creagh, Michael Haggerty, George Whiteside. Edited by Carlo Pirovano. Verona: Charta, 1996. 35.

medium's parameters. This revolution, of which Martini's *Scultura lingua morta* was a symptom not the cause, reflected the paradoxical relationship sculptors felt to their own medium. Though Melotti's purely abstract works on the mid-1930s seemingly reached the sculptural ideal of an anti-statue, his dramatic shift towards figuration is telling of the still active questioning of the sculptural medium.

Like the larger project to construct a new Italian culture after Fascism, Melotti's figurative works not only left behind sculptural preconceptions about medium and form but also took up earlier modernist projects. Even though the *Teatrini* are figurative, their theatrical theme and use of non-canonical media remove them from a statuesque tradition, away from *scultura morta*. At the same time, Melotti's sculptures resemble Martini's own series *Teatrini*, from the 1920s and 30s (for example *Donna alla finestra*, 1931-32 [Figure 2.14]). Emily Braun writes that Martini's *Teatrini* "subverted the pictorial model of bas-relief, canonized by Hildebrand [...] instead, the eye moves inward from the outmost point of the frame, entering a real, rather than a fictive, space."<sup>341</sup> Melotti continued this motif as well as Martini's search for a *scultura viva* in his own *Teatrini* series. However, instead of focusing on "real" space, Melotti's new *Teatrini* focused on allegories of sculptural creation and about sculpture's ability to convey meaning to the viewer. The space of Melotti's *Teatrini* was not real, but instead a fictive dream-landscape.

Most studies have read Melotti's *Teatrini* as mystical stories, arguing that Melotti found abstraction inadequate to tell these poetic tales during the postwar years. For example, Fulvio Abboni, member of the Florence Office of Culture, described Melotti as "above all a poet: a great poet who expresses himself instead of with words, with the language of art."<sup>342</sup> For the

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<sup>341</sup> Braun, Emily. "Bodies from the Crypt and Other Tales of Italian Sculpture between the Wars." In *Chaos & Classicism: Art in France, Italy, and Germany, 1918-1936*. Edited by Kenneth E. Silver. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2010. 149.

<sup>342</sup> "Credo che Fausto Melotti sia soprattutto un poeta: un grande poeta che si esprime, anziché con le parole, con il linguaggio dell'arte." Abboni, Fulvio. "Scultura e poesia," *Melotti*. Firenze : Electa Firenze s.r.l., 1981. 9.

most part, Melotti as poet laureate has overwhelmed the understanding of this body of work. This is true for the only major study of this series, a 1996 exhibition at the Galleria dello Scudo in Verona. This exhibition and the accompanying catalogue presented Melotti's desire to create meaning through sculpture in the *Teatrini*. In the catalogue, curator and art historian Fabrizio D'Amico contextualizes the *Teatrini* as part of a larger project but with a focus on narrative framework.<sup>343</sup> Along the same lines, art historian Carlo Pirovano understands Melotti's projects in terms of formal solutions for narrative problems.<sup>344</sup>

While the contributions of D'Amico and Pirovano have advanced the critical engagement with Melotti's *Teatrini*, instead of seeing the sculptor's shift to figuration as a way to work through formal issues, they see Melotti's *Teatrini* as a return to a narrative form of sculpture. When Melotti's *Teatrini* are considered within the larger context, in particular in relation to Martini's treatise and his friend Fontana's contemporary work, it is clear that this work is situated in a larger investigation into modern sculptural meaning rather than engaged with issues of narrative.<sup>345</sup> His *Teatrini* were therefore not merely figurative depictions of stories, created by a man broken by a Fascist-war, but rather abstract theories about sculptural meaning.

Similar to what Martini described in *La Scultura*, Melotti's distrust of naturalism was central to his ideals for sculpture. Therefore, an iconographic reading of the figures as actors in a sculptural allegory allows any discussion of naturalism to be taken completely out of the equation. By moving past a merely whimsical reading of these works, the *Teatrini* can be considered as integral to Melotti's larger sculptural project. Just as Sharon Hecker argues for

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<sup>343</sup> See: *Fausto Melotti: Teatrini 1931-1985*, Ed. Carlo Pirovano. Verona : Charta, 1996.

<sup>344</sup> Pirovano, Carlo. "Per l'acrobata invisibile/For the Invisible Acrobat." In *Fausto Melotti: Teatrini 1931-1985*, Translated by Ursula Barr Creagh, Dorinana Comerlati, Michael Haggerty and George Whiteside. Edited by Carlo Pirovano. Verona: Charta, 1996. 16 & 39.

<sup>345</sup> Anthony White discusses Fontana's use of parallel themes to Martini in his own search for a living sculpture. See: White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 138



Fontana, Melotti's work of this period cannot be set aside in an understanding of the artist's oeuvre.<sup>346</sup> Instead, it must be seen as integral to his larger project because it informed what happens later.

Throughout his career, Melotti's musings about sculptural communication clearly outline the central tenants of his sculptural project. For example, in a 1984 interview, Melotti declared that

I don't love nature. Nature, I think of as a curtain that hides us from God. [...] The Devil is the Archangel that hates the father; [...] it is for this I think that nature is the curtain that hides us from God... moreover it is the only model that we have in which we have to be able to look at ourselves. In abstract art, thank goodness, we do not have these horrendous models.<sup>347</sup>

Melotti's description of the conflation of nature and the devil did not rule out figuration, but instead separated it from naturalism. The devil, therefore, stood as an allegorical personification of naturalism in art. This exact trope was played out in a number of *Teatrini*, including Melotti's 1940 *Il Diavolo che tenta gli intellettuali* [*The Devil Who Tempts the Intellectuals*, Figure 2.7]. This work personified the relationship between intellect and naturalism in sculpture.

In *Il Diavolo che tenta gli intellettuali*, the intellectuals in Futurist-style suits, with vest decorated with geometric forms, personify the intellect. They represent sculpture's access to meaning. Conversely the devil personifies nature/naturalism within the small box of this *Teatrino*. The white painted background camouflages the devil's face doubling his opacity both physically and metaphorically, since his attribute obscures higher meaning beyond the visual. This white paint functions as a curtain that obstructs the viewer's, outside the work, and the intellectuals',

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<sup>346</sup> Hecker, Sharon. "‘Servant of Two Masters’: Lucio Fontana's Sculptures in Milan's Cinema Arlecchino (1948)." *Oxford Art Journal* 35, no. 3 (2012): 337-61.

<sup>347</sup> "Io non amo la natura. La natura penso che sia un sipario, che ci nasconde a Dio. [...] Il Diavolo è l'Arcangelo che odia il padre [...] è per questo che penso che la natura sia il sipario che ci nasconde a Dio... d'altronde è l'unico modello che abbiamo nel quale possiamo speciarci. Nell'arte astratta grazie a Dio non abbiamo questi modelli orrendi." Mulas, Antonia. *Tre Ore Con Fausto Melotti*. Milan: Vanni Scheiwiller, 1992. 41-2.

inside the work, perception of truth. This *Teatrini* uses an allegorical narrative in order to work through the problems of modern sculpture's authentic communicability.

During the early twentieth-century, debates between realism and abstraction raged in Italy, as they did all over Europe, and Melotti was not alone in his experiments.<sup>348</sup> Art historian Giorgio de Marchis writes that the debates between “realism” and “abstraction” found renewed fever in post-war Italy because of the breakdown of Fascism and the subsequent civil war, where “Italy was thus chopped in two.”<sup>349</sup> At this moment, figures like the realist painter, Renato Guttuso came to embody the war-time resistance, while new “avant-garde” groups, like Milan's *Art Club*, championed abstraction as the new Italian style.<sup>350</sup> As Alex Potts describes in his recent book *Experiments in Modern Realism*, though traditional definitions of realism have prevailed throughout the twentieth-century there were developments in the post-war moment that were in dialogue with those of abstraction.<sup>351</sup> He writes that, “Realism is not anti-formalist but anti-formalistic and, as such, is at odds with a purist understanding of artistic abstraction as systematically evacuating or blocking any concrete reference a work might make to the larger world of which it is part.”<sup>352</sup>

Parallel to Melotti, Albert Giacometti experienced a crisis over sculptural meaning and moved from more abstract works towards figuration. In a 1947 letter to his dealer Pierre Matisse, Giacometti wrote about his search for truth in sculpture that came from his first explorations with

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<sup>348</sup> Pirovano, Carlo. "Per l'acrobata invisibile/For the Invisible Acrobat." In *Fausto Melotti: Teatrini 1931-1985*, Translated by Dorian Commerlati Ursula Barr Creagh, Michael Haggerty, George Whiteside. Verona: Charta, 1996. 15.

<sup>349</sup> "l'Italia è così spaccata in due." Marchis, Giorgio de. *Storia dell'arte italiana*. Edited by Federico Zeri. 3 vols. Vol. 3: Il Novecento. Turin: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1982. 553.

<sup>350</sup> Marchis. Ibid. 554-565. Marchis terms the “Art Club” as avant-garde. It is not a value judgement made here by the author.

<sup>351</sup> Potts, Alex. *Experiments in Modern Realism. World Making, Politics and the Everyday in Postwar European and American Art*, New Haven : Yale University Press, 2013. 2.

<sup>352</sup> Potts. Ibid. 4.

the medium and moved to his shift toward figuration just at the brink of the Second World War.

He wrote that

It was no longer a question of reproducing a lifelike figure but of living, and of executing only what had affected me, or what I really wanted. But all this alternated, contradicted itself, and continued by contrast. ...I saw anew the bodies that attracted me in reality and the abstract forms which seemed to me true in sculpture, but I wanted to create the former without losing the later, *very briefly put*.<sup>353</sup>

For Giacometti, the “lifelike figure” of abstraction in works created during the inter-war period no longer gave the sense of the whole of real life. Like Melotti’s own return to figuration, Giacometti too shifted in a search for truth that he had found incapable of being conveyed through abstraction by the late 1930s.

As curator and art historian Christian Klemm describes, “Giacometti [starting in the late 1930’s] did not naively seek to transfer reality directly onto the canvas, but to realize the picture of reality held within his inner perception.”<sup>354</sup> Melotti likewise claimed that making “abstract art [after WWII] seemed to [be] an estrangement from the common life, from [mankind], for which I abandoned it for a while... whence I gave myself to poetry.”<sup>355</sup> Melotti’s *Teatrini* created a poetry of form, where figurative iconography revealed a reality of inner perceptions about the medium specific possibilities of sculpture. Therefore, Melotti’s sculptural poetry was concerned with sculpture’s ability to communicate pure, mathematical truths.

For example, Melotti’s 1945 *L’Eco* [*Echo*, Figure 2.8] combined poetic counterpoints (tactile and flat, figurative and abstract, geometric and materialistic) in a sculptural game of signs.

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<sup>353</sup> Giacometti, Alberto. "Letter to Pierre Matisse (1947)." In *Theories of Modern Art*. Edited by Herschel B. Chipp. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968. 599. Emphasis original to text.

<sup>354</sup> Klemm, Christian. “Aberto Giacometti; 1901-1966,” *Alberto Giacometti*, Ed. Christian Klemm. New York : Museum of Modern Art, 2001. p. 120 Klemm also reiterates Giacometti’s claims in his letter to the Pierre Matisse Gallery, in that “the perceived distance of viewer to figure in a painting can be fixed by the painted illusion of space, sculpture does not offer this possibility. Making ever smaller figures, Giacometti tried to impart the lived experience of distance” (121).

<sup>355</sup> “L’arte astratta mi sembrava un allontanamento dalla vita comune, dagli uomini, per cui l’ho abbandonata per un bel po’... onde mi sono dato alla poesia.” Mulas, Antonia. *Tre Ore Con Fausto Melotti*. Milan: Vanni Scheiwiller, 1992. 32.

In *L'Eco*, Melotti positioned a sinuous figure within a tight interior space. The unglazed terracotta sculpture's monochrome surfaces diverge from his typical *Teatrini*. With its imprinted gird, the architectural framing has a mass-produced aesthetic, contrasting starkly with its enclosed figure. Here, Melotti emphasized the juxtaposition between surfaces that read as both hard and soft in both box and figure with the uniform media. Where in *Il Diavolo che tenta gli intellettuali* Melotti personified Martini's *scultura morta*, complementarily in *L'Eco*, he created a dialogue about the possible physical modes of creating sculpture. Through his juxtaposition of abstract and figurative, geometric and organic, Melotti expressed his active investigation into possibilities for a *scultura viva*.

At the same time, "Echo" undoubtedly references the character from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>356</sup> Melotti's *L'Eco* shouts out. This conjuring of spoken language points to Melotti's constant desire to have sculpture clearly communicate to the viewer. Unlike Narcissus, Melotti hopes the viewer will not ignore Echo's call and will understand her, sculpture personified, message.

Melotti's central concern with sculptural meaning, rather than an aesthetic adherence to pure abstraction, was most clearly articulated in his own discussions on the subject. In a 1984 interview, Antonia Mulas, daughter of influential photographer Ugo Mulas, asked the sculptor to describe the meaning behind the 1969 *L'Infinito* [Figure 2.10]. Laughing, suggesting it was an obvious answer, Melotti replied, "[it] is... a simple concept: it is the logarithmic spiral that never ends, and at the top of this pole the spiral (that does not end) is able to represent infinity."<sup>357</sup>

Furthermore, he said that "abstract art only knows art in itself, therefore it does not speak a

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<sup>356</sup> See: Ovid. *Metamorphoses : a new verse translation*. Translated by David Raeburn. London: Penguin, 2004.

<sup>357</sup> "(ride) ma è la stessa cosa, è anche quello un pensiero semplice in fondo: è la spirale logaritmica, che non finisce mai, e in cima a questa asta la spirale, che non finisce può rappresentare l'infinito." Mulas, Antonia. *Tre Ore Con Fausto Melotti*. Milan: Vanni Scheiwiller, 1992. 40.

language that is supported by phenomena; [instead] it is like geometry, like mathematics.”<sup>358</sup> The formula for sculptural meaning relied on concrete, abstract ideas being conveyed through the sculpture, whether the form of that sculpture was purely abstract or figurative.

From Melotti’s own descriptions, it is clear that the titles played a central role in the meaning of the sculptures. He used titles in a number of ways, yet all in the service of a sculptural allegory. Like with *L’Eco*, one mode relied on recognizable figures from literature and opera to stand in for sculptural allegories. For example in the later *Il Sonno di Wotan* [*Wotan’s Dream*], 1958 [Figure 2.11], Melotti referenced Wagner’s operatic trilogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen* [*Nibelung’s Ring*], 1848-1874. Wotan, the chief god (Oden) in the opera, strives for total control but ultimately fails.<sup>359</sup> Pirovano writes that Melotti’s reference to Wagner, “is not concerned with the transcription of the fact narrated but, rather, with the dark obsession of unavoidable destiny.”<sup>360</sup> However, rather than merely related to destiny, Melotti’s depiction of Wotan dream coincided with his own dream of success.

In this *Teatrino*, Melotti depiction of Wotan’s dream, separated physically from the realm of the theatrical box, consists of a number of small geometric forms. Reminiscent of Melotti’s earlier works like *Il Museo* (1959) or *Dopoguerra* (1946) [Figures 2.12-13], not to mention the geometric motifs used to create the box of *L’Eco*, the figures of Wotan’s dreams are sculptures, on pedestals. The narrative suggested by the title works out with regards sculptural problems. Melotti’s *Il Sonno di Wotan* is an allegory of sculpture’s formal attributes—it is even possibly an allegory of Melotti’s own process as creator, dreaming of sculptures he cannot adequately create.

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<sup>358</sup> “L’arte astratta conosce solo l’arte in se stessa, quindi non chiede un linguaggio che si appoggia alle cose fenomeniche; è come la geometria, come la matematica.” Mulas, *Ibid.* 42.

<sup>359</sup> See: Poster, Mark. “What Does Wotan Want?: Ambivalent Feminism in Wagner's Ring,” *New German Critique*, No. 53 (Spring - Summer, 1991), pp. 131-148

<sup>360</sup> Pirovano, Carlo. “Catalogo delle opere/Catalogue of the works,” *Fausto Melotti: Teatrini 1931-1985*, Ed. Carlo Pirovano. Verona : Charta, 1996. p. 78

The figurative Wotan dreams of a *scultura viva* that is higher, more immediately understandable; abstract forms in his dream have concrete meanings. Melotti's never ending desire to make communicative abstract sculpture and his anxiety about this possibility is personified in this multivalent *Teatrino*.

For Melotti, this new work would be taken up as both a return to a traditionally Italian craft medium, ceramics, but also as a rebirth of something new. His new sculptural modernism not only turned the use of ceramic media on its head but also challenged the use of modern sculpture for propaganda. About Fontana's parallel sculptural shift, Anthony White writes that,

faced with the co-optation of this modernist idea [of integration of the arts] by the Italian government for use in spectacular installations, Fontana turned against abstraction, and reintroduced elements specifically rejected by the modernist canon: the decorative objects and the ornamental motif. He deliberately turned against Mussolini's idea that modern artists should utterly reject past decorative styles.<sup>361</sup>

For both Fontana and Melotti, the new use of modernist sculpture during late-Fascism had spurred them to change their practice. Then in this post-war moment, this earlier shift, that started in the late-1930s, was championed as a new order of Italian modern sculpture. Melotti's and Fontana's use of craft media in their sculpture represented one of the many kinds of post-war sculptural "rebirths" that were mobilized in the creation of a new understanding of modern Italian culture.

### **Marino Marini's *Cavaliere* as New Monumentality**

Marini's take on *scultura viva* took a different shape. Starting in the late-1930s, Marini moved away from Fascist and *Novecento* themes and replaced them with new ones derived from the sculptural canon: equestrians, nudes, archangels, and dancers. Again, Marini's search for a

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<sup>361</sup> White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 110.

new form of sculptural modernism both sought a break and looked back. Like Melotti, Marini seemingly returned to order with traditional subjects and materials. However, by specifically appropriating these themes from the sculptural canon, Marini turned the canon on its head and separated these themes from the control of statuary. In particular, the *Cavaliere* were not simply “backward looking,” post-war lamentations but rather experiments in modern sculptural revitalization.<sup>362</sup>

Marini took up the argument against statuary in particular through this *Cavaliere* series. In *La Scultura lingua morta*, Martini wrote that,

[at] the middle of a crossroads, a statue hinders traffic; in exhibitions it serves as a screen to separate a series of pictures; in modern houses it is a nonsense. [...] Nothing justifies the survival of sculpture in the modern world. The only time one has use for it is in solemn occasions and in commemorations, just as one uses Latin for epigraphs and the mass.<sup>363</sup>

Martini defines statuary as something that is placeless. With this, Martini highlighted the preposterous place of the modern “statue” and, simultaneously, historical monuments. The Fascist context, therefore, illustrates a vivid picture for this critique. Marino Marini’s own discussion of sculpture in a 1950 interview mimicked Martini’s earlier sentiments. Marini proclaimed that the plight of sculptors in Italy was “very bad [and there] is no money—and people have no place to put sculpture.”<sup>364</sup> In dialogue with this aspect of Martini’s *La Scultura*, Marini’s *Cavaliere* highlighted these negative aspects in order to highlight their disfunction. In so doing, he created a new modern sculpture that broke with the past and yet looked back in its

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<sup>362</sup> See: Causey, Andrew. *Sculpture Since 1945*, Oxford History of Art. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. 29.; Hunter, Sam. *Marino Marini: The Sculpture*. New York: Abrams, 1993. 16.

<sup>363</sup> Martini, Arturo. "Sculpture Dead Language 1945." In *Modern Sculpture Reader*. Edited by Jon Wood, David Hulk and Alex Potts. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007. 177.

<sup>364</sup> Louchheim, Aline B. "Tradition and the Contemporary." *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1950, X9.

generation of a new post-Fascist Italian culture. Quiet rightly, critic Giovanni Carandente has described *Cavaliere* as the “beginning of invention.”<sup>365</sup>

When, at the end of 1942, Marini and his wife traveled to Switzerland (Marina was a Swiss citizen) where they would live for the duration of the war, Marini did not stop creating. This post-Fascist work reflected a mature use of the equestrian type. Indeed, his production spiked and he created both autonomous horses and equestrian groups.<sup>366</sup> In 1944 alone, he created at least nine equestrians, most in three-dimensions.<sup>367</sup> Though, Marini did not return to Milan till the spring of 1946, his *Cavaliere* series continued his modernist aesthetic project to create new Italian modern sculpture.

Marini had begun to make his *Cavaliere* as a new *scultura viva* in the late years of Fascism; and the series continued after the physical and ideological upheaval of war. Of the new set of subjects, Marini took up the *Cavaliere* in particular by trading on canonical types, familiar to the monumental history of sculpture. Yet, he did this in a way that negated their traditional readings. He accomplished this through material and thematic choices. Though he used traditional sculptural themes, Marini “never [let] himself be trapped by the seductions of traditional systems...”<sup>368</sup>

Marini’s first free-standing sculpture combination of a horse and rider came in 1936 [Figure 2.15]. This work’s rigid form is a clear quotation of the Bamberg Rider from which

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<sup>365</sup> Marini, Marino. "Incontro con Marino Marini, 1." By Piero Bargellini, Giovanni Carandente, Lorenzo Papi and Carlo L. Ragghianti. *Critica d'arte* 49, no. 3. (Oct.-Dec., 1984): 52.

<sup>366</sup> See: Cavadini, Luigi. “Marino in Switzerland.” In *Marino Marini*, Translated by Georgina Dennis. Edited by Pierre Casè. Milan: Skira, 2000. 29-39.

<sup>367</sup> Information compiled by consulting the catalogue raisonné of the artist’s sculptures: *Marino Marini: Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Milan : Skira Editore, 1998.

<sup>368</sup> Vitali, Lamberto. “Contemporary Sculptors: VII-Marino Marini.” Trans: Bernard Wall, *Horizon* 17-18, no. 105 (1948). 204.



Marini claimed inspiration [Figure 2.16].<sup>369</sup> His later *Cavaliere* are different; they break away from a single referent to critique a larger history of equestrian statuary. The later works reflected the growing unease that artists felt in the wake of the Fascist rejection of liberal culture. At the same time, they continued Marini's modernist aesthetic project with a modernist focus on form and surface. In 1950, Marini described the place of the equestrian model in contemporary Italian social consciousness. He explained that,

[e]questrian statues have always served, through the centuries, a kind of epic purpose. They set out to exalt a triumphant hero, a conqueror like Marcus Aurelius... In the past fifty years, this ancient relationship between man and beast has been entirely transformed. The horse has been replaced, in its economic and its military functions, by the machine [becoming] a symbol of sport or of luxury and, in the minds of most of our contemporaries, is rapidly becoming a kind of myth.<sup>370</sup>

Like its historical precedents, Marini pointed out the placelessness of statuary in modern culture echoing Martini's critique of statuary. Though the historical equestrian stood as heroic representations of political leaders, they had lost that power in the modern period for Marini—important to not is that the Fascists extensively utilized equestrian imagery to connote the power of il Duce. For Marini, however, the equestrian could be recuperated. Since the horse now had its own myth value, it no longer had a connection to heroics and therefore in a post-Fascist world represented a reinvigorated kind of humanism, the humanism of war's physical destruction.

The first group works of this series, created between 1939 and 1949-50 [Figures 2.17-19], showed an interest in dismantling the equestrian image as a monumental statue, which had both historically and in the modern period served as political propaganda. Marini achieved this in two ways: rather than a glorification of a political hero, Marini's *Cavaliere* were anonymous; and

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<sup>369</sup> See: Caprile, Luciano. "Quatre Temps, Quatre Aspects de l'Art Italien au XXe Siècle [Four Times, Four Aspects of Italian Art in the Twentieth Century]", *Giorgio Morandi, Marino Marini, Alberto Burri, Zoran Music : quatre temps, quatre aspects de l'art italien au XXe siècle* : Galerie d'art du Conseil Général des Bouches-du-Rhône, Aix-en-Provence, 19 Octobre-30 Décembre 2000. Arles : Actes Sud, c2000. 14. & Hammacher, Abraham. *Marino Marini : sculpture, painting, drawing*. New York : Harry N. Abrams. 1970. 14.

<sup>370</sup> Roditi, Edouard. *Dialogues: Conversations with European Artists at Mid-Century*. San Francisco : Bedford Arts, Publishers. 1990. 85.

rather than presenting an image of physical and political strength, the *Cavaliere* are short and stout. In Marini's view, new modern sculpture needed to rid itself of the ideological restrictions of statuary, exemplified in the equestrian theme.

With the millennium-long tradition of life-size honorific equestrian monuments, the power of the equestrian symbol was powerful in Italy. From Ancient Roman equestrians [Figure 2.20] to those of the Middle Ages, in particular images of Saints Martin and George, the equestrian represented specific historical and religious figures, as well as human virtues.<sup>371</sup> Risorgimento leaders likewise utilized the equestrian monument as both portraiture and, similarly, as a conveyer of universal ideals used to unify the new Italian State. Works like the monuments to Giuseppe Garibaldi and Emanuel-Philibert of Savoy [Figures 2.21 & 2.22] created new icons for veneration and an imagining of the new, unified Italian state. Some of Marini's contemporaries, most notably Giorgio di Chirico [Figure 2.23], likewise used equestrian iconography to both mark the current visual landscape of Italy and simultaneously created a critical dialogue about their place in the modern city. In Italy, the historical equestrian had a place in the contemporary consciousness as much as did the modern one.

During the twentieth century, the traditional equestrian-type was again used this time to glorify the Fascist Regime. Mussolini's was often imaged mounted [Figures 2.24-26 & 2.28]; he even on the guise of a mounted St. George, as on a plate produced after the League of Nations placed sanctions on Italy for their invasion of Ethiopia [Figure 2.25].<sup>372</sup> In the same vein,

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<sup>371</sup> An image of the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius was included among the images sent from Marini and his dealer Curt Valentin to curator James Thrall Soby for Marini's inclusion in the 1949 MoMA exhibition *Twentieth Century Italian Art*. See: *James Thrall Soby Papers*, I.171, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

<sup>372</sup> Donatello's famous sculpture of St. George also played an integral role in Mussolini's representation of a culturally significant modern Florence for Hitler's 1939 visit. Like earlier equestrian imagery, the Fascist equestrian in the guise of St. George represented universal ideals for the Fascist "New Man." Crum, Roger J. "Shaping the Fascist "New Man" - Donatello's *St. George* and Mussolini's Appropriated Renaissance of the Italian Nation." In *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Edited by Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005. 133-44. 135-44.

publicity photos of Il Duce showed the dictator as cavaliere on his steed [Figures 2.26, 2.28]. The use of generalized Roman-type mounted soldier was also central in Fascist imagery, for example: Filippo Sgarlata's *It Is the Plow That Draws the Sickle, but It Is the Sword Which Defends It* [Figure 2.27]. Sgarlata's work won the Venice Biennale first prize in 1938 and was so prized by Mussolini that it was that year's exhibitions personal purchase for Il Duce's collection.<sup>373</sup> Marini's *Cavaliere* appeared at a moment when the equestrian image still represented real power and political importance, not just a symbol of power long past.

Like the larger phenomenon of post-war Italian culture, Marini's equestrians signaled a break from and continuation of recent aesthetic production. At the same time, Marini's incorporation of the nude male body into the canonical equestrian motif rejected mere ethnographic archaism or a nostalgia for a pre-Fascist (or pre-modern) Italy. In saying, "[t]hat is why my own art was at one time so often founded on themes borrowed from the past, like the equestrian figure, which remains a reminder of utilitarian relationships between man and the horse, rather than on more modern themes, like the relationship between man and the machine,"<sup>374</sup> Marini showed his engagement with new kind of humanism that allied with larger developments in post-Fascist culture. In so doing, he turned on its head the propagandistic meanings of the equestrian image.

When Marini claimed inspiration from the German *Bamberg Rider* [Figure 2.16], he was distancing himself from the particular political readings of equestrian imagery in Fascist Italy while reinforcing a modern humanist meaning—this claim also could have very likely originated

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<sup>373</sup> Stone, Marla Susan. *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. 194-5.

<sup>374</sup> Roditi, Edouard. *Dialogues: Conversations with European Artists at Mid-Century*. San Francisco: Bedford Arts, 1990. 89.

from an uneasy attempt to connect his new wartime studio work with German aesthetic ideals.<sup>375</sup>

Marini described the *Bamberg Rider* as

the type of knight from fairy tales, very imaginative with regard to the style of architecture; [it] made me think of my own horsemen, very virile and very sensual. And as I reflected I recreated in my mind 'the idea of the *Horseman*'.<sup>376</sup>

Marini, by referencing the monument to the anonymous rider, focuses attention to a new reading of the equestrian, one both “virile” and “sensual” at the same time. Importantly, this new equestrian was divorced from specific political references. Marini’s *Cavaliere* therefore spoke to humanity in general. This *scultura viva* relied on separating the monument from the hegemony of statuary. For a post-Fascist Italian culture, Marini’s *Cavaliere* represented the every-man raised up on his average steed.

This humanist focus was reinforced by the uncharacteristically nude rider. One of the only precedents with which Marini would have been familiar was Giorgio Gori’s *Genio del Fascismo*, 1936 [Figure 2. 29]. This Fascist example, like the images of Mussolini, represented the Roman-type Fascist “New Man,” a classical nude athlete. However, Marini’s nude riders are not ideal types, nor do they carry any of the classical attributes of Gori’s. Marini’s riders were average men. The riders of the *Cavaliere* loudly proclaimed their anti-idealism through bulging bellies and short, stumpy limbs. Marini’s horses too did not fit the standard heroic steed, instead their bodies are slightly too big for their legs and their heads lack the majesty or detail of canonical equestrian monuments.

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<sup>375</sup> Important to note, the Bamberg Rider became an important symbol for Nazi German iconography. See: Baird, Jay W. *To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. 241.; Fozi, Shirin. "The Bamberg Rider." *Conversations: An Online Journal of the Center for the Study of Material and Visual Cultures of Religion* (2014), <http://mavcor.yale.edu/conversations/object-narratives/bamberg-rider>. [Accessed: May 22, 2015]; Gray, Richard T. *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004. 213-14; Hudson, Mark. "Escape to art: Bamberg." *The Telegraph* (2003), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3608810/Escape-to-art-Bamberg.html>. [Accessed: May 22, 2015]

<sup>376</sup> Lorenzoni, Laura. "Marini's Life." In *Marino Marini*, Translated by Georgina Dennis. Edited by Pierre Casè. Milan: Skira, 2000. 283. Emphasis added to text.

Marini's 1947 *Cavaliere* [Figure 2.19] is an apt example. With horse and rider both disrobed of any honorific or politically-signifying garb, this equestrian's composition and form deviate from historical precedents. With an asymmetry, strongly diverging from the canonical type, this *Cavaliere* shows both horse and rider looking up. The horse turns his head back, straining to look at the same unseen occurrence. Even more exaggerated, the rider leans back and an obscured right leg braces against the horse's own leg as the rider stretches to likewise catch a glimpse. Frozen in time and space, this action suggests that both horse and rider are reacting to an unseen incident. This composition creates a formal dynamism in the sculpture that is lacking in precedents for this canonical type. Marini's *Cavaliere* have an energy about them. Yet, there are equal aspects of stillness, or rather timelessness. Like all of Marini's works, it sets up productive contradictions: modern and traditional, dynamic and still. These juxtapositions situate his work within a long history of Italian sculpture, engage with a contemporary sculptural modernism, and create a new image of post-Fascist Italian culture.

The material quality of this work functions in parallel. Though the medium is traditional, bronze, the *Cavaliere* were created with new strategies of making. They were cast to create a unique variety of marks and textures, from fingerprints to chisel gouges, with raised textures that conjure various and simultaneous images. From hair to shadow to scar to casting remnants, the lines, marks, and residues show up in the surface of the sculpture to enliven it as well as make a nod to process. These combinations of pre- and post-casting marks, along with his various patinas, create a highly varied surface that revitalizes this canonical material. Some of these marks seem to stand in for shadows, for example on the horse's neck or the raised panel on the chest and stomach of the rider. Other textures, like the series of raised dots that show up in seemingly random parts of the sculpture, become places of possible exaggerated highlights.

There is also a series of post-casting chisel marks that occur in various places on the sculpture. These marks seem to suggest scaring, yet at other times they appear to be merely decorative, accentuating a line of the animal's leg. The formal qualities of the work continue Marini's Fascist-era modernist ideals with a new post-Fascist theme.

When Marini returned to Milan and took back his position at the Accademia di Brera, these works were championed by critics as exemplar. They represented the pinnacle of Marini's work and of a new sculptural modernism for Italy moving forward. However, he was at the center of the debates between realism and abstraction alongside Melotti. This debate came to a head at the 1952 Venice Biennale. Marini was slotted to win but, to the surprise of many Italian critics, the Premio for sculpture went to the American abstract sculptor, Alexander Calder. One critic wrote: "It detracts in no way from the very special significance of Calder's work, when we assert that in actual fact the moral winner at Venice is Marino Marini."<sup>377</sup>

As I will show in the last chapter of this dissertation, the works created during this period would become iconic. Marini's *Cavaliere* and his *Pomone* [Figures 2.30] will bring him international fame and fortune. Even though Marini lost the 1952 Biennale to Calder—he was already good friends with the American sculptor by this time—he remained the preeminent modernist sculptor in Italy throughout the 1950s.

### **New Modern Sculpture and a New Post-Fascist *Italianità***

Arturo Martini's *La Scultura lingua morta* was not the first denunciation of sculptural monuments in Italy. As curator Elisabetta Mossinelli describes, even in the moment of Italy's modern birth intellectuals felt that monuments had lost their aesthetic bite.<sup>378</sup> Giuseppe Mazzini

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<sup>377</sup> Langui, Emile. *Marino Marini*. Edited by A.M. Hammacher. New York: Universe Books, 1959. 6.

<sup>378</sup> Mossinelli, Elisabetta. "Contro l'immatura smania di monumenti." *Arte (Italy)*, no. 341 (2002): 65.

lamented that “the restless prematurity and immaturity in monuments [is] one of the plagues of Italy.”<sup>379</sup> Mossinelli explains that the lineage of modern Italian sculptors, from Medardo Rosso and Adolfo Wildt to Martini and Marini, strove for a new sculpture that was relevant in a new Italy. Both Martini and Marini paradoxically achieved a new monumentality through their representation of “human fragility” as a universal truth.<sup>380</sup> Rather than marking a single event or glorification of a single person, the very definition of monumentality shifted to a new definition of public sculpture.

Mossinelli’s characterization makes important point because it allies with the larger descriptions of how media like film and photography strove to create a new post-Fascist Italian culture. In the embrace of physical destruction, or “human fragility,” in conjunction with a look back to recent precedents, artist and other cultural producers were able to present an image of a new Italian culture. This cultural production was new but still legible as Italian, revising the image of *Italianità*.

For both Marini and Melotti, their own desire to create a new modern sculpture was caught up in this larger cultural phenomenon. Though both their projects had begun during the war, the operative break and look back corresponded to the broader work of creating a new post-Fascist Italian culture. Melotti would go on to represent new sculptural modernism through his works’ connection to craft. On the other hand, Marini would become an icon of high modernist sculpture and his work would be taken up by influential critics like Clemente Greenberg. In both cases, however, their work came to represent a new post-Fascist Italy both at home and abroad.

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<sup>379</sup> “Nel 1871 Mazzini critica “la prematura e immatura smania dei monumenti” considerandola addirittura “unna delle piaghe d’Italia”.” Mossinelli, *Ibid.* This lines up with Vitali’s later claim that the reassessment of sculpture began long before Martini’s treatise. Vitali, Lamberto. “Contemporary Sculptors: VII-Marino Marini.” Trans: Bernard Wall, *Horizon* 17-18, no. 105 (1948): 203-04.

<sup>380</sup> Mossinelli. *Ibid.*

### Chapter 3

#### ***Made in Italy: The Politics of Italian Sculpture and Craft Production in the United States after WWII: 1947-1958***

American interest in Italy's new post-Fascist culture grew in the months after armistice and supported a number of initiatives that strove to define a new Italian culture.<sup>381</sup> One major focus of their efforts was the support of the cultural production of the peninsula. In particular, they focused on bolstering existing artisan industries. Many artists, including Melotti, easily found a place in these Marshall Plan programs to gain the financial support of these initiatives because of their pre-existing collaboration with craft materials and other artisan industries. Considering the American influence on Italian culture in the post-war period is important not only because the U.S. spent a huge amount of money in Italy during reconstruction but also, and more consequential for this study, the rhetoric that accompanied U.S. financial support effected the ways in which Italian culture would be understood inside and outside of Italy in the proceeding decades. However as I will describe in this chapter, American rhetorical frames about Italian

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<sup>381</sup> "And after the war's end this rediscovery of Italy steadily gathered momentum. Rome and the islands of the Bay of Naples became head-quarters for an influential wing of the culture *avant-garde*. The postwar American programs of economic and military aid sent to the peninsula hundreds of United States citizens—economists, army and navy men, and agricultural specialists. The American motion picture industry experimented with making films in this land of low wages and reliable sunshine, and in their turn Italian pictures enjoyed a high prestige in the United States. Similarly, Italian luxury products found eager American buyers. Above all, the years after 1947 brought to Italy a flood of tourists that reached its height in the mass pilgrimages to Rome during the Holy Year of 1950." Hughes, Henry Stuart. *The United States and Italy*. 3rd ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979. 13.



culture relied on pre-existing understandings of Italian culture that originated with artists, artisans, architects and intellectuals in Italy.

In the decades following the Second World War, ideas about Italian cultural production came under the influence of the American ideals of Cold War capitalism. The eventual creation of a new “Made in Italy” brand was one result of this Trans-Atlantic cultural exchange.<sup>382</sup> The blurred lines between high and low, sculpture and craft, were already present in the work and its exhibition and artists like Melotti were at the fore of pushing the boundaries of modern sculptural theory. It was these qualities of Italian design that were championed in post-war exhibitions in the United States. At the same time, Melotti and his contemporaries were savvy in their cooperation and collaboration with American curators and critics and they did find some financial success in Europe and the United States.

In addition to this contemporary context, the new post-Fascist Italian culture relied on the modern history of art and design for its reference points. As design and architecture historians Elena Dellapiana and Daniela N. Prina outline, the origins of Italian design can be found in the bringing together of craft, art and industry at the UAD in the 1920s and 30s.<sup>383</sup> Therefore, just as Melotti’s new sculptural production in ceramics helped to redefine a new sculptural modernism, it also helped to define the new genre of Italian design. This combination of art, craft and

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<sup>382</sup> Though the term “Made in Italy” is most typically used to describe branding within the fashion world, I argue that this term can be utilized to understand a larger cultural post-war phenomenon. See: Corbellini, Erica. ““Made in”: dalla denominazione di origine alla costruzione di un immaginario.” In *La scommessa del Made in Italy e il futuro della moda italiana*. Edited by Erica Corbellini and Stefania Saviolo. Milan: RCS Libri, 2004. 21-58.; Fallan, Kjetil, and Grace Lees-Maffei. “Introduction: the History of Italian Design.” In *Made In Italy: Rethinking a Century of Italian Design*. Edited by Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. 1-33.; Nuñez, Cristina. “Made in Italy. Italy — Milan and Naples: parallel worlds of fashion.” In *Tales From A Globalizing World*. Edited by Daniel Schwartz. London: Thames & Hudson, 2003. 56-79.; Oliva, Achille Bonito. “Belvedere.” In *1951-2001 Made in Italy?* Edited by Luigi Settembrini. Milan: Skira editore, 2001. 33-43.; Saviolo, Stefania. “Made in Italy: ieri-oggi-domani.” In *La scommessa del Made in Italy e il futuro della moda italiana*. Edited by Erica Corbellini and Stefania Saviolo. Milan: RCS Libri, 2004. 1-20.

<sup>383</sup> Dellapiana, Elena, and Daniela N. Prina. “Craft, Industry and Art: ISIA (1922-1943) and the Roots of Italian Design.” In *Made in Italy: Rethinking a Century of Italian Design*. Edited by Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. 109-25.

industry was championed in contemporary periodicals like *Domus* and exhibitions like the Triennale.

As architect, designer, and *Domus* editor Gio Ponti wrote in the 1951, “painters and sculptors” played a central role in making Italian ceramics that had “poetic value.”<sup>384</sup> Though there was a continued push for the integration of the arts, it took a different form than it had before WWII. Already in 1930, Melotti had collaborated on designs for small decorative sculptures in ceramic and, following Ponti’s own footsteps, he collaborated with the famed porcelain producer Richard Ginori.<sup>385</sup> Adding to it were his numerous collaborations with architects like BBPR and Pollini, Melotti’s sculptural production had long been in conversation about the unity of the arts. Yet as Ponti articulated in 1950, this new post-war artistic unity focused on abstract qualities that artists could bring to craft media rather than as merely the spectacle of a unified Fascist culture.

After his turn away from pure abstraction in the mid-1930s, Melotti’s focus on ceramics only grew. By the second half of 1950, Melotti began signing his letters with the abbreviation “So. Ce. Mel,” for *Società Ceramica Melotti*. This, as he explained in a letter to Belli, corresponded to the financial success he was finding in his ceramic production.<sup>386</sup> By the end of 1960, he had at least a dozen ceramic stamps in circulation that identified his work in the ceramic medium [Figure 3.1].<sup>387</sup> In this medium, he was prolific, creating both ceramic objects (plates, vases, etc.)

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<sup>384</sup> “Già nella disposizione della stessa sezione una serie di spazii isolati era dedicata a quegli artisti che si possono classificare fra i maestri d'oggi della ceramica italiana moderna per valori d'arte e dottrina ceramica e per valori poetici. ...Dopo questi Maestri esclusivamente ceramisti che improveriamo per primi per questa ragione, viene lo stuolo valoroso di quegli scultori e pittori che (prima ancora del clamoroso episodio picassiano) hanno celebrato le nozze fra ceramica ed artisti.” Ponti, Gio. "Prefazione." In *Ceramica alla 9a Triennale di Milano*. Edited by Zetti e Spreafico. Vol. 4. Milano: Editoriale Domus, 1953 (1951). 8.

<sup>385</sup> Soldaini, Antonella. "1901-1986." In *Melotti*. Edited by Germano Celant, Museum of contemporary Art DonnaREGina Milan: Mondadori Electa S.p.A., 2011. 44.

<sup>386</sup> Melotti, Fausto. Letter to Carlo Belli, Aug. 20, 1950, in *Archivio del '900*, R. 44/c.198 V15, Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Rovereto .

<sup>387</sup> "Marchi." In *Fausto Melotti. L'opera in ceramica*. Edited by Antonella Commellato and Marta Melotti. Milan: Skira, 2003. 445.

alongside ceramic sculpture, which included his *Teatrini*—a separate catalogue raisonné was even dedicated to the sculptor's work in ceramics.<sup>388</sup>

Then exported to the United States, Melotti's presence in American exhibitions entered into the Trans-Atlantic dialogue about the creation of the new cultural brand of Italian design. The American exhibitions of the 1950s likewise connected art and craft but they also blurred the line between modern art's autonomy and the market, with a political edge. As Sharon Hecker argues, Fontana's ceramic works engaged directly with traditional commercial venues without lessening the works' importance in his artistic trajectory to the famous "slashes."<sup>389</sup> Fontana himself suggested the importance of this encounter "between the "major" and "minor" arts, between the unique quality of a work of art and the modern public's expectations of mass production."<sup>390</sup> Melotti's engagement in ceramics paralleled his friend Fontana's. In addition, he explicitly compared his and Fontana's works in ceramics and discussed with Belli the medium's central importance in continuing to financially support the two sculptors' practices.<sup>391</sup>

As sociologist Gian Maria Fara and anthropologist Alberto M. Sobrero have argued, the growing culture of consumerism in Italy in the twentieth-century caused the invention of the idea of an unified artisan culture; this was of course divorced from an actual tradition of Italian artisan production.<sup>392</sup> American financial intervention helped to bring on a robust Italian consumer market that led to this solidifying of a post-Fascist unified image of Italian culture. The post-WWII American exhibitions like *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy* (1947) and *Italy at work: her*

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<sup>388</sup> See: *Fausto Melotti: L'opera in ceramica*. Edited by Antonella Commellato and Marta Melotti. Milan: Skira, 2003.

<sup>389</sup> Hecker, Sharon. "'Servant of Two Masters': Lucio Fontana's Sculptures in Milan's Cinema Arlecchino (1948)." *Oxford Art Journal* 35, no. 3 (2012): 337-61.

<sup>390</sup> Negri, Antonello. "'...man goes there and leaves his mark'." In *Fontana*. Edited by Enrico Crispolti. Milan: Edizioni Charta, 1999. 50.

<sup>391</sup> Melotti, Fausto. Letter to Carlo Belli, Aug. 20, 1950, in *Archivio del '900*, R. 44/c.198 V15, Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Rovereto .

<sup>392</sup> Fara, Gian Maria, and Alberto M. Sobrero. *Cultura e immagine dell'artigianato italiano*, Istituto di Studi Politici Economici e Sociali: Temi d'oggi. Rome: Merlo, 1988. 23.

*renaissance in design today* (1950) [Figure 3.2], both funded by the Marshall Plan, helped shape this idea. These exhibitions made connections between art, craft, and commerce explicit. Moreover, and of importance for the present study, they served as a microcosm of the growing interaction between craft and commerce in the sculpture of Melotti. Effects of the robust American support for these high-end consumer goods fostered the further developments of Italian sculptors' ceramic production through the 1950s and into the 1960s. These exhibitions framed this type of new Italian modernist sculpture within a broader landscape of Italian design, the politics of the American-led reconstruction of Europe after World War Two, and the creation of an image of an unified Italian culture in the wake of Fascism.

In the trade-friendly environment created by new European Recovery Program (ERP), products of Italian design began flooding into the U.S. One of the ramifications of this Trans-Atlantic market for Italian culture, from sculpture to film to Vespas, was a further distancing of it from its Fascist legacy in the minds of international viewers and consumers. For artists whose work pushed the boundaries of sculpture's medium specificity, like Melotti, their new post-Fascist work deepened an already existing experimentation with the boundaries between art, craft and consumerism. It would be this new form of modernist sculpture that became the focus of American ERP initiatives.

Melotti's works exhibited in the United States after the war became a part of a cultural and market phenomenon that would become the design brand: "Made in Italy." The idea of "Made in Italy" not only reflected a new consumer market but it further separated Italian artists and artisans tainted by Fascism from their past under the totalitarian regime. This allowed them to present the new version post-Fascist Italian culture that they had begun to develop in the late-1930s for an international audience.

At the same time, early post-war exhibitions in the U.S. presented earlier Fascist work as apolitical contemporary post-war production, furthering the cleansing of Italian modernism's connection to Fascism. Exhibitions claimed that the regenerative power of American cultural and economic intervention that claimed to re-ignite Italian culture after Fascist totalitarian domination. This rhetorical Americanization of Italian culture further distanced an idea of Italy away from totalitarianism. In the end, the "Made in Italy" brand would present Italian culture as connected to a traditional past constructed as democratic, as consumer-driven, and as innovative like American culture.

Simultaneously, the dialogue initiated in these American exhibitions functioned as part of the so-called "Cultural Cold War."<sup>393</sup> With almost eleven-percent of all post-war European recovery funds spent in Italy alone, the peninsula clearly held a central place for the U.S. in their post-WWII agenda.<sup>394</sup> The United States began a wide variety of programs both official and clandestine in order to boost the Italian economy and politically shore-up the country against instability, especially the "communist threat." Culture was understood to be a central in the fight for Italian political stability.

Consequently, one of the ERP programs generated from these political activities was the CNA (*Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana*). This organization had a large impact on the visibility of

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<sup>393</sup> See: Ellwood, David W. "The Propaganda of the Marshall Plan in Italy in a Cold War Context." In *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960*. Edited by Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, The Intelligence Series. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003. 225-36.; Krabbendam, Hans, and Giles Scott-Smith. "Introduction: Boundaries to Freedom." In *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960*. Edited by Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, The Intelligence Series. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003. 1-11.; Lazar, Marc. "The Cold War Culture of the French and Italian Communist Parties." In *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960*. Edited by Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, The Intelligence Series. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003. 213-24.; Saunders, Frances Stonor. *The Cultural Cold War. The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*. New York: The New Press, 1999.

<sup>394</sup> Scrivano, Paolo. "Romanticizing the Other? Views of Italian Industrial Design in Postwar America." In *The Italian Legacy in Washington DC: Architecture, Design, Art and Culture*. Edited by Luca Molinari and Andrea Canepari. Milan: Skira, 2007. 157.

Italian art and crafts in the U.S. and Europe through the 1950s and played a critical role in the later creation of the ideals of “Made in Italy.” As political scientist Suzanne Berger explains, the traditional sector of artisan production not only came to secure the long-term economic and political security of Italy and France but also became the center of modernization in the post-war period.<sup>395</sup> Therefore, the focus on artisan production by American support aided in the growing “Economic Miracle” of the 1960s.<sup>396</sup>

This chapter will track the political and economic support for Italian cultural production, describe the exhibition of these objects in the United States, and elaborate the ways in which the “Cultural Cold War” affected the removal of Fascism from the early history of the Italian design, which included the ceramic sculptural production of artists like Melotti. With the important political and economic impact of American financial and rhetorical intervention in Italian cultural production, these exhibitions incorporated existing creative strategies while at the same time brought new interpretations of Italian culture to the table. In a reversal of the exhibitions’ assertions, American intervention did not create new artistic forms. Therefore, this “Made in Italy” culture highlighted existing connections among the arts at the same time that it shed light on the possibilities of broad consumer appeal for Italian producers.

### **The Marshall Plan and American Support of Italian Culture**

When Italian Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi visited the United States in 1947, he

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<sup>395</sup> Berger, Suzanne. "The traditional sector in France and Italy." In *Dualism and Discontinuity in Industrial Societies*. Edited by Suzanne Berger and Michael J. Piore. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.108-11.

<sup>396</sup> As economist Guido Maria Razzano elaborated in the 2011 exhibition to mark the 150th anniversary of the Italian State, “The centenary [1961] was celebrated with the Lira [.]which had just been awarded the “Oscar for monetary stability”, [which was] proof of how a country destroyed by war had been able, in just fifteen years, to reconstruct itself from its own ruins....” Razzano, Guido Maria. "The Roots of the *Italian Uniqueness* Exhibition." In *Italian Uniqueness: The Making of a National Identity. 1961/2011*. Edited by Enrico Morteo and Alessandra Maria Sette. Venice: Marsilio, 2011. 21.

wished “to convince the American authorities that [Italian] economic necessities and the need to normalize political life [...] should be dealt with as a single problem.”<sup>397</sup> Politics and economics were linked in De Gasperi’s vision of the country’s democratic future. From the perspective of the Americans, however, stopping the spread of Communist was paramount to the security of Europe as a whole. In spite of this, De Gasperi made it clear that, without the Americans’ support for economic security in Italy, he would not support their political, Cold War initiatives.<sup>398</sup> Though it is clear that the Americans were already interested in Italian political affairs, it is also clear that Italian leaders had both desire and need for U.S. support.

De Gasperi was the head of the DC (*Democrazia Cristiana* or Christian Democrats). The DC was the major post-war party on the right and was the only party that had the numbers to challenge the large left-wing parties. As part of a larger Trans-Atlantic context, De Gasperi’s anti-Communist sentiments paralleled ideas concerning European security going back to the very eve of WWII.<sup>399</sup> Using this to his advantage, De Gasperi focused on the the Communist threat in Italy to incentivize for American intervention.

By 1947, many in the U.S. thought that the way to normalize both economic and political life globally was through the creation of a united Europe. Calling for a safeguard to the “Threat of WWII,” a group of “81 Prominent Americans” signed a petition claiming that,

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<sup>397</sup> Vadori, Antonio. "De Gasperi, Nenni, Sforza and their Role in Post-War Italian Foreign Policy." In *Power in Europe? Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany in a Postwar World, 1945-1950*. Edited by Josef Becker and Franz Knipping. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986. 99.

<sup>398</sup> Vadori. Ibid.; “Italy Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation Treaty.” *Office of Trade Agreements Negotiations and Compliance*, no. 1 12 UST 131; TIAS 4685., [http://tcc.export.gov/Trade\\_Agreements/All\\_Trade\\_Agreements/exp\\_005443.asp](http://tcc.export.gov/Trade_Agreements/All_Trade_Agreements/exp_005443.asp). [Accessed: May 20, 2015]

<sup>399</sup> “The Diplomatic struggle of post-war [WWI] Europe was embittered by ideological conflicts cutting across national frontiers, which in magnitude and fanaticism bore a striking resemblance to the religious wars of the seventeenth century. The new ideologies of Fascism and Communism, which tended to fill the emotional void left by the decline of organized religion, soon manifested the dynamic drive and all-inclusive character of earlier religious movements. Both doctrines owed their origins to the teachings of Karl Marx, which affected Mussolini in the editorial offices of the Socialist news paper *Avanti!* no less than Lenin in his Siberian prison.” Dean, Vera Michele. *Europe in Retreat*. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1939. 86-7.

[o]nly by a policy of economic union can Europe hope to repair rapidly the devastations of the war and pave the way to future mass-prosperity by mass-production. A prosperous Europe would become our best market, increasing international trade and American wealth. Politically and economically a divided Europe would constitute a permanent threat and a heavy burden—a United Europe would be a pillar of peace and a source of world-wide prosperity. After the untold sufferings of this war, most Europeans favor the idea of a United States of Europe. But the peoples of a prostrate Europe feel too weak to start such a gigantic task without the moral encouragement and support that only the United States of America can provide.<sup>400</sup>

A forerunner to the now-realized European Union, this 1947 idea of the “United States of Europe” needed to appeal to both an American and an European public. As they argued, the United States needed to provide an ideological compass for European peace and prosperity. Taxpayer funds from the U.S. would therefore be used for publicity on both sides of the Atlantic, with a goal of European economic and, most importantly, political normalcy.<sup>401</sup>

The following year marked a watershed moment in Italo-American relations and for the broader development of the Cold War. After Italy’s Civil War (1943-1945), democratic elections reflected the shifting political landscape of the new Republic. De Gasperi’s 1947 plea coincided with the American realization of the real chance that the PCI (*Partito Comunista Italiano* or Italian Communist Party) would gain the Premiership in 1948.<sup>402</sup> If the PCI won, the balance in Europe would have shifted—Yugoslavia had already sided with the Soviets and Moscow had its eyes set on Italy’s strategic Mediterranean shipping and naval location.

Italy’s historic instability made American intervention necessary in the eyes of

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<sup>400</sup> "OUR BACKING ASKED FOR U.S. OF EUROPE: 81 Prominent Americans Sign Petition for Union." *New York Times*, Apr. 18 1947, 12. Emphasis original in title text.

<sup>401</sup> As historian Max Beloff summarized, the “use of [US] aid to induce acceptance of and compliance with the plan [was] uppermost.” Beloff, Max. *The United States and the Unity of Europe*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1963. 17.

<sup>402</sup> For brevity, I am presenting a much simplified version of the political situation leading to the 1948 elections, let alone the larger European situation. For a thorough overview, David’s Ellwood’s article from the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* outlines how the Italian situation fit into the larger European climate. See: Ellwood, David. "The 1948 elections in Italy: a cold war propaganda battle." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 13, no. 1 (1993): 19-33.



policymakers like Secretary of State Cordell Hull.<sup>403</sup> Historian John L. Harper recounts that according to the Hullian doctrine, “Italy should become a stable but independent member of the European community” with an eventual “transition from autarchy to an open world economy.”<sup>404</sup> With the threat of continued instability, the Italian political system saw a rapid influx of American monies and propaganda meant to sway the victory toward De Gasperi’s DC party.<sup>405</sup> This fulfilled De Gasperi’s 1947 goals. The United States additionally expressed a desire to continue economic recovery support following the elections, no matter the result.<sup>406</sup> Yet despite outward assurances, it was clear that if the DC lost so too would Italy.<sup>407</sup> In the end, De Gasperi and the DC was triumphant and Italian aid continued—in the Spring of 1948 the country received US\$25million in loans and another US\$133million in “direct grant” monies with over US\$555million committed for the rest of 1948 and 1949.<sup>408</sup>

As historian David Ellwood recounts, “American experts in ‘counter-insurgency’ looked back 10 years later on the Italian campaign of 1948 as opening a new era of ‘psychological warfare’.”<sup>409</sup> For the Americans, Italy needed to be protected from a PCI premiership by any means necessary. Yet, “no overall propaganda strategy existed: anything to stop the left was

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<sup>403</sup> Harper, John Lamberton. *America and the Reconstruction of Italy, 1945-1948*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986. 7-8.

<sup>404</sup> Harper. *Ibid.* 8.

<sup>405</sup> Ellwood. "The Propaganda of the Marshall Plan in Italy in a Cold War Context." 232; Lucas, W. Scott. "Beyond Freedom, Beyond Control: Approaches to Culture and the State-Private Networks in the Cold War." In *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960*. Edited by Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, The Intelligence Series. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003. 58.

<sup>406</sup> Vasori. "De Gasperi, Nenni, Sforza and their Role in Post-War Italian Foreign Policy." 106.

<sup>407</sup> Ellwood, David W. "Italian modernisation and the propaganda of the Marshall Plan." In *The art of persuasion. Political communication in Italy from 1945 to the 1990s*. Edited by Luciano Cheles and Lucio Sponza. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001. 25.; Filippelli, Ronald L. *American Labor and Postwar Italy: 1943-1953; a Study of Cold War Politics*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1989. 129.; Hughes. *The United States and Italy*. 137.

<sup>408</sup> *Italy, country study; European recovery program*. Economic Cooperation Administration. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Print Office, 1949. 5.

<sup>409</sup> Ellwood. "The 1948 elections in Italy: a cold war propaganda battle." 21.

allowed.”<sup>410</sup> The idea that American foreign policy had “no overall propaganda strategy” lines up with the erratic economic support and the inconsistent archival record.

Under the ERP, the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) authorized 152 projects by the end of 1949 with over 350 American personnel abroad—among their actives, this included bringing foreign managers to tour American factories and sending cutting-edge equipment to Europe.<sup>411</sup> The expenditure for the funding to Italy of these ECA programs was just about four million U.S. dollars in grants and another million in credit for Italy.<sup>412</sup> Though there is little documentation of specific projects, an ECA report outlined their broad goals. The Italian recommendations were:

- (1) Establishment of Boards, Committees, or Offices under government sponsorship, with all-industry or part-government, part-industry membership, to promote exports ...
- (3) Assistance in export financing by such means as export credit guarantee schemes...
- (4) Incentives to exporters in one or more of the following forms: (a) permitting retention in part of the proceeds of sales to dollar areas to be used for the most part for specified purposes related to further development of the export business in question (b) granting allowances for dollar expenditures in export promotion; (c) giving preferences in obtaining dollar exchange...
- (6) Promotion of market research and publicity ...<sup>413</sup>

Importantly, these four ECA parameters would be important for American support of indigenous Italian culture in the decade following WWII.

At the time, one of Italy’s central exports was cultural goods and a significant number of these people involved in artisan industries. As a 1949 report outlined, the total industrial workforce (including industries such as: textiles, metallurgy, mining, construction, etc.) numbered 2,932,600 in 1948, while the smaller artisan companies employed 1,300,700.<sup>414</sup> Though the

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<sup>410</sup> Ellwood. *Ibid.*

<sup>411</sup> *Country Data Book: All Participating Countries*. Economic Cooperation Administration. Washington D.C.: United States, 1950. 3-5.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.* Table XII-I

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.* 14-15.

<sup>414</sup> *Italy, country study, European recovery program*. Economic Cooperation Administration. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Print Office, 1949. 63.

artisan workforce had recovered only at 97.7% of its pre-war level, they amounted to almost one-third of the this industrial workforce. No directly corresponding data as to gross output for these industries was provided in this report; however, the sub-category of “handicrafts” made US \$600,000 in 1948-49, when the total Gross National Product was estimated at almost eleven billion.<sup>415</sup> These numbers are important because they show the real impact of artisan industries (from ceramics to leather goods) on the Italian economy.

Though ECA funds also went to larger industrial sectors, the artisan industries were some of the most important for the U.S. program because of their political significance. U.S. claims as to the destruction of artisan industries under Fascism and the important place they would hold in reconstruction was the focus of a 1956 study.<sup>416</sup> It stated that small artisan firms had hired almost a million workers with financing from the “Artisan Trader’s Credit Fund” between 1951-52. Likewise, a 1952 study from the Mutual Security Agency further supported this claim and listed “[i]ntensification of credit assistance to handicraft, through the Handicraft Fund [that] improved in organization and increased from 500 to 5,500 million Lire,” as one of its nine major post-war fiscal balancing solutions.<sup>417</sup>

The support for Italian artisan production also played a part on U.S. soil. Importantly, the U.S. State Department supported domestic cultural institutions to position Italian cultural

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<sup>415</sup> Ibid. 71 & 9.

<sup>416</sup> *Ten years of Italian democracy, 1946-1956*. Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Information Office, Documentation Centre. Rome: Centro di documentazione, 1956. 178.

<sup>417</sup> *The development of Italy's economic system within the framework of European recovery and cooperation*. Mutual Security Agency. Rome: Comitato interministeriale per la ricostruzione, 1952. 35.

production at the forefront of American exhibitions.<sup>418</sup> Museums, galleries and other cultural institutions engineered a demand for Italian handicraft in American consumers through exhibitions of fine art and artisan production alike. By 1950, the “Cultural Cold War” drove the rhetoric of exhibitions of Italian art and handicraft in the United States. In as much, the U.S. strove to create stronger ties between itself and Italy in their accelerating fight against Communism. The rhetoric of these exhibitions made this point explicitly. Terms like “work,” “individualism,” and “freedom” were code, not so thinly veiled, for the ideal state of democratic cultural creativity. These American-sponsored exhibitions also played a large part in another “Cultural Cold War” fight against the image of the United States as “culturally barren, a nation of gum-chewing, Chevy-driving, Dupont-sheathed philistines...” by the Soviets.<sup>419</sup> Therefore, the U.S. strove to gain cultural “soft power,” by presenting post-war Italian cultural renewal as sparked by American democratic money and ideals.<sup>420</sup>

On the part of the Americans, as it had been with Hitler’s courtship of Mussolini in the 1930s, Italy represented the truest holders of a classical lineage of high culture. As historian Jessica Gienow-Hecht elaborates, American post-WWII cultural stimulus programs were organized to “reveal how much the country [USA] and Europe resembled each other on the

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<sup>418</sup> In a correspondence between Director of the Brooklyn Museum and local officials and community leaders, it is clear that though this particular project was supported by both governments ideologically, however the financial support was not as forthcoming. For example: Nagel, Charles. Letter to Ambassador James Clemete Dunn, July 7, 1950, in *Records of the Office of the Director (Charles Nagel, 1946-55)*. *Exhibitions: Italy at Work*, 1 CN4945 Dir 1949- 50, Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn. Also see: "Display Ad 55 - Abraham & Straus." *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1950, 13.; "Italian Fair Here Opened by Major." *New York Times*, Sept. 11, 1951, 26.; *Italian Arts & Crafts*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1955.; *Italy At Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*. Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana, 1950.

<sup>419</sup> Saunders, Frances Stonor. *The Cultural Cold War. The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*. New York: The New Press, 1999. 19.

<sup>420</sup> "...soft power resources [are] cultural attraction, ideology, and international institutions..." Nye, Joseph S. *Bound to lead: the changing nature of American power*. New York: Basic Books, 1990. 188.

cultural level.”<sup>421</sup> Through a variety of programming, American art was being exported to Europe and European art was likewise being imported to the U.S. to strengthen cross-cultural ties.<sup>422</sup> Both high art and a broader Italian cultural production amplified the effects of this exchange because of Italy’s cultural cachet.

For example, a 1950 review of Marini’s first solo exhibition in New York made the idea of Italian modern art as proxy for of cultural knowledge and classical heritage quite explicit in visual terms. For American viewers, Marini’s facial features were presented in this review as reflecting this connection to the past cultural glory;

The moment you meet him you know he comes from Tuscany. You try to decide specifically what this agile face recalls. The gently sensual lips, the delicate retroussé nose, the steeply arched eyebrows, the high forehead—was the ancestor one of the Florentines who wind through the fairy-tale landscapes of the Val d’Arno in Benozzo Gozzoli’s fresco, or one of those whose pristine profiles was caught by Antonio Pollaiuolo? [...] is this a descendant of Verrocchio’s “David”?<sup>423</sup>

With connections to this kind of cultural power, modern Italian artists and artisans were used as surrogates for American culture in their anxiety about their lack rich cultural heritage as compared to Europe or the U.S.S.R.

In the end, this cultural surrogacy was not left as a stand-alone. More importantly, the U.S. portrayed itself as the sole liberator of ancient high-culture tradition in modern Italian art. Italians could not access their own cultural heritage fully without their economic and ideological

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<sup>421</sup> Gienow-Hecht, Jessica C.E. “Culture and the Cold War in Europe.” In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume 1*. Edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 408.

<sup>422</sup> Likewise, American artists inspired by Italy too had their own show in the United States. See: Prior, Harris K. *Italy Rediscovered an exhibition of work by American painters in Italy since World War II*. Utica, NY: Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, 1955. This would not be the first time that American collectors and museums shifted their interest in art based on larger political trends. For example, “German art before the Civil War played a prominent role in the United States, but after the Civil War American patrons tended to value French academic and avant-garde art over contemporary Germany painting. American museums enlarged their collections with old masters and French Impressionists.” Deshmukh, Marion, Françoise Forster-Hahn, and Barbara Gaehtgens. "Introduction." In *Max Liebermann and International Modernism: An Artist's Career from Empire to Third Reich*. Edited by Marion Deshmukh, Françoise Forster-Hahn and Barbara Gaehtgens. New York: Berghahn, 2011. 9.

<sup>423</sup> Louchheim, Aline B. "Tradition and the Contemporary." *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1950, X9.

support because of the scourge of Fascism and the equally-ominous impending threat of Communism. One account of the exhibition *Italy at Work* illustrated this point clearly,

Italian craftsmen had a long tradition of artistry in stone, wood, clay, oils, textiles, and metals. And when, in the middle 1940s, they were freed from a quarter century of Fascist repression, they suddenly found themselves with both the spiritual and economic impetus to express themselves in an atmosphere of freedom.<sup>424</sup>

For the American public, this spiritual revival went hand in hand with consumer worth. Another reviewer wrote,

[t]he jurors hoped that the objects in the exhibit will create an American consumer demand to benefit permanently the Italian workman.[...] And Nagel [Director of the Brooklyn Museum] especially has emphasized "this very activity America has fostered has been a strong instrument in teaching men who had lived under totalitarianism, the desirability of democracy. This has been a prime factor in stopping communism in Italy in its tracks".<sup>425</sup>

American democracy was seen as bringing to life the true Italian cultural spirit and economic capital.

### **Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana**

The CNA (*Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana* or National Artisan Company) was funded through the U.S. Export-Import Bank under the auspices of the ERP starting in 1947.<sup>426</sup> With a cultural and economic agenda, CNA produced international traveling exhibitions of Italian art, craft and industrial products, distributed modern machinery provided by the U.S. to Italian artisans, and functioned as an export manager for Italian producers, with a particular focus on cultivating and serving American buyers.<sup>427</sup> A wide variety of artists, artisans, and industrial firms

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<sup>424</sup> Seymour, Gideon. "Italy at Work." *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, December 2, 1951, np.

<sup>425</sup> Jenkins, Nedra. "Italy's Houston Exhibit Shows Amazing Variety." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Feb. 23, 1952, 14.

<sup>426</sup> *Relazione della X Commissione Permanente*. Ministero dell'industria. Roma: Camera dei Deputati, 1949. 6.

<sup>427</sup> There is little archival evidence left regarding this organization, so the information provided here is mainly derived from an institutional publication from 1949 outlining its prior two years of activities. Alhaique, Claudio. *Relazione sull'attività della Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana*. Roma: Arti Grafiche A. Chicca, 1951. 29-39.

in Italy participated in the activities organized by the CNA.<sup>428</sup> These exhibitions focused attention on the artisan traditions in Italy, while at the same time supported fine art that incorporated materials traditionally associated with craft.

Early in the Marshall Plan's development, a focus on supporting small industry and artisan production in Italy was evident.<sup>429</sup> In fact, there was a mutual desire, both American and Italian, to support these industries. As the head of the Confindustria, the most important industrialists' association in Italy, Angelo Costa saw small firms and traditional artisan technique as the key to Italy's economic future because they had been for centuries.<sup>430</sup> Likewise, the post-war Ministry of Industry reinforced the importance of funding small artisan industry by connecting artisan production with a kind of *Italianità*,

[a]rtisan production responds to the unique qualities of our people: these qualities are an individualistic spirit and an elevated creative capacity. For its further development, however, it has urgently occurred to the state by the end of 1947 to support legislation for artisan credit. This credit would intervene in a country like ours, poor in natural resources and rich in ingenious manpower: by exploiting manpower to the full, twice as much as now, in order to implement a new productive directive, by reinforcing creative organs with all the technical and economic assistance possible and by strengthening the mercantile apparatus for the most effective distribution of artisan-produced commodities at home and abroad.<sup>431</sup>

Therefore, artisan production was necessary to satisfy the Italian "spirit" and the attendant labor resources were ready and willing so long as the necessary capital came through.

Through CNA's financial backing of US\$4,625,000 from the U.S. Export-Import bank,

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<sup>428</sup> In the documents pertaining to CNA that I have been able to uncover, there is a huge lack of details about who participated on the ground in Italy. There are not lists of specific companies or artisans who received materials or funds in any of the documents.

<sup>429</sup> "Sees Italy Making Steady Comeback." *New York Times*, Dec. 24, 1946, 25.; "Recovery in Italy by 1952 Forecast." *New York Times*, Nov. 25, 1948, 55.

<sup>430</sup> Ellwood. "The Propaganda of the Marshall Plan in Italy in a Cold War Context." 230.

<sup>431</sup> "Il lavoro artigiano risponde alle qualità peculiari del nostro popolo, che ha spirito individualista ed elevata capacità creativa; ma, per il suo sviluppo, occorre che lo Stato, emanate fino dal 1947 le favorevoli disposizioni legislative per il credito all'artigianato, intervenisse, in un Paese come il nostro povero di materie prime e ricco di manodopera ingegnosa, con mezzi più adeguati a valorizzare questa ricchezza, ad imprimerle un nuovo indirizzo produttivo, a rafforzare gli organismi creati per la tutela e l'assistenza tecnica ed economica ed a potenziare l'apparato mercantile per la maggiore diffusione dei consumi interni ed esterni della produzione artigianale." *Relazione della X Commissione Permanente*. Ministero dell'industria. Rome: Camera dei Deputati, 1949. 5.

this ideal could become a reality.<sup>432</sup> The agreement with the Export-Import Bank guaranteed that exports from Italy were to be duty free, with the primary exports being ceramics and glasswork.<sup>433</sup> However, CNA's funds were not given interest-free. The monies were loaned interest-free only until 1953, with a repayment guarantee of 1960.<sup>434</sup> In addition to these funds, raw materials and new equipment were to be brought into the country.<sup>435</sup> Most importantly, a supply of new ceramic furnaces from the U.S. helped to modernize Italian ceramic production that was still dependent upon antiquated hand-made furnaces, allowing work to be created with more controlled and consistent firing.

As already mentioned, the CNA also organized exhibitions of Italian design in Europe and the United States. Their first American exhibition was held in 1947. Titled *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy*, it featured Marini and Melotti alongside other important Italian sculptors—Giacomo Manzù, Lucio Fontana, and Pietro Consagra for example—and painters—including Renato Guttuso. Promotion came from the American arm of the CNA, known as the House of Italian Handicraft (HIH), based in New York.<sup>436</sup> A large Italian expatriate coalition helped organize this exhibition including the organization CADMA (*Commissione Assistenza Distribuzione Materiali Artigianato* or Artisan Materials Distribution Assistance Commission), headed by theorist and art critic Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti in collaboration with the vocal anti-Fascist immigrant Max Ascoli. Ascoli was founder of the Handicrafts Development Incorporated, an earlier-developed

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<sup>432</sup> This document notes that the company was incorporated in April of 1948, but it is clear from other sources that this date must be a mistake. *Relazione della X Commissione Permanente*. Ministero dell'industria. Rome: Camera dei Deputati, 1949. 6.

<sup>433</sup> Alhaique. *Relazione sull'attività della Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana*. 6 & 12.

<sup>434</sup> Alhaique. *Ibid.* 10.

<sup>435</sup> Alhaique. *Ibid.* 12-22. To date, I have been unable to find any archival evidence as to the quantity of these materials that were distributed or who specifically received them.

<sup>436</sup> This was carried out with assistance from Handicraft Development Inc. in New York and the Commissione Assistenza Distribuzione Materiali Artigianato (CADMA—Artisan Materials Distribution Assistance Commission). Ragghianti, Carlo Ludovico. *Handicraft as a Fine Art in Italy*. New York: House of Italian Handicraft, 1947.



private organization to help artists and artisans in Italy.<sup>437</sup>

*Handicraft as a fine art in Italy* showcased some of the most important contemporary Italian painters and sculptors. As CNA's first American exhibition, *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy* became an ideological template for subsequent exhibitions. Works of Italian production were represented to viewers as evidence of an American social victory, following the military victories of the previous years. The exhibition's catalogue described Italian contemporary art production as the direct result of American economic and cultural stimuli by the Marshall Plan. In addition, the exhibition sought to strengthen American popular support of European economic and cultural recovery efforts. According to the exhibition catalogue, *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy* strove to "perfect the quality of the Italian handicrafts by means of collaboration between artists and craftsmen [...as it] is hoped that the American public may accord a favorable reception of this

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<sup>437</sup> Comar, Nicoletta. "Carlo Sbisà: Catalogo Generale Dell'Opera Pittorica." Doctoral Dissertation, Università degli Studi di Trieste, 2009. 23. Ascoli has a huge number of publications. Here is a selection: Ascoli, Max. "Fascism in the Making." *The Atlantic* (1933): 580-85.; \_\_\_\_\_. "Notes on Roosevelt's America." *The Atlantic* (1934): 653-64.; \_\_\_\_\_. "Italy's Future." *New York Times*, Feb. 2, 1936, E9.; \_\_\_\_\_. *Fascism for Whom*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1938.; \_\_\_\_\_. "No. 38 Becomes a Citizen." *The Atlantic* (1940): 171.; \_\_\_\_\_. "Political Reconstruction in Italy." *The Journal of Politics* 8, no. 3 (1946): 319-28., \_\_\_\_\_. *The Power of Freedom*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1949.

Sparke give a brief overview of the connections, but no corroborating citations. She writes; "in 1945, a non-profit organization called Handicrafts Development Incorporated was formed in the U.S. by Dr. and Mrs Maz Ascoli to help Italian artists after the ravages of the war. At the same time CADMA was established in Italy. In 1947 the House of Italian Handicrafts was set up in New York as a retail outlet for Italian crafts and in the following year money was made available to help Italian craftsmen under the Marshall Aid scheme and CADMA was merged with the larger CNA of which the House of Italian Handicrafts was an American subsidiary." Sparke, Penny. "The Straw Donkey: Tourist Kitsch or Proto-Design? Craft and design in Italy, 1945-1960." *Journal of Design History* 11, no. 1 (1998): 68, Note 1. One of the traps of looking for materials for the CNA (*Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana*) is that there is another organization, relating to artisan production, with the same acronym that was created within a few years of the CNA of this study. The *Confederazione Nazionale Artigianato* (also known as CNA) was a type of trade-union that continues to operate today. Additionally, there are no records of the HIIH, the New York arm of CNA, within the U.S., to my knowledge. I have yet to consult the National Archives of either country, but most historians relate that for some reason the Marshall Plan era records about Italy are surprisingly lacking in breadth and depth as compared to those pertaining to Britain, France, or even post-war Germany For example, see: Ellwood, David W. "Italian modernisation and the propaganda of the Marshall Plan." In *The art of persuasion. Political communication in Italy from 1945 to the 1990s*. Edited by Luciano Cheles and Lucio Sponza. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001. 23-48. 34.

work, planned and carried out especially on its behalf.”<sup>438</sup> The ideals of the centrality of American interventionism and the concurrent consumer demand would become a central tenet for future CNA exhibitions in the United States.

Though the show’s title suggested an exhibition of art-aspiring handicraft, the works included were almost exclusively created by already well-known Italian fine art sculptors and painters. Therefore, the misleading title hints at the second major template for U.S. sponsored exhibitions of Italian handicraft: the idea that by fostering the collaboration among artists and artisans the Americans could enrich the old-fashioned traditional Italian handicraft. However, the nascence of Italian interdisciplinarity had developed much earlier during interwar experimentation—an argument could also be made that the kind of modern interdisciplinarity in Italy can be traced back to pre-WWI Futurism, if not before.

*Handicraft as a Fine Art in Italy* not only included the most prominent painters and sculptors of the time, including Guttuso, Fontana, Consagra, Morandi, Levi, Marini and Melotti [Figures 3.3-7] but also a number of prominent contemporary ceramicists and designers, including Fabbri, Leonardi, Sassu, Signorelli, and Sottsass.<sup>439</sup> Each of the participating producers was given a full page spread in the exhibition catalogue; this included a headshot of the artist, a short biography that emphasized the importance of the artist in existing fine art collections, and an image of one

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<sup>438</sup> Ragghianti, Carlo Ludovico. *Handicraft as a Fine Art in Italy*. New York: House of Italian Handicraft, 1947. np. It is unclear if the works of the catalogue came to the US for an exhibition. For example, the catalogue for Melotti’s work lists *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy* as a publication and not an exhibition credit. Regardless the catalogue seems to have been widely distributed and was quickly followed, in three years time, by another large-scale CNA exhibition.

<sup>439</sup> Sottsass later recounts that, “I started ceramics in 1956 because an American named Irving Richards asked me to.” Sottsass, Ettore. “Experience with Ceramics (1969).” In *Ettore Sottsass. Ceramics*. Edited by Bruno Bischofberger. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995. 6. *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy* exhibited the following artists and artisans: Afro, Nirko Basaldella, Enrico Bordini, Luigi Brogini, Massimo Campigli, Pietro Cascella, Felice Casorati, Sandro Cherchi, Fabrizio Clerici, Pietro Consagra, Filippo de Pisis, Agenore Fabbri, Lucio Fontana, Piero Fornasetti, Renato Gregorini, Lorenzo Guerrini, Renato Guttuso, Leoncillo Leonardi, Carlo Levi, Paola Levi Montalcini, Marino Marini, Fausto Melotti, Giovanni Michelucci. Giorgio Morandi, Adriana Pincherle, Anita Pittoni, Armando Pizzinato, Emanuele Rambaldi, Giuseppe Santomaso, Aligi Sassu, Carlo Sbisà, Maria Signorelli, Ettore Sot-Sas Jr. [sic.], Enrico Steiner, Nino Ernesto Strada, Giulio Tracato, and Gianni Vagnetti. Ragghianti, Carlo Ludovico. *Handicraft as a Fine Art in Italy*. New York: House of Italian Handicraft, 1947.

of their works. However, in the lavishly illustrated catalogue, no trace remained of the claimed collaboration with artisans introduced in the catalogue's Preface. This should not be surprising since the pre-existing Italian artist-artisan collaboration had been coopted for a new political agenda.

In order to reinforce this rhetoric, the exhibition de-historicized a number of works in order to fit the exhibition framing as new American-led productions. One important case is of Melotti's "Figures." The works exhibited as undated "Figures" in 1947 [Figure 3.7] had already been shown in 1936 titled *Uomo Coerenza* [Figures 0.4, 3.8-9]. Though it is unclear if the organizers or Melotti himself renamed the work, the new title allowed the work to represent a new coming together of art and handicraft.

Most importantly, this process of stripping the works of their historical meaning reveals the early workings of the commodification of Italian culture. The works presented in the post-war had no past, literally no date. Instead, they were viewed as reflections of "indubitable originality and noteworthy value."<sup>440</sup> They were fresh expressions of a newly democratized Italy under American economic and cultural patronage.

The historical "noteworthy value" of the work created for the Milan Triennale ceased to exist in this new post-war frame. As previously introduced, Melotti had teamed up with BBPR to create the series of twelve *Coerenza Uomo* for a room at the 1936 Milan Triennale.<sup>441</sup> Installed in the firm's *Sala della Coerenza*, Melotti's collaboration was framed within a debate about modernist architecture and design in Fascist Italy. As a glorification of man's control over his own Fascist

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<sup>440</sup> Ragghianti, Carlo Ludovico. *Handicraft as a Fine Art in Italy*. New York: House of Italian Handicraft, 1947. no.

<sup>441</sup> Celant, Germano. *Melotti. Catalogo generale. Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Milano: Electa, 1994. 36.

epoch, the *Sala della Coerenza* propagated the myth of the Fascist “New Man.”<sup>442</sup> Since, according to Il Duce Benito Mussolini “*Il Fascismo fa la storia, non la scrive* [Fascism makes history rather than writes it],”<sup>443</sup> Melotti’s *Coerenza Uomo* as the Fascist “New Man” was one of action, one who made history, one who built civilization—the civilization of the Fascist “Third Rome.”

The sculptures’ new meaning came from the fact that they were “Made in Italy,” rather than as a glorification of a Fascist epoch. Therefore, any references to a Fascist *Italianità* were removed within this new American frame. By bringing together artistic collaboration with an idea of economic stimulus through cultural consumerism, “Made in Italy” allowed artists like Melotti to change the understanding of his early Fascist art.

Like Fontana transversing his bombed studio [Figure 2.3], the image used for the exhibition catalogue was taken of the *Constant Man* among the remnants of Melotti’s bombed Milan studio [Figure 2.2]. The documentary photo had been set within the same frame of cultural rebirth as had Fontana’s. However, reframed in the *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy* catalogue, they stood only as models, as automatons, as manufactured multiples, as objects of cultural consumption.

If, as Fara and Sobrero argue, the creation of a unified image of a design culture relies on consumerism, *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy* appears to be an apt example. The original context was both signaled and moved past in the service of the rhetoric of the exhibition. This was “new” Italian production that relied on the ingenuity of the Americans. Important to note therefore, by 1950 the House of Italian Handicrafts, Inc. would have a former V.P. of

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<sup>442</sup> De Grazia, Victoria. *The Culture of Consent: Mass organization of leisure in Fascist Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. 5.; Antliff, Mark. "Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity " *The Art Bulletin* 84, no. 1 (2002): 152-53.

<sup>443</sup> Fogu, Claudio. "To Make History Present." In *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Edited by Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005. 33.

Bloomington as its President.<sup>444</sup> Therefore, culture and consumerism came together in explicit terms for many of these ERP initiatives in the support of Italian post-war recovery.

American mass production and consumption had moral connotations both inside and outside the US, jointly representing democracy and freedom as Victoria de Grazia has argued.<sup>445</sup> Therefore, the visual cues to mass production highlighted in this image of Melotti's "Figures" reflected the American desired ideals. In fact, these works were actually produced in a semi-industrial way [Figure 3.9]. Produced at a commercial plaster factory, the *Coerenza Uomo* series did reflect a collaboration between the high and low arts, with his use of an artisan industrial installation. However, the history of the original interaction between artist and artisan was lost. Yet, Melotti's "Figures" retained this reading of artistic unity for their new post-war American context in *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy*. Therefore, meaning was not lost in the trans-Atlantic move towards "Made in Italy" but instead reframed and repackaged to fit into a new political and economic reality.

Knowing the existing relationship between fine art and craft in Italy, the easy participation of artists in an exhibition of this kind is not unexpected. Not only did they gain an international platform for their work and the much-needed financial income that came with it. Likewise, the impetus behind an art/artisan collaboration aligned with their own pre-existing artistic practice, even if inaccurately defined for the exhibition. The integration of the arts between craft, design, architecture, sculpture, and painting was seen as connecting modernism to Italian cultural heritage past and present. However, this new form of Italian culture lost its Fascist connotations even further with the help of this American context. Post-war Italian modernism

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<sup>444</sup> Bros., Pach. "Elected to Presidency of Italian Handicrafts." *New York Times*, Mar. 8, 1950, 8.

<sup>445</sup> De Grazia, Victoria. *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005. 1-14.

“Made in Italy” allowed for a clear post-Fascist viewing of artistic production. *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy* set the tone for later CNA exhibitions.

### ***Italy at Work***

Not long after *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy*, CNA began another project in collaboration with two major American museums. The exhibition *Italy at Work: her renaissance in design today* would travel to twelve American cities between 1950 and 1953.<sup>446</sup> With sculptures and sculptural objects by Melotti, Fontana, Giacomo Manzù, and Pietro Consagra, the wildly popular show exhibited the work of a number of young important contemporary Italian sculptors.

For *Italy at Work*, the organizers brought together disparate works of contemporary Italian cultural production. These objects could be categorized into several broad genres: fine art, traditional folk art and craft, glassware, interior and industrial arts, textiles, and children’s toys [Figures 3.10–25]. Even two pairs of shoes from the famous designer Salvatore Ferragamo were included.<sup>447</sup> Altogether, these objects were labeled in the official texts as “handicrafts.” With over 2,500 individual works, brought together “with acute and sympathetic understanding,” the exhibition tried to present the breadth of Italian contemporary cultural production.<sup>448</sup>

Visitors moved in and out of the multiple rooms of the large exhibition. Some rooms

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<sup>446</sup> The twelve museums that participated in displaying versions of *Italy at Work* were: Brooklyn Museum (30 Nov. 1951 - 31 Jan. 1951); Art Institute of Chicago (15 March 1951 - 13 May 1951); De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco (19 June 1951 - 31 July 1951); Portland Art Museum (5 Sept. 1951 - 21 Oct. 1951); Minneapolis Institute of Art (27 Nov. 1951 - 6 Jan. 1952); Museum of Fine Arts of Houston (13 Feb. 1952 - 27 March 1952); St. Louis City Art Museum (4 May 1952 - 6 July 1952); Toledo Museum of Art (7 Sept. 1952 - 22 Oct. 1952); Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY (27 Nov. 1952 - 8 Jan. 1953); Detroit Institute of Art (12 Feb. 1953 - 27 March 1953); Baltimore Museum of Art (1 May 1953 - 15 Aug. 1953); and the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence (22 Sept. 1953 - 15 Nov. 1953). The exhibition was almost constantly on view for nearly three full years and, though concentrated in the Northeast and Midwest, visited each section of the country. Italy at Work Attendance. undated (1950-53?), in *AIC Archives*, 305-0003.2, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.; Alhaique, Claudio. *Relazione sull'attività della Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana*. Roma: Arti Grafiche A. Chicca, 1951. 31-32.

<sup>447</sup> Gallery Installation List. 1950, in *AIC Archives: Department of Decorative Arts Exhibition Records 1951-53*, Italy at Work: 305-0003.2, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.

<sup>448</sup> Teague, Walter Dorwin. "Forward." In *Italy at Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*. Edited by The Art Institute of Chicago. Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana, 1950. 9-11.

were thematic while others displayed objects by type.<sup>449</sup> One room at the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC) installation showed a variety of objects of religious subject matter [Figure 3.12]. On the far wall, a polychrome ceramic plaque by Ugo Lurcerini and a mosaic by Giuseppe Macedonio flanked a polychrome ceramic figure group by Marcello Fantoni. In the far left corner, a small pedestal held Fontana's *Transfiguration*. On the opposite wall, visitors would come upon Melotti's *Annunciation* pair. Off this small room, there was the private chapel designed by architect Roberto Menghi featuring Manzù's works.<sup>450</sup> This was one of four specially-designed, autonomous rooms created by important Italian architects. Other rooms, had high-volume installations more akin to department store displays [Figure 3.13].

Rooms of textiles from printed hemp from M.I.T.A. (Genoa) to luxurious velvet brocade by Luigi Bevilacqua (Venice) [Figure 3.14] flanked those holding a pair of straw animals, goat and donkey, by the Florentine craftsman Emilio Paoli [Figure 3.15]. Industrially produced products also made their way in to *Italy at Work*. Recent technological innovations, the electric calculator and portable typewriter were presented from Olivetti alongside the *Lambretta* scooter from Innocenti [Figures 3.10, 3.16]. The inclusion of these objects, later to be categorized as industrial design, was key to the presentation of the broadening Italian design culture, one that would become the "Made in Italy" brand. Companies like Olivetti would play a central role in the continued development of the "Made in Italy" brand by unifying "the different artistic operations in a single fundamental experience, able to transform the face of the environment in

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<sup>449</sup> This was at least true for the Art Institute of Chicago and the Brooklyn Museum, both of whom retain a small number of installation documentation images. In addition, the installation list for the Art Institute survives. See: Gallery Installation List. 1950, in *AIC Archives: Department of Decorative Arts Exhibition Records 1951-53*, Italy at Work: 305-0003.2, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.

<sup>450</sup> Gallery Installation List. 1950, in *AIC Archives: Department of Decorative Arts Exhibition Records 1951-53*, Italy at Work: 305-0003.2, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. (G58 Individual Room)

which [they lived], to create a new style.”<sup>451</sup>

In 1949, Meyric R. Rogers, Curator of Decorative and Industrial Arts at the Art Institute of Chicago, took an initial scouting trip to Italy while Director of the Brooklyn Museum, Charles Nagel, coordinated the operations State-side to bring *Italy at Work* to fruition. In Italy, a small staff worked out of Florence, made up of Americans Richard Miller and Ramy Alexander—a representative for Ascoli’s Handicraft Development Inc. and one of the two Vice Presidents of CNA—and an Italian, Alberto Antico. They helped organize studio visits, paperwork, publications, and material exports for Rogers and his U.S.-based delegation.<sup>452</sup> According to Rogers’ preliminary report, the still nascent exhibition was titled “Italian Contemporary Industrial Arts.”<sup>453</sup> At this moment, there was still some debate as to the scope of the project, the members of the Jury, and funding. During this initial trip, Rogers met with a number of important architects including Fabrizio Clerici, Ernest Rogers and Enrico Peressutti, both of BBPR, and Gio Ponti—only Ponti would design a room for *Italy at Work*. Rogers also met with a number of artists and artisans. Among them, Melotti’s work in ceramics was signed out, being described as “special production” in the field notes.<sup>454</sup> What Rogers made clear at the end of his 1949 Italian trip was that the breadth of the exhibition would be large—“it would take about

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<sup>451</sup> Filiberto Menna (1967) as quoted in Fallan, Kjetil, and Grace Lees-Maffei. "Introduction: the History of Italian Design." In *Made In Italy: Rethinking a Century of Italian Design*. Edited by Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. 11.

<sup>452</sup> For examples see correspondences between Charles Nagel and CNA officials at the Brooklyn Museum. See: Antico, Alberto. Letter to Charles Nagel, 1950, in *Records of the Office of the Director (Charles Nagel, 1946-55). Exhibitions: Italy at Work, (1) CN 49-45 Dir 1949-50*, Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn; Miller, Richard. Letter to Charles Nagel, Aug. 5, 1950, in *Records of the Office of the Director (Charles Nagel, 1946-55). Exhibitions: Italy at Work, (1) CN49-45 Dir 1949-50*, Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn.

<sup>453</sup> Rogers, Meyric R. "Italian Contemporary Industrial Arts" Report on a survey made in Italy, June 2 - July 5, 1949, 1949, in *Records of the Office of the Director (Charles Nagel, 1946-55). Exhibitions: Italy at Work, (1) CN 1949-50*, Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn, 1.

<sup>454</sup> Rogers, *Ibid.* 2-4.



1200 items to cover adequately the various fields.”<sup>455</sup>

Though partially supported through the ECA, the operating costs for the twelve exhibition venues were largely up to each museum to find. However, this could not be carried out through the charging of admission prices. As an AIC press release explained:

The extraordinary “Masterpiece Exhibitions” displayed in the Art Institute customarily require a special entrance fee to meet the exceptional expenses involved. For this “Masterpiece Exhibition,” ITALY AT WORK: HER RENAISSANCE IN DESIGN TODAY, the Art Institute has decided it would not charge the usual special admission fee so that the exhibition could be open to the greatest possible number of visitors. Another purpose of the Art Institute in presenting this exhibition is to stimulate a market for Italian products, thus implementing the economic aims of the Marshall Plan.<sup>456</sup>

The participating museums made clear the political and economic aims for Italy of the exhibition by stating the connection to the Marshall Plan. At the Brooklyn Museum, collaborating closely with the Italian Consul General in New York Aldo M. Mazio, Nagel worked to draw on the large Italian-American community in New York’s five boroughs, especially in Brooklyn with its large Italian-American population, to cover the exhibition budget of US \$16,000.<sup>457</sup> With US\$5,000, Max Ascoli was the Brooklyn Museum’s largest donor and Alfred E. Blum, future President of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and governing Committee Chair of the

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<sup>455</sup> “These will form, as it were, a nucleus for the exhibition. It is proposed that each of these interiors, arranged on a three wall principal and occupying approximately 300 square feet of floor area, is to be designed and carried out under the direction of leading Italian designers to a specific program. The five subjects under present consideration are as follows: 1. A private chapel. (religious art) 2. A living room for a worker’s family (low cost functional design) 3. The lobby of a small theater. (imaginative decorative treatment) 4. The dining room in a luxury apartment. (fine special order furnishing and equipment) 5. Sun or terrace room. (furnishing for semi-outdoors living). Each of these interiors is to be so designed as to be readily demountable and packed for transportation. It is also proposed that these interiors be prepared in time to be shown as the clou [sic.] of the Milan Triennale in May 1950.” Rogers, *Ibid.*

<sup>456</sup> “For Immediate Release: “Italy at Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today” Tremendous Exhibition of Contemporary Italian Crafts to be Shown at the Art Institute March 15 through May 13.” In *Art Institute of Chicago*. Chicago, 1951. [emphasis original]

<sup>457</sup> A memorandum from Nagel’s assistant Thelma B. Bedell shows that they initially tried to get funding directly from an judiciary arm of the US government, through judge Joseph P. Marcelle, but then had to rely on lists of Italians and Italian-Americans living in New York, provided by the Consul General. See: Bedell, Thelma S. Memo to Charles Nagel, Aug. 30 1950, in *Records of the Office of the Director (Charles Nagel, 1946-55). Exhibitions: Italy at Work, 1* CN49-45 Dir 1949-50, Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn. There must have been similar campaigns at the other institutions—at AIC no budget records remain.

Brooklyn Museum was a close second.<sup>458</sup> Notable institutional donors for the Brooklyn installation were: Italian-American Professional & Business Men's Association; Public Schools 157, 133, 67, and 67; and the New York State Pharmaceutical Association.<sup>459</sup> It is clear that the broader public was directly and actively engaged with this ERP initiative.

Returning to Italy in the spring of 1950, a committee of Americans, including Rogers, his wife, and designer Walter Dorwin Teague made "its selections in a tour of over three thousand miles."<sup>460</sup> Then the group met up with CNA's Ramy Alexander and traveled the country, "seeking out the Italian craftsmen in the odd places where they live and work, and selecting the objects to make up this collection."<sup>461</sup> In one of the images included in the catalogue, the collaborators can be seen receiving one of the exhibition's works in the Florence warehouse at the Uffizi [Figure 3.17]. With some haste, works worth over 40 million Lire were selected and made the journey to the U.S. for exhibition, after being inspected, photographed, and cataloged in rooms of the Uffizi Galleries in Florence.<sup>462</sup>

First at the Brooklyn Museum then the Art Institute, in 1950 and 1951 respectively, the exhibition's twelve-leg tour closed two years later at the Rhode Island School of Design in November of 1953. The expansive reach of the exhibition across the country allowed for the kind of influence that makes it an important example to consider. Along with the 1949 MoMA exhibition, discussed in the next chapter, *Italy at Work* crystallized the basic framework for

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<sup>458</sup> Statement of Receipts and Disbursements. Mar. 20, 1951, in *Records of the Office of the Director (Charles Nagel, 1946-55)*. *Exhibitions: Italy at Work, (3)* CN 50-51 Budget & Donors, Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn, 2.

<sup>459</sup> For a full list of personal and institutional donors see: *Ibid*, 2-3.

<sup>460</sup> Rogers, Meyric R. Article for February Bulletin, undated (1950?), in *AIC Archives*, 305-0003.4, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, 3.

<sup>461</sup> Teague, Walter Dorwin. "Forward." In *Italy at Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*. Edited by The Art Institute of Chicago. Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana, 1950. 9.

<sup>462</sup> Alhaique, Claudio. *Relazione sull'attività della Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana*. Roma: Arti Grafiche A. Chicca, 1951., 31.

understanding Italian cultural production outside of Italy.<sup>463</sup> The framework for this exhibition mimicked that of *Handicraft as a fine art*. Even more politicized however, the language of *Italy at Work* not only explicitly spoke the language of labor and consumerism but also articulated the contrast between democratic cultural productivity and the Communist threat.

The exhibition texts invited a particular kind of viewership, asking Americans to go see the handicrafts as “mystical” objects of a newly liberated, pure culture.<sup>464</sup> “[D]esigned to give the American public the pleasure that comes from seeing objects made in our own time [and] that are at once useful and beautiful or stimulating to the imagination,” spectacle played an important role in the exhibition.<sup>465</sup> One viewer exclaimed that the exhibition contained “the most amazing things I’ve ever seen!”<sup>466</sup> The catalogue presented this project to the public as a tourist “expedition” of sorts. Viewers would learn about “an astonishing variety of destinations” for “an unforgettable experience.”<sup>467</sup>

Architectural historian Paolo Scrivano has described this phenomenon as “romanticizing the other.” He argues that the large “discrepancy between reality and imagination in the way Italian design culture was presented to the American public” can be understood in these kinds of orientaling terms.<sup>468</sup> He argues that the agency of Italian design companies has been

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<sup>463</sup> Sparke, Penny. “The Straw Donkey: Tourist Kitsch or Proto-Design? Craft and design in Italy, 1945-1960.” *Journal of Design History* 11, no. 1 (1998): 59-69.; Scrivano, Paolo. “Romanticizing the Other? Views of Italian Industrial Design in Postwar America.” In *The Italian Legacy in Washington DC: Architecture, Design, Art and Culture*. Edited by Luca Molinari and Andrea Canepari. Milan: Skira, 2007. 156-61.

<sup>464</sup> “It is the natural outcome of a certain sense of mystic forces ever at work behind and within the obvious face of nature. This mysticism, in counterpoint to the Italian sensuous appreciation of nature, is one of the main sources of her artistic strength in its most complex as well as its simplest expressions.” Rogers, Meyric R. “The Arts and Crafts in Italy Today.” In *Italy At Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*. Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana, 1950. 22.

<sup>465</sup> Rogers, Meyric R. “Introduction.” In *Italy At Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*. Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana, 1950. 18.

<sup>466</sup> Cass, Judith. “Recorded at Random.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 28, 1951, A1.

<sup>467</sup> Teague, Walter Dorwin. “Italian Shopping Trip: Twelve American museums send out a battery of buyers.” *Interiors* CX, no. 5 (1950): 195 & 145.

<sup>468</sup> Scrivano, Paolo. “Romanticizing the Other? Views of Italian Industrial Design in Postwar America.” In *The Italian Legacy in Washington DC: Architecture, Design, Art and Culture*. Edited by Luca Molinari and Andrea Canepari. Milan: Skira, 2007. 156 & 60.

downplayed and that they played an active role in cultivating an American consumer base for their products. Therefore, when considering *Italy at work*, the economic considerations of the producers should not be seen as antithetical or unrelated to those of the exhibition organizers. The American-led consumerism and cultural appropriation were not merely forced on Italian producers. Moreover, these producers were in the market, so to speak, for consumers. Therefore, though the language of the exhibition text was exaggerated, it cannot be seen to fully misrepresent the aims and ideas of the artists, artisans, architects and companies included in the show. This complicates the narrative of American cultural dominance and reveals their reliance of Italian-led ideas about design and cultural commerce.

Going hand-in-hand, consumerism and culture were at the heart of the two main aims of this exhibition. The first aim was the “broadening of [American] cultural experience” through the “pleasure that comes from seeing objects.”<sup>469</sup> This pleasure, Rogers wrote, connected the success of the exhibition to “the average buying public.” Here, the language quickly turned from cultural pleasure as the “purpose of [...] museums of art” to the purpose of sparking a broad consumer base. Just as the lines between art and craft had begun to be blurred, so too the lines between modernist autonomy and “Tourist Kitsch” were blurred.<sup>470</sup> The second aim spoke the language of cultural commerce, strongly connected to the U.S. aims in the “Cultural Cold War.” In *Italy at Work’s* move to develop “the great health of Italy and our western world, the producer-consumer chain must be completed.”<sup>471</sup> Through the consumerist output sparked by this exhibition, its organizers claimed, Italy could create a robust postwar economy relieving their

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<sup>469</sup> Rogers, Meyric R. "Introduction." In *Italy At Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*. Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana, 1950, 18.

<sup>470</sup> Sparke, Penny. "The Straw Donkey: Tourist Kitsch or Proto-Design? Craft and design in Italy, 1945-1960." *Journal of Design History* 11, no. 1 (1998): 59-69.

<sup>471</sup> Rogers, Meyric R. "Introduction." In *Italy At Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*. Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana, 1950, 18.

import debt and reignite “that stream of creative imagination—warm and rich in human values—which has inspired our civilization from its beginnings.”<sup>472</sup> Not only did this cultural consumerism fit the aims of the Marshall Plan, but it would have long-lasting effects in the creation of the “Made in Italy” brand.

Resembling a kind of sales brochure, the exhibition catalogue provided an understanding of the different types of objects being presented for the viewer/consumer: why they were chosen to be representative and what connection they had to Italian culture. At the center was Italy’s “post-war renaissance.”<sup>473</sup> This “renaissance” was reflected in the individuality of each artist or artisan—note that even this language of rebirth both points to and reframes pre-existing Italian ideas about a new post-Fascist culture. Revealing how viewers/consumers would find individuality in the works of the exhibition, “variety” was represented as “the instinctive craving of the Italian craftsmen.” Individuality could be seen through the imprecise nature of multiples, each one individual, varied, like the artist who had created it.<sup>474</sup> *Italy at Work*’s exhibition catalogue started with: “The Italian is an individualist. Hence this exhibition.”<sup>475</sup> Not only was this a trait of the new “reborn” Italian society, it represented democratic ideals.

Juxtaposed in opposition to collectivism (i.e. Communism), the exhibition organizers described how Italian individualism responded to the ravages of war before “even a provisional government could institute and direct relief measures” and was therefore “radically untouched by governmental paternalism and *instinctively distrustful* of it.”<sup>476</sup> In Teague’s article about *Italy at Work* for *Interiors* magazine, Communist collectivity’s failure to create good handicraft was

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<sup>472</sup> Rogers. Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> Rogers, Meyric R. “The Arts and Crafts in Italy Today.” In *Italy At Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*. Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana, 1950, 20.

<sup>474</sup> Rogers. Ibid. 21.

<sup>475</sup> Rogers, Meyric R. “Introduction.” In *Italy At Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*. Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana, 1950. 13.

<sup>476</sup> Rogers. Ibid. Emphasis added.

outlined explicitly. He wrote, “in one community only [... we saw] a pall of conformity resting on the craftsmen, and we learned later that this group had been organized as an adjunct of the Communist party: here again politics was operating as a blight on individualism.”<sup>477</sup> Likewise, as a Brooklyn Museum press release articulated, Italians were “individualistic free-loving people” and as such “the example of democracy.”<sup>478</sup> Individuality represented not merely a material quality of Italian handicraft but an ideological one: individuality as free, democratic and consumerist.

In *Italy at Work*, Italian individuality could be found in the “counter-balance to the lifeless monotony of purely mechanical production.”<sup>479</sup> This idea of uniqueness and individuality has lasted as a way to define Italian cultural production.<sup>480</sup> For the country’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome held the *Unicità d’Italia. Made in Italy e identità nazionale (Italian Uniqueness: Made in Italy and National Identity)*. Like *Italy at Work*, politics, economics, and art all came together. Though the majority of the works included in *Italy at Work* were handmade, a few, such as the Vespas and Lambrettas, pointed to the mass produced objects that would become iconic of the “Made in Italy” brand, later on.

As design historians Kjetil Fallan and Grace Lees-Maffei describe, the growing market for consumer goods throughout the 1950s and 60s was connected to the rise of these designed, industrial products.<sup>481</sup> Therefore, the 1950 exhibition marked the nascence of these ideas about

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<sup>477</sup> Teague, Walter Dorwin. "Italian Shopping Trip: Twelve American museums send out a battery of buyers." *Interiors* CX, no. 5 (1950): 199.

<sup>478</sup> Bennett, Isadora, and Richard Pleasant. ""Italy at Work — Her Renaissance in Design Today" Largest Museum Show Ever Brought to This Country to Tour United States 3 Years Opens at Brooklyn Museum November 29th." Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 1950. 2.

<sup>479</sup> Rogers, Meyric R. "The Arts and Crafts in Italy Today." In *Italy At Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*. Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana, 1950. 21.

<sup>480</sup> See: Razzano, Guido Maria. "The Roots of the *Italian Uniqueness* Exhibition." In *Italian Uniqueness: The Making of a National Identity. 1961/2011*. Edited by Enrico Morteo and Alessandra Maria Sette. Venice: Marsilio, 2011. 20-23.

<sup>481</sup> Fallan, Kjetil, and Grace Lees-Maffei. "Introduction: the History of Italian Design." In *Made In Italy: Rethinking a Century of Italian Design*. Edited by Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. 14.

and markets for Italian art, craft, and industrial production. Through the 1950s and 1960s, a new relationship between craft and mechanical production gained importance. As a result, the combining of modern mechanical production with traditional craft aesthetics would become a central marker of “Made in Italy.”<sup>482</sup>

While *Italy at Work* highlighted the growing importance of industrial consumer products, it also shed light on the central role that sculptors and the ceramic medium played in the creation of “Made in Italy.” The final description of individuality is crucial to understand how it would operate in the Trans-Atlantic culture.

A third factor related to this individualistic approach is that sympathy with his material which is almost universally characteristic of the work of the Italian craftsman. Left to himself, the craftsman may indeed create or follow a bad design, but he seldom violates the character of the material used unless forced by necessity to cater to vulgarized taste.<sup>483</sup>

In the catalogue, the focused discussion on ceramics singled out both sculptors and ceramicists. The description of their work differs from those of the large companies who produced ceramic products (Richard-Ginori, for example) as well as the smaller-scale artisan industrial installations. Terms like “abstraction” and “baroque” accompany the descriptions of artist-created ceramics, rather than “decorative” and “traditional.”<sup>484</sup> Fontana’s work represented a “*tour de force*” and a “super-impressionist virtuosity.” This allied with the contemporary understanding of artist-ceramics already present in Italy.

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<sup>482</sup> Corbellini, Erica. ““Made in”: dalla denominazione di origine alla costruzione di un immaginario.” In *La scommessa del Made in Italy e il futuro della moda italiana*. Edited by Erica Corbellini and Stefania Saviolo. Milan: RCS Libri, 2004. 39.

<sup>483</sup> Rogers, Meyric R. “The Arts and Crafts in Italy Today.” In *Italy At Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*. Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana, 1950, 21-2.

<sup>484</sup> For the section on ceramics see: Rogers, Meyric R. “Notes on the Exhibition.” In *Italy At Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*. Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana, 1950. 28-32.

## **Melotti in *Italy at Work***

The catalogue described Melotti's "potting [as] extraordinarily fine since the body is reduced to the minimum thickness necessary to support the heavy enamel glazes."<sup>485</sup> Melotti's "sympathy with [his] material" was pushed it to its limits in their description. However, looking to Melotti's works included in this exhibition, from picture frames to bowls, the wide variety of works in ceramic reflect his engagement with form rather than an interest in medium as such, however.<sup>486</sup> His slips varied in texture and tone, highlighting the formal shifts of the clay in order to enhance the movements and shapes made in clay. Rather than being merely decorative, the color slips emphasize the formal elements of each object. For example, with his cup, ca. 1948 [Figure 3.18], the dark brown slip drips over the edge to accentuate the curve of the footed-cup. As if actively dripping down the side of the vessel, the slip seems to have sloshed out from the interior, in the same color. This reinforces the actual form, the convex shape of the cup exterior. Even the white slip below has an appearance of cascading over to cover the faintly legible markings beneath it.

In a completely different technique, Melotti's cornet from ca.1930 [Figure 3.19] has a uniformly-colored slip. Like many of his sculptural ceramic works, this technique allowed for a more intense focus on form. Shadows cast by the overlapping clay's brightness are punctuated by dark shadows. In this piece, the undulating rim of the cornet pops out as a bright white line, flanked by deep grey shadows. Melotti withheld any kind of ornamentation in order to foreground the formal qualities of the piece. A similar effect was achieved in two complementary

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<sup>485</sup> Rogers, *Ibid.* 31.

<sup>486</sup> Since the catalogue of Melotti's ceramics does not note which works were presented in *Italy at Work*, I have made educated guesses as to which works were presented. These selections are based on the brief descriptions in the exhibition lists at the AIC archives (e.g. Figure 3.20 fits the description of "DC 1508 7. Large Green BOWL, fluted" in the AIC archives). See: Gallery Installation List. 1950, in *AIC Archives: Department of Decorative Arts Exhibition Records 1951-53*, Italy at Work: 305-0003.2, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago



colors for another cornet [Figure 3.20].

This linear nature, emphasized through the application of slip to ceramics, can be seen as functioning in another way in a different work included in *Italy at Work*. In the frame from ca. 1950 [Figure 3.21], Melotti emphasized the lines at the interior and exterior edges with a vibrant blue slip. The same blue can be found in a thick uneven band at the raised portion of the frame. This creates a kind of ambiguity between the graphic nature of the lines and the surface's real three-dimensionality.

As Massimo Carboni describes, the “vessels [like this one], beyond their formalist debt, present themselves as true and typical sculptures.”<sup>487</sup> Even though Melotti saw these ceramics as separate from his sculptural practice, the focus on abstract form remained at their heart. In comparison to others included in *Italy at Work*, Melotti's ceramics stand out for their focus on form rather than functional, decorative, or narrative aspects, even among his contemporary sculptors. In contrast, Fontana's vases [Figure 3.22], one of a pair, show a completely different relationship to the medium. Fontana brought to life the surfaces of the vase, a standardized shape from the studio at Albisola, to become a kind of theater. Unlike Melotti, Fontana also engaged with the material in a way that left his physical marks, both in the relief figures and the brushiness of the background slip. Relief figures separated the object from the story (narrative and phenomenological) created by the artist on its surface. At the same time, Fontana focused on creation as a sign of the phenomenon of making in his ceramic works in particular.<sup>488</sup> The trace of his hands, as they pressed each figure into the clay vase, remained in the deep groves of each warrior's body.

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<sup>487</sup> “I vasi, al di là, di ogni ipotesi formalistica, si presentano come vere e proprie sculture.” Carboni, Massimo. “L'angelo del fare. Fausto Melotti e la ceramica.” In *Fausto Melotti. L'opera in ceramica*. Edited by Antonella Commellato and Marta Melotti. Milan: Skira, 2003. 21.

<sup>488</sup> Crispolti, Enrico. “On the Creative Adventure of Fontana.” In *Fontana*. Edited by Enrico Crispolti. Milan: Charta, 1999. 11.

Though there was a trace of the artist's hand, Fontana did not engage in materials in the same way as his contemporaries. Hecker writes that "Fontana, like Duchamp, suggests that the key to success will depend on proof of the artist's involvement as a form of branding."<sup>489</sup> Melotti, on the other hand, did not intend to give proof of the artist's hand, since he saw materiality as merely serving as a vehicle from which higher meaning could be understood. Abraham Hammacher suggests that Melotti "rejected modeling because it was the direct expression of the fingers."<sup>490</sup> This would account for Melotti's later disavowal of his use of ceramics when, in an 1974 interview for *Harper's Bazaar*, he proclaimed that "I don't really love ceramics. For me ceramics are a mess."<sup>491</sup> Curator Enrico Carboni argues that Melotti's "anti-materialist" nature created "a series of objective and subjective problems" that were resolved in his use of fire.<sup>492</sup> As proposed by philosopher Paul Valéry, Carboni writes, "the author with whom Melotti, without doubt, is electively linked for many reasons," fire formed the most noble arts.<sup>493</sup> In the end, by looking closely at his ceramic works, it is clear that Melotti continued to focus on form rather than materiality, allying with his broader sculptural ideals.

At the same time, Melotti's figurative ceramics posed an important relationship between the traditions of sculpture and craft. In another work presented in *Italy at Work*, Melotti's *Annunciation*, 1948-49 [Figure 3.23] depicts the scene of the Virgin Mary and the Angel Gabriel as two separate ceramic figurines. The quality of the clay making up the drapery in particular

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<sup>489</sup> Hecker, Sharon. "'Servant of Two Masters': Lucio Fontana's Sculptures in Milan's Cinema Arlecchino (1948)." *Oxford Art Journal* 35, no. 3 (2012): 352.

<sup>490</sup> Hammacher, A.M. *Fausto Melotti*. Translated by James Brockway. London: Marlborough, 1973. 22.

<sup>491</sup> "Io non amo molto la ceramica. Per me la ceramica è un pasticcio." Carboni, Massimo. "L'angelo del fare. Fausto Melotti e la ceramica." In *Fausto Melotti. L'opera in ceramica*. Edited by Antonella Commellato and Marta Melotti. Milan: Skira, 2003. 12.

<sup>492</sup> "La tecnica della ceramica pone a Melotti — artista "antimaterico" per eccellenza— una serie di problemi oggettivi e soggettivi fra cui, per l'appunto, quello della materia, considerata inaggrabile da ogni putto di vista. [...] Per Paul Valéry — autore al quale Melotti senza dubbio è elettivamente legato per tante ragioni, in parte nascoste in parte esplicite — le arti "più avventurose", "più incerte", dunque "più nobili", sono quelle che richiedono l'uso del fuoco." Carboni. *Ibid.* 11.

<sup>493</sup> Carboni. *Ibid.*

gives them a quality of sheets of rigid material rather than clothing. Despite their figurative motif, these formal elements clearly connect this work to Melotti's larger sculptural project. As in his iconic 1935 works [Figures 0.5-6, 1.6, 2.5-6], the material functions as conveyor of form above all. The sculptures' drapery creates a series of lines and shapes with light and shadow. As with the non-sculptural ceramics described above, rather than an illusory image of clothing, Melotti creates an assemblage of forms. Likewise, the glaze serves little figurative purpose. Instead, the monochromatic slip highlights the abstract formal qualities Melotti created with the clay. The glazing on the one hand strongly sets the medium in the arena of handicraft ceramics, and on the other creates a sense of otherworldliness.

Like his in *Teatrini*, Melotti used figurative personifications in this work to experiment with his ideas about modern sculpture's ability to communicate. Mary and Angel Gabriel, both semi-divine, illustrate the sculptural interaction between the modeling and the modulation: mother (nature/disorder) and God (rule/order). This work should be seen as a kind of companion to his 1940 *Il Diavolo che tenta gli intellettuali* [Figure 2.7]. Narratively, the figures here are legible as a pair, in the canonical Annunciation pose recognizable to Catholics and art historians alike. Melotti, like many of his contemporaries, used well-known catholic imagery as proxy for critical debates about the form and function of modern Italian sculpture.

Comprising two separate figures, Melotti kept each realm separate. Yet as a pair, they create a dynamic interaction between the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary, which ends in the narrative with the word of God impregnating the woman. The figurative group therefore plays out an investigation of sculpture's possibilities for communication to the viewer, to "impregnate" the viewer with Melotti's meaning.

Perhaps a consequence of their place in *Italy at Work* as a work of both cultural and

consumer value, the figures of Melotti's *Annunciation* were shortly after separated. Melotti's *Angel* now resides as a singular object in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum.<sup>494</sup> Separated, they lose their metaphoric meaning and default to consumer objects to be bought and sold.

Fontana gave the American public another image of Italian ceramic-sculptural production. His *Transfiguration* [Figure 3.24] exploited the qualities of the medium to differing effects. Unlike Melotti's *Annunciation* figures, Fontana handled the clay not merely as forms but instead as material to be molded. White describes a similar work as being a "record of Christ's passion [that] translates the religious narrative of fleshly mortification and redemption into an outlandish extension of the medium's possibilities."<sup>495</sup> Like Melotti, Fontana's religious themes points to more than just the church. He gave the sculpture a sense of the earthiness of the material from which it came. Fontana let the material speak, taking lessons from contemporary ceramic trends.<sup>496</sup>

The abstract sculptural qualities of Melotti and Fontana's works stand out when contrasted with the other handicraft ceramics exhibited alongside. In comparison, a set of ceramic candlesticks by Victor Cerrato [Figure 3.25] represented more traditional Italian ceramics in the exhibition. As utilitarian objects, Melotti's works, for example, are further separated from that of Cerrato's. The details of Cerrato's figures were clearly molded, despite of their use as candlestick holders. Form and function are distinct, creating a decorative object.

Presenting ethnographic models, these figures present a look into regional Sardinian costume—

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<sup>494</sup> According to their website, the *Angel* was part of a gift from the Italian Government. See: "Brooklyn Museum. Collections: European Art: *Angel* (Part of set "Annunciation")." (2011), [http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/68568/Angel\\_Part\\_of\\_set\\_Annunciation/set/79d3b8dde457cd1bfd29864faa78b37b?referring-q=melotti](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/68568/Angel_Part_of_set_Annunciation/set/79d3b8dde457cd1bfd29864faa78b37b?referring-q=melotti). [Accessed: Aug. 14, 2013]

<sup>495</sup> White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 143.

<sup>496</sup> One contemporary ceramicist, Savatore Fancello, investigated the boundaries similar of the medium. This kind of investigation can be seen in Fancello's 1938 *Cinghiale* (*Boars*). Fontana spent time before he left for Argentina during the war at Albisola with Fancello. His mastery of the medium had derived from Fancello's own advances in ceramics. See: Labò, Mario. "Le ceramiche di Fancello." *Domus*, no. 173 (1942): 209.

even if the artist was from Turin and not Sardinia. Likewise, the glazing of the figurines designates different aspects of the clothing and regional Sardinian attributes. In contrast, Melotti's monochromatic slip sets his *Annunciation* apart in their abstractness; his works in ceramics were concerned with the aesthetics of high art even in the media of the artisan.

### **The Reception and Legacy of *Italy at Work***

Understanding the complexities of the works presented, the exhibition organizers presented diversity on the surface; yet, as Scrivano shows "the curators of *Italy at Work* had assumed an interpretation of Italian design culture (if not of Italian culture *tout court*) tainted by simplifications and generalizations."<sup>497</sup> Differing formal concerns among artists, artisans, and architects, fell to the wayside. The focus remained firmly on presenting a unified set of cultural products for their new American consumers. At the same time the generalized idea that all Italian works were individual made prevailed was a paradox.

In the lead-up to the show, organizers had anticipated some of the challenges this work might have posed for American viewers. In an essay in the *New York Times*, Rogers wrote to the effect that "[c]omparisons from most points of view [between Italian and American cultural goods] are on that account not only difficult but unenlightening."<sup>498</sup> Due to economic as well as social influences, according to Rogers, Italians did not furnish their homes as Americans, who had an interest in a cohesive style. He explained that the eclectic Italian design sensibility sprang from an "individuality" inherent in the handicraft tradition and did not sprang from cultural inadequacies. Therefore, Roger's presentation of Italian individuality made each work stand

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<sup>497</sup> Scrivano, Paolo. "Romanticizing the Other? Views of Italian Industrial Design in Postwar America." In *The Italian Legacy in Washington DC: Architecture, Design, Art and Culture*. Edited by Luca Molinari and Andrea Canepari. Milan: Skira, 2007. 157.

<sup>498</sup> Rogers, Meyric. "Italian Art Works." *New York Times*, Jan. 18, 1950, 6XX.

alone in style but not culture. He wrote that a “single item is shown as [a] self-sufficient unit.”<sup>499</sup> This object autonomy created the ideal consumer product. Roger argued that Italian individuality should therefore be desirable to the American consumer because it would enliven their more rigid design style. *Italy at Work* would help bring a more sophisticated design style into the home of everyday Americans; this was not mere kitsch but a culturally rich connection between Italian and American cultures.

These sentiments were echoed in most of the critical responses to the exhibition, which as a whole was overwhelmingly positive. In addition to contributing cultural value to their home decor, Americans would find another reward in *Italy at Work*.

It shows that 20 years of regimentation by Mussolini's dictatorship did not deprive Italians of the urge and ability to think along new lines and express old skills in new forms and colors. ...It should provide additional means of self-support to Italians and bring new satisfactions into American lives. It should not be missed.<sup>500</sup>

With the win-win situation, *Italy at Work* provided Italian economic independence, as a safeguard against Communism, and brought ideological and stylistic contentment to the American viewer.

Above all, exhibition reviews adhered to the rhetoric from the exhibition press releases, hitting upon four familiar points: the exhibition was organized through the Marshall Plan, the exhibition hoped to create an American market for Italian goods, the Italian artists liberated from Fascism were now able to express their individuality, and admission to the exhibition would be free at all venues. Reviews from New York,<sup>501</sup> to Chicago,<sup>502</sup> to Houston<sup>503</sup> all transcribed the museums' press releases. One section that was often duplicated read:

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<sup>499</sup> Rogers, *Ibid*.

<sup>500</sup> "Italian Art on Display." *Minneapolis Star*, Nov. 28, 1951, np.

<sup>501</sup> "New Italian Art Arrives For Tour." *New York Times*, Nov. 12, 1950, 70.

<sup>502</sup> Barry, Edward. "Arts and Crafts of Italy Reflect Life and Charm." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 15, 1951, C4.; Dearborn, Cholly. "Art Devotees to See Preview of 'Italy at Work' Exhibit." *Chicago Heartland-American*, March 10, 1951, 4.; Jewett, Eleanor. "'Italy at Work' is Art Exhibit of Rare Beauty." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 14, 1951, A3.

<sup>503</sup> "Major Exhibit of Italian Arts, Crafts Opening at Museum February 17." *Houston Post*, Feb. 3, 1952, 1.; Loudon, Catherine. "Skill of Italian Artists Illustrated in Exhibition Opening at Museum Today." *Houston Post*, Feb. 17, 1952.

One of the purposes in presenting the show is to stimulate a market for Italian products, thus implementing the economic aims of the Marshall Plan. Already some of the objects illustrated in the exhibition are being stocked in stores throughout the country. Another purpose of the exhibition is to have as many people as possible see fine work by contemporary Italian designers and craftsmen. To this end, the admission fee usually charged in exhibitions of this scope was waived. A generous donation from the Friends of the Institute was instrumental in making this decision possible. The rebirth of Italian design, first perceived by the Art Institute of Chicago in 1949, was already under way in Italy in 1946, when the establishment of a democratic government released the long pent-up imagination and warmth of the Italian craftsman. Calling upon traditional Italian technical virtuosity in their urge to rebuild and create, they were inspired to a new and vivid phase of creative design. The outstanding feature of Italian design rests on a controlled fantasy of form and a delight in color, texture, and form which convey a humanity and warmth often lacking in contemporary design.<sup>504</sup>

Culture and politics came together here as if a natural event of humanitarian concern.

The contemporary fight against Communism held a prominent place in exhibition reviews. One Fort-Worth paper painted a particularly vivid image;

But the primary purpose is educational and to acquaint America with Italy's upswing in a culture which was dormant under Mussolini's rule. However, the political and economic possibilities in the collection aren't being lost, either. And Nagel especially has emphasized "this very activity America has fostered has been a strong instrument in teaching men who had lived under totalitarianism, the desirability of democracy. This has been a prime factor in stopping communism in Italy in its tracks."<sup>505</sup>

Reviews like this made the political positioning clear. American democracy played an integral role in making possible the freedom and productivity of these Italian craftsmen and women.

One article in particular stands out in the publicity surrounding *Italy at Work*. In the 1950 *New York Herald Tribune*, Pulitzer Prize winning (1974) critic Emily Genauer made a series of astute points about Italian art and its relationship to craft as presented in *Italy at Work*. Accurately stating that there are a number of artists exhibited in *Italy at Work* who were also showcased in the

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<sup>504</sup> ""Italy at Work" is Craft Exhibit at Art Institute." *Independent*, November 29, 1951, 10. This format was particularly strong in the press out of Minnesota, where text seems to be verbatim in multiple newspaper outlets. For example, see: "Italy At Work Craft Exhibition At Minneapolis Art Institute." *Breckenridge Gazette-Telegram*, Nov. 29, 1951, np.; ""Italy At Work" Craft Exhibition." *Blue Earth Post*, Nov. 29, 1951, np.; "Italian Exhibit at Mpls. Institute." *Willmar Daily Tribune*, Nov. 30, 1951, np.; "Italian Work Exhibit At Minneapolis Institute." *Lanesboro Leader*, Nov. 29, 1951, np.; "Exhibitions of Italian Craftsmanship Set." *Minneapolis Star*, Nov. 27, 1951, np.; "Italian Art on Display." *Minneapolis Star*, Nov. 28, 1951, np.; Lawrence, Elizabeth. "Museum Show Has Ideas For Homemakers." *San Francisco Examiner*, Sun., July 8 1951, 3.

<sup>505</sup> Jenkins, Nedra. "Italy's Houston Exhibit Shows Amazing Variety." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Feb. 23, 1952, 14.

previous year's *Twentieth Century Italian Art* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art—this exhibition will be considered in the following chapter—Genauer wrote that the exhibition,

may have another outcome, one which very likely was never in the minds of its backers at all, yet is of no less importance to us at home. It may, because of the drama and flair with which the exhibition is being presented, and the fact that it will tour the country for three years, serve as no other force has yet succeeded in convincing Americans that art has a place in their lives—their everyday lives—which the smoothest, most efficiently operating machine-produced objects we surround ourselves with, has only magnified. It may result in a greatly increased demand for the unique and beautiful crafts [*sic.*] objects which now, at last, the public must realize can be as valid works of art as a painted landscape. ...So quick always to scorn academic and Philistine principles, they [Americans] have not themselves been able to discard the bourgeois nineteenth-century notion, fostered by the industrial revolution, that a useful object is one thing, and art is something else—to be hung on a wall or placed on a pedestal.<sup>506</sup>

Not only did Genauer highlight the presence of important Italian artists in the show but she also hit on an important paradox in Italian artists' own understandings of the unity of the arts. Artists were a part of and yet separate from artisan craft production.

Gio Ponti's contemporary writings about ceramics parallel Genauer's assessment.<sup>507</sup> In 1953, for the introduction to the catalogue of ceramics for the 9<sup>th</sup> Milan Triennale, Ponti wrote that artist "masters" have much to bring to the arena of ceramics. He highlighted that "schools of art, artisan production and industry all complete the panorama of our [Italian] modern

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<sup>506</sup> Genauer, Emily. "Italy at Work' Exhibition Shows Humble Objects, Too, Can be Art." *New York Herald Tribune*, Dec. 3, 1950. np.

<sup>507</sup> "Dopo questi Maestri esclusivamente ceramisti che noveriamo per primi per questa ragione, viene lo stuolo valoroso di quegli scultori e pittori che (prima ancora del clamoroso episodio picassiano) hanno celebrato le nozze fra ceramica ed artisti. Essi si sono innamorati della ceramica e l'hanno onorata con opere e produzioni stupende, primi fra tutti Lucio Fontana scultore, pieno d'impeti spaziali, Fausto Melotti altro scultore, che s'è fatto anche maestro in quest'arte, poi Agenore Fabbri altro scultore, ceramista vigoroso ed aspro, e vicino a loro Leoncillo, ancora uno scultore, ed Aligi Sassu pittore, i due Cascella Pittori e scultori, e Romano Pui, scultore rivelatosi smaltatore finissimo e intenso, e Mirko ed Afro. Questi artisti caratterizzano tutti con forti personalità la ceramica italiana. Interessante considerare però quanto il loro mondo particolarmente plastico, formale e figurative sia tanto diverso da quello dei maestri finlandesi. ...[Qui] la ceramica usata come mezzo d'espressione, mezzo più ceramicamente riservato in Melandri, più liberamente usato invece in Fontana ed in Fabbri e nei Cascella che pare non vogliono tanto lasciar fare al fuoco. Sapiienti—accanto a Melandri—sono Melotti e Rui. Potente Gambone, Sassu dipinge, e il fuoco gli fissa il colore. Accanto a questi noveriamo altri Maestri, altri artisti, ed artiste. Temperamenti in sviluppo; scuole d'arte e produzioni artigiane ed industriali completano il panorama della nostra ceramica moderna." Ponti, Gio. "Prefazione." In *Ceramica alla 9a Triennale di Milano*. Edited by Zetti e Spreafico. Vol. 4. Milano: Editoriale Domus, 1953 (1951). 8.



ceramics.”<sup>508</sup> Likewise in her review, Genauer indicated that the conventions that high art need be “something else—to be hung on a wall or placed on a pedestal” was turned on its head in *Italy at Work*. Genauer allowed for an understanding of the works in craft media by artists as fine art even though they were not made of canonical high art materials, such as bronze or marble.

The importance of this exhibition cannot be understated in terms of the effect it had on the American consumer market for Italian goods. With its immense appeal, a succession of special consumer events and exhibitions followed. For example, the Abraham & Straus department store ran ads [Figure 3.26] coinciding with *Italy at Work* that said “Everyone will be talking about the great show of modern Italian handicrafts at the Brooklyn Museum: Give yourself a treat and go to see it... then COME TO A&S to see and buy delightful gifts from Italy featured all through the store.”<sup>509</sup> The advertisement showed examples of housewares with tiny notations of each one’s price. At the very bottom of the huge half-page advertisement, they claimed that,

*A&S is supporting the Museum in featuring Italian merchandise that you may actually buy — lacy baskets from Naples and Milan, glossy new leathers and brasses from Florence, exquisite baby things, lingerie, imaginative glass and pottery and linens from up and down the book (many one-of-a-kind). In our Priscilla Food Shop you’ll even find Italian delicacies. Come now and choose your Christmas gift!*<sup>510</sup>

Though a formal agreement between store and museum did not exist, the department store gained legitimacy through the perceived affiliation with the museum and the cultural cachet of the show.

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<sup>508</sup> Ponti. Ibid.

<sup>509</sup> "Display Ad 55 - Abraham & Straus." *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1950, 13. Emphasis original to text.

<sup>510</sup> Italics added but bold original to text. Ibid.

Then in 1951, an even more spectacular spin off came to Macy's department store. *Italy-in-Macy's, U.S.A.*, at the flagship store opened with much pomp and circumstance in September, presided over by the city's Sicilian-born Mayor Vincent Impellitteri and his wife.<sup>511</sup> Even more explicitly than *Italy at Work*, the fair played a dual role of consumer spectacle and political platform.

Over one million dollars of merchandise populated the fifth floor of the Seventh Avenue building. This "two-acre Italian enclave" contained items with both "Renaissance richness" and "contemporary simplicity" that ranged from glassware to children's toys. Much like *Italy at Work*, the department store spin-off *Italy-in-Macy's, U.S.A.* brought together a huge array of different objects and expositions accompanied the displays. There were artisans brought in from Murano and Montelupo demonstrating glass-blowing and ceramic-making—the ceramic figurines ranged in price from "\$14.98 to \$29.95," not cheap, though there were also ceramic mugs from only 98¢.

As the epitome of consumerism and politics coming together, a "hand-decorated donkey cart and glittering harness, traditional for Sicilian festivals, vied for attention with a thirty-six-foot gondola, complete with two jump seats, fresh from a shakedown run on the Grande Canal of Venice."<sup>512</sup> The donkey cart was a diplomatic gift from "the people of Palermo to Gen. George C. Marshall." Marshall lent the gift to the fair, in order to recognize Italy's part in making the Marshall Plan a reality.<sup>513</sup> This loan pointed to the complexities of the political alliance between Italy and the United States with the blurred boundaries between politics, consumerism and culture.

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<sup>511</sup> "Italian Fair Here Opened by Major," *New York Times*, Sept. 11, 1951, 26.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>513</sup> The presence of General Marshall's donkey cart, a diplomatic gift, in a department store display makes sense because Macy's owner, Mr. Weil was part of the secret cultural army recruited by William Donovan, the head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). See: Saunders, Frances Stonor. *The Cultural Cold War. The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters.* New York: The New Press, 1999. 35.

### ***New Frame for Sculpture and Handicraft in “Made in Italy”***

Still active throughout the late 1950s, CNA organized another show concerned with both “art and trade” that was distributed in the U.S. by the Smithsonian Institution.<sup>514</sup> The last CNA of this large scale happened between 1955-57, traveling to at least seven different cities.<sup>515</sup> Bringing in another wave of Italian handicraft, the exhibition *Italian Arts & Crafts* displayed a smaller variety of works than *Italy at Work*, but did include works of glass, wood, ceramics, stone, metal, furniture, textiles, leather work, and even strawwork. However, artists like Melotti were no longer present.<sup>516</sup> With its dual focus on aesthetics and economics, this exhibition furthered the initiatives made by *Italy at Work*.

Melotti’s “Figures” in *Handicraft as a Fine Art* and his ceramics in *Italy at Work* came to represent a new post-Fascist image of Italian culture that was specifically for Cold War audiences. All of these works, existed in a moment of changing semiotics in Italy and the United States. As described in the first two chapters of this dissertation, Melotti and his contemporaries had searched for a new modern sculptural language in order to create a new post-Fascist culture. This American presentation of his work allowed for it to be further contextualized as post-Fascist. It was labeled internationally as non-Fascist, described as modern yet connected to tradition and, importantly, understood as an integral part of Italian economic and spiritual reconstruction.

Melotti’s works, alongside the wider variety of works in *Italy at Work*, were part of the nascence of the “Made in Italy” brand. With its political and consumerist framing, this post-war presentation of Italian culture in the United States shaped prevalent trends in Italian cultural

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<sup>514</sup> Brosio, Manlio. "Preface." In *Italian Arts & Crafts. A Loan Exhibition of Handicrafts and Design*. Edited by Italian Government. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1955.

<sup>515</sup> This number is based on the billing records in the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian. Billing Record for "Italian Arts & Crafts". December 1954, in *Italian Arts & Crafts*, RU316 Series 1, Box 6, Folder 23, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.

<sup>516</sup> *Italian Arts & Crafts*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1955.

production into a clear set of design principles. Framed within this larger post-war reconstruction of Italian culture, work of Italian artists and artisans was not seen as “primitive” but instead connected to a rich cultural tradition.

“Made in Italy” replaced *Italianità* after the Second World War and helped Italian cultural production gain a truly international presence. Even if the phrase “Made in Italy” did not become a colloquial term until the 1980s, the creation of a unified set of traits to define Italian cultural production began at this early post-war moment.<sup>517</sup> As design historian Penny Sparke argues, “[t]he catchphrase “utility plus beauty” came to characterize the Italian design aesthetic of the late 1940s and early 1950s” and *Italy at Work* held a pivotal role in this definition.<sup>518</sup> Giampiero Bosoni likewise describes this same moment in the 1950s as characterized by “a fundamental sensitivity to lifestyle transformations [as] tools constantly employed in the new Italian approach to the design of every day items.”<sup>519</sup>

Under Fascism, the official focus on artisan production had represented an anti-Americanist critique of Fordist ideals.<sup>520</sup> This changed in the 1950s because of the integration of the kind of American ideas reflected in *Italy at Work*. With this integration of consumer ideals, the understanding of “artigianato” shifted from something only representing “tradition” to something that also incorporated more modern ideals and methods.<sup>521</sup> As I have shown though, the bringing together of tradition and modern had been present in discussions of Italian modern

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<sup>517</sup> Saviolo, Stefania. "Made in Italy: ieri-oggi-domani." In *La scommessa del Made in Italy e il futuro della moda italiana*. Edited by Erica Corbellini and Stefania Saviolo. Milan: RCS Libri, 2004. 1-2.

<sup>518</sup> Sparke, Penny. *Design in Italy: 1870 to the Present*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1988. 87.; \_\_\_\_\_. "The Straw Donkey: Tourist Kitsch or Proto-Design? Craft and design in Italy, 1945-1960." *Journal of Design History* 11, no. 1 (1998): 59-69.

<sup>519</sup> Bosoni, Giampiero. "What is Italian Design?" In *Italian Design*. Edited by Giampiero Bosoni. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008. 37.

<sup>520</sup> Fara, Gian Maria, and Alberto M. Sobrero. *Cultura e immagine dell'artigianato italiano*, Istituto di Studi Politici Economici e Sociali: Temi d'oggi. Rome: Merlo, 1988. 25.

<sup>521</sup> Fara, et al. *Ibid.* 69.

art throughout Fascism, even as one of the central tenets, in the postwar period this same attribute allowed artists to transcend the destruction of Fascism. In the end, the brand “Made in Italy” established itself as an a-nationalistic understanding of art and craft that brought together ancient traditions with modern industry in a Trans-Atlantic Cold War context.<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> Corbellini, Erica. "“Made in”: dalla denominazione di origine alla costruzione di un immaginario." In *La scommessa del Made in Italy e il futuro della moda italiana*. Edited by Erica Corbellini and Stefania Saviolo. Milan: RCS Libri, 2004. 39.

## Chapter 4

### Trans-Atlantic Debates and the Politics of Post-War Sculptural Modernism in the 1950s

Marino Marini's new version of Italian modernist sculpture found enthusiastic support in both national and international contexts. His work was not only supported through similar Marshall Plan initiatives as Melotti's, highlighting Italian uniqueness—remember that he participated in the 1947 *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy* exhibition—but also was touted as representative of a post-war European artist. With the growing importance of the Trans-Atlantic art scene, a paradox became central to the way in which Marini's type of new sculptural modernism was exhibited and received by critics and collectors. Marini's sculpture exemplified both a generically European-type as well as a specifically Italian one. As the case of Melotti in *Italy at Work*, Marini's exhibition and critical reception in the United States played an important role in the legacy of Italian modern sculpture.

As described in the second chapter of this dissertation, with sculptural themes like equestrians, mythical nudes, and portraits, Marini's works retained ties to the tradition of sculpture, yet his use of these canonical types was not a simple regurgitation of old motifs. Marini, alongside his contemporaries, used canonical motifs in order to create a new form of sculptural modernism. As with the overwhelming bulk of modernist methodology, Marini's

sculptural modernism likewise relied on a pre-modern archaic models. Yet, the kind of archaism or primitivism that he used were specifically sourced from imagery identified as Italic. His use of this imagery, the same iconography mobilized by Fascists to present their ideals of *Italianità*, connected him both to an Italian-specific modern sculptural problem and also to a broader modernist phenomenon after the Second World War.

For Marini, commissions large and small came in from Europe and the United States starting almost immediately after the armistice, with a particular interest in his most recent works, including his *Cavaliere* [Figures 4.1-3, 4.9, 4.14-17, also see: 0.14-16, 0.19, 2.15, 2.17-19,]. From the late 1940s and into the mid-1950s, Marini's popularity rose to a fever-pitch in the United States through exhibitions, acquisition by major collections (both public and private) and critical responses. The initial sparks for the collecting frenzy in the U.S. were arguably lit by the 1949 American exhibition *Twentieth Century Italian Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) in addition to Marini's representation by the American dealer, Curt Valentin. A spotlight was firmly placed on Marini as the next great European sculptor and collectors flocked to own one of his works. At the same time that Marini's work gained popularity among American collectors, critics like Alice Louchheim and Clement Greenberg began to take notice.

Alongside a number of modernist European sculptors to garner American attention in the early 1950s—including Henry Moore, Jean Arp (1886-1966), Jean Lipchitz (1891-1973), and Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975)—Marini became representative of the European contribution to modern sculpture's advances in the decade following WWII. Many commentators focused descriptions of both Marini and his sculpture on the connections to the glorious Italian past that his nationality represented. Simultaneously, the formal qualities of his sculptural modernism bolstered this appeal. The dualistic qualities of Marini's work, both holding connections to a

vaguely-Italian-located humanist past and, at the same time, representing the possibilities for a new advanced modernist sculptural aesthetic, created a potent mix of references that attracted curators, critics and collectors alike.

In the immediate post-war moment, Marini's new place as exemplary European sculptor put his work at center stage of the "Cultural Cold War."<sup>523</sup> This was reflected in the dualistic interpretation of his works. In so doing, the exhibition and reception of Marini's work was connected to a larger web of associations and allegiances that made up the "Cultural Cold War."

In addition to exhibitions of Italian art in the U.S. in which Marini was included, American art was also being exported to Europe; these exhibitions were meant to strengthen cultural ties.<sup>524</sup> As I have introduced previously, the Trans-Atlantic exhibitions of this period strove to propagate the idea of American (and by proxy democratic) cultural supremacy with respect to Soviet Russia. Like design, American art and culture was bolstered by association with its European allies, and in return European art found a new audiences and collector bases in the States. Within this larger context, Marini's work was simultaneously touted as bearers of a kind of legitimating humanistic cultural patrimony and also as an important model for a democratic modernism in a post-Holocaust world.

Marini's work also played a part in setting new terms for post-war sculpture in the 1950s on the new international stage. For example, the subsequent debate between the critics Clement Greenberg and Herbert Read might have taken a different shape without the influence of Marini

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<sup>523</sup> See: Gienow-Hecht, Jessica C.E. "Culture and the Cold War in Europe." In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume 1*. Edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 398-419.; Saunders, Frances Stonor. *The Cultural Cold War. The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*. New York: The New Press, 1999.; \_\_\_\_\_. "Modern Art was CIA 'weapon'." *The Independent*, 22 October 1995.

<sup>524</sup> The initial plan for a MoMA exhibition of Italian contemporary art entailed an exchange of Italian and American artists. See: Morey, Chales Rufus. "Letter to Alfred Barr," May 15, 1945, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153. Likewise, American artists inspired by Italy too had their own show in the US. See: Prior, Harris K. *Italy Rediscovered an exhibition of work by American painters in Italy since World War II*. Utica, NY: Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, 1955.



and his European contemporaries in the United States under this rhetoric of the “Cultural Cold War.” Art historian David Getsy has argued that nationalist politics, at least in part, drove the post-war battle over the fate of modern sculpture’s legacy in the mid-1950s. He writes;

It was this question of public sculpture that fueled Greenberg and Read’s analyses. Simply put, both [critics] understood that sculpture, more so than the other arts, has an important cultural function [and] the monuments of the past determine how that past is remembered. ...In this regard, the scuffle over the *Art of Sculpture* played out on a microcosmic level that larger, global battle between the two primary victor nations [the United States and Britain] for the public face of modernism in the decade after the close of the Second World War. ...Both Read and Greenberg understood these stakes, and the implications and motivations for the debate about tactility and opticality extended beyond a quarrel about the proper aesthetics of sculpture.<sup>525</sup>

As Getsy explains, the nature of the debate was not simply a discussion about formalism, haptic verses optic sculpture. The Trans-Atlantic politics of the Cold War played a role in the debates about sculptural theory of the period.

Marini and his contemporaries from Europe used new sculptural media, like wood and ceramics, though traditional materials like bronze were still heavily represented. At the same time, European sculptors combined lessons learned from the pure abstraction of the early years of the century—including the use of signs and a focus on material—while still developing new kinds of figurative imagery. Since the new figural sculpture from Europe was not tied to naturalism and instead used figurative types as abstractions, symbols for sculptural form and meaning, the Trans-Atlantic debates about sculpture cannot be explained simply through formal distinctions. By considering the broader geo-political context, Marini’s work must be situated at the nascence of the international distinctions about sculptural modernism that would be hashed out in the late 1950s.

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<sup>525</sup> Getsy, David. "Tactility or opticality, Henry Moore or David Smith: Herbert Read and Clement Greenberg on *The Art of Sculpture*, 1956." *Sculpture Journal* 17, no. 2 (2008): 86-7.

Gettsy's reading of the Greenberg/Read debate reveals three important points to keep in mind when considering the Trans-Atlantic sculptural discourses of the 1950s: first, politics partially motivated the choices made by critics; second, these debates specified sculpture, not painting or architecture, as central conveyers of cultural meaning; and third, Marini's sculpture was part of the macrocosmic "battle [...] for the public face of modernism."<sup>526</sup> After two world wars, the United States became a major player in the trans-Atlantic art scene and not only was it a major market for art but also the nation began to wield influence on art's development. This chapter shows that Marini's place within this new Trans-Atlantic art scene sheds light on both larger developments in conceptions of modern sculpture and on the specific changes in the critical understanding of Marini's work. In light of the larger context, Marini's post-war work was not merely a return to order but presented an important contribution to the international development of sculpture and participated in those larger dialogues throughout the 1950s and onward.

### **Marini From European Critical Perspectives 1945-1959**

Marini's privileged place among critics in Europe undoubtedly informed the initial interest in his work by American curators and collectors.<sup>527</sup> With his Rome Quadriennale win in 1935, his first appearance at the Venice Biennale in 1936, and his first major monograph being published before the war in 1937, Marini's prestige in Italy had already been solidified by the

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<sup>526</sup> Gettsy. *Ibid.* 87.

<sup>527</sup> There was much discussion about getting sources and the scholarly content in the catalogue essays among the two MoMA curators. See: Soby, James Thrall. "Letter to Alfred H. Barr, Jr.," Jan. 7, 1949, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153.; \_\_\_\_\_. "Letter to Alfred H. Barr, Jr.," March 1949, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154.; \_\_\_\_\_. "Letter to Lamberto Vitali," Mar. 1, 1949, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154.

start of the Second World War in 1939.<sup>528</sup> In addition to his inter-war and war-time achievements, the critical reception of Marini's new work in Europe during the immediate post-war period colored the terms of the American reception.

As described in Chapter Two, the effects of Fascist State support of Italian artists (both direct and indirect) remained a part of the critical consciousness after the fall of Mussolini's Regime in 1943. Alongside the creation of a new forms of Italian modernism, Fascist-Era art production became cleansed of its totalitarian ignominy. A focus on artists' achievements during the Fascist period displaced this memory of totalitarianism, presenting a purely aesthetic image of Italian art production from the *ventennio*. Though for Marini this process was made somewhat easier by his flight to Switzerland in 1942, the need for an ideological cleansing was reflected in post-war European criticism, even if not explicitly stated.

The portrayal of Marini's work differed among Italian-language critical responses. Italian-speaking Swiss critics were keenly aware of Marini's contemporary work and its critical reception in Italy. Their writing is pertinent because it offers an extra-Italian look at critical responses of Marini's work without any issues of linguistic misunderstandings. Therefore, it is clear that these two groups of critics (Swiss and Italian) used diverse criteria on which they based their contemporary appraisals of Marini's work in the immediate post-war period.

All Italian-language criticism considered Marini's work as progressive and inventive in its use of sculptural form. From here however, the two dialogues diverge. As I will detail below, Italian critics focused on Marini's possible leadership of a new post-Fascist artistic resurgence and

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<sup>528</sup> As Martini had before him, Marino Marini won the First Prize for sculpture, with a substantial cash prize of 100,000 Lire in the Rome Quadriennale of 1935. Lorenzoni, Laura. "Marini's Life." In *Marino Marini*, Translated by Georgina Dennis. Edited by Pierre Casè. Milan: Skira, 2000. 286. Also see: *Marino Marini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 343.; Vitali, Lamberto. *Marino Marini : 33 tavole*. Edited by Giocanni Scheiwiller, Arte Moderna Italiana N. 29. Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1937.

highlighted his general importance to the future of indigenous artistic production. Marini's work represented new life for Italian art. In contrast, Swiss critics focused closely on recent trends in his production. Swiss-Italian critics mainly considered the work of his "Swiss period." They highlighted Marini's exploration of painterly media and his development of new sculptural types that showed his prominence in the larger post-war European context. Fundamentally for Swiss critics, he represented one of the most advanced sculptors of their time within a larger European landscape.

The audience of these two groups of criticism undoubtedly played an important role in their framing. For Swiss-Italian critics, their audience was small but cosmopolitan. Throughout the war, artists, intellectuals and other political and religious refugees, like Marini himself, fled to the country and brought with them a vibrant social and cultural scene. For the Italians, their audience was overwhelmingly national, in the midst of a physical and ideological reconstruction. Italian artists and intellectuals, many of whom had supported the modernizing tendencies of Fascism were continuing to look for a new post-Fascist national culture.

Writing just after the end of WWII, Swiss arts intellectual Piero Bianconi reviewed the recent monograph on Marini's work by Gianfranco Contini in the Swiss periodical *Belle Lettere*.<sup>529</sup> Contini's exhibition catalogue, published in French in 1944 in Lugano, was one of a number of publications in languages other than Italian coming from Europe at this time.<sup>530</sup> In Bianconi's review of the catalogue, he wrote that Contini's take on Marini

confirms one thing that could be a possibility for further discussion: [...] Marini's resettling, piece by piece, of the characters of shifting fantastic assemblies, that make up

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<sup>529</sup> Bianconi, Piero. "Note su Marino." *Belle Lettere*, no. 2 (1946): 15-16.

<sup>530</sup> Contini, Gianfranco. *Vingt sculptures de Marino Marini*. Lugano: Mazzuconi, 1944.

our world; instilled with the northern spirit, it was veiled by different colors, new and nostalgic.<sup>531</sup>

Bianconi's account of the war-time publication focused on the innovations Contini's exhibition highlighted within Marini's "Swiss" work. Bianconi saw a deep connection between Marini's developments in painting and his sculptural advances; the two dimensional works stimulated a rediscovery of sculptural forms. In a highly poetic description, he outlined that in the medium of drawing Marini elaborated the richness that was carried out in the sculpture.<sup>532</sup> Bianconi ended his review by quoting Contini: Marini's works have a "gentle style, attentive to the epidermis, almost a thoughtfulness of caress finally becomes interrupted by the rigorous necessity of the aspects of the material..."<sup>533</sup> This left the reader with a sense of the new material qualities in Marini's most recent sculpture.

In another short review in the Lugano *Libera Stampa*, Ugo Frey, Swiss journalist and later editor of the magazine *Cooperazione* (1954-1981), reviewed Marini's 1945 exhibition at the Galerie d'Art Moderne in Basel. Frey's article differs from Bianconi's mainly in the variety of works he

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<sup>531</sup> "Nella chiusa del testo che accompagna venti opere di Marino Marini, Gianfranco Contini afferma una cosa che potrebbe essere occasione di lungo discorso chi avesse la possibilità di svolgerlo: afferma che, in quel tipico modo dello scultore,—dove le nude accosciate covano sogni interminabili accanto ai cavalli cilibdrici bilicati su gambe trasparenti come dimostrazioni anatomiche, e confessate nostalgie antiche stanno somito a gomito con plebee energie che preannunciano tempi nuovi,—afferma dunque che (al diavolo le frasi cominciate) il Marino, ricomponendo a membro a membro i personaggi di quella muta assemblea fantastica che è il suo mondo gli ha come infuso uno spirito settentrionale, la ha velato d'un colore diverso, nuovo, nostalgico." Bianconi. Ibid.

<sup>532</sup> "But the discourse is ignited the more that's known: rather, this pink color on the face could be a suggestion, could stimulate us to find it in certain drawings of sculpture where one of the pictorial vocation is made vehemently wider, and after powerful winds of deposition, supports from meagre, very fragile limbs coil a breadth of color, rosy sails of pathetic pungency; where the more elemental material wrinkles to the extremely precious refinement it is made vibrant and anxious, quivering and bearing. [Ma il discorso lo si lascerà a penne più sapute; piuttosto, quel rosa della facciata potrebbe essere un suggerimento, potrebbe stimolarci a ritrovarlo in certi disegni dello scultore dove una sua vocazione pittorica si fa largo con prepotenza, e dietro poderosi torsi di Deposizioni, sostenuti da scarse fragilissime gambe, spira un fiato di colore, una velatura rosea di pungentezza patetica; dove la materia più elementare si arriccia a raffinatezze estremamente preziose, si fa vibrante e inquieta, rabbrivisce e soffre.]" Bianconi. Ibid. 16. Marini's use of extra-sculptural media has been little studied in a critical way. The only really thoughtful look at Marini's production in various media is by the Dutch curator and historian. See: Hammacher, Abraham. "Ritrovare Marini... [Coming across Marini...]." In *Marino Marini: la forma del colore [Marino Marini: the form of color]*. Edited by Marco Bazzini and Maria Teresa Tosi. Florence: M&M, 2001. 15-23.

<sup>533</sup> "Un tenero gusto affettuosa delle epidermidi, quasi una carità di carezze viene finalmente a spezzarsi contro la rigorosa necessità dell'aspetto reale..." Bianconi. "Note su Marino." 16. Translated into Italian from the French original by Bianconi, as noted on page 16 of the text.

considered, describing a number of specific works in addition to the popular themes that Bianconi had likewise described. Frey discussed Marini's "Venus" works as "[returning] to the full and rotund form" and the group of four terracotta as horses having a "rare grace."<sup>534</sup> In addition to describing these works, it is clear that Frey wanted to situate Marini within a longer Italian art historical narrative. When Frey likened Marini's sense of "melancholy to a formal "non finito"", though he did not make the reference to Michelangelo explicit, it would have been clear to readers that Frey considered Marini as part of a long Renaissance lineage. Importantly though for the present study, Frey does not articulate Marini's formalism in terms of a revitalization of Renaissance ideals but instead, as the Fascists would have, as a participant in a vague language of *Italianità*. Frey's brief review of Marini's work gave readers a sense of the variety of his most recent works as well as a set of basic terms in which to understand them.

Another article in *Svizzera Italiana*, coinciding with an exhibition at the Basilica in Locarno, the city on the northern tip of Lago Maggiore where Marini was living at the time, described Marini's works as working outside the "isms" of the modern canon.<sup>535</sup> Adolfo Jenni, Italian Language and Literature Professor at the University of Bern, characterized Marini's work as moving beyond the previous inter-war development of European art.

Jenni's description of Marini put the sculptor's work in the most progressive light. For example, he elaborated that Marini's portraits

are actually the person portrayed but they are also something else, more profound, more distant, more generically human. In one head of a man who clearly has Spanish and Mexican in his veins, [Marini] creates a summary, a synthesis that includes certain traits

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<sup>534</sup> Frey, Ugo. "Da Basilea: Figure e disegni di Marino Marini." *Libera Stampa*, Oct. 12, 1945. np.

<sup>535</sup> Jenni, Adolfo. "Marino Marini Ritrattista." *Svizzera Italiana* January (1945): 24.

and ignores others in order to create an impressionistic type from an ancient race that today may be invisible.<sup>536</sup>

For Jenni, Marini created an interpretation of the sitter that only his eye was adapted to seeing. Marini therefore created an image from usually undetectable attributes in the sitter. This kind of description in particular, of Marini's ability to access something unclassifiably primordial, reverberates in later American criticism.

Jenni argued that Marini's work needed to be considered with a new set of criteria.

Marini was both anti-classical and anti-academic:

to demonstrate [Marini's] sources (Greek archaism, primitivism, Etruscan-ism, Gothic, Egyptian art, Aztec art, Negro art, etc.) does not signify anything at its core, because the only thing that matters is what he likes—everything is high stylization, new and immediate impressions of life.<sup>537</sup>

Unlike the other Swiss critics, Jenni's new criteria were based on modern Italian models rather than greater European ones. He defined Marini's aesthetics as "absolutely not in reference to archaic [modernist] models nor to Maillol but [instead] maybe to Medardo Rosso."<sup>538</sup> This rarified Marini as the new of the new that came, not from outside the established modern European canon but instead from the outsider Italian modern tradition. His models were "anti-

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<sup>536</sup> "Questi ritratti sono cioè la persona ritrattata, ma sono anche altra cosa, più profonda, più lontana, più genericamente umana. Da una testa d'uomo che ha sangue spagnolo e messicano nelle vene, ha cavato, con un riassunto, una sintesi, che appoggia su certi tratti e ne ignora altri, un tipo impressionante, oggi forse scomparso, di una antichissima razza." Jenni, *Ibid.*

<sup>537</sup> "...per mostrare le sue fonti (arcaismo greco, primitivismo, etruschismo, goticismo, arte egizia, arte azteca, arte negra, ecc.) non significano in fondo nulla, poiché ci sono solo in quanto a lui piace tutto ciò che è alta stilizzazione, e fresca e immediata impressione di vita." Jenni, *Ibid.*

<sup>538</sup> "Sono queste, artisticamente, le cose sue più belle; e in esse non si riassocia affatto a modelli arcaici e neppure a Maillol, ma forse a Medardo Rosso." Jenni, *Ibid.* There is much to say about the allusion to Rosso here. However, for space I have omitted a broader discussion about Rosso and his reading as anti-academic and central to the Italian modern canon. See: Bacci, Francesca. "Momentary vs. monumental: Medardo Rosso and public sculpture." *Sculpture Journal* 22, no. 1 (2013): 83-96.; Banham, Reyner. *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960. 107-13.; Hecker, Sharon. "Ambivalent Bodies: Medardo Rosso's Brera Petition." *The Burlington Magazine* 142, no. 1173 (2000): 773-77. Rosso also played an important role in the post-WWII American image of Italian art and culture. See: Fabi, Chiara. "1958: Medardo Rosso at the Peridot Gallery, New York." Paper presented at the College Art Association, New York, Feb. 12, 2015.; Guzzetti, Francesco. "Mapping a Discovery: Medardo Rosso and the United States Since 1963." Paper presented at the College Art Association, New York, Feb. 12, 2015.

academic to the max.”<sup>539</sup> By situating Marini as part of an anti-academic Italian strain of modernism, Jenni set him apart from his European contemporaries.

From Belgium to Holland, France and Germany, Marini’s work gained a broad audience in Europe through solo and group exhibitions in the decade after World War Two.<sup>540</sup> As Jenni pointed out, Marini’s leading place among European contemporary sculptors unfolded in the critical reception of his work. The categorization of Marini as such translated to non-Italian-language publications as well. For example, Diego Valeti began his 1945 article for the French-language Swiss publication *Servir Lausanne* writing, “Marino (ce n’est que par son premon qu’on l’appelle dans les milieux artistique italiens)...”<sup>541</sup> Swiss criticism presented Marini as both Italian and European, and exemplary of both.

With the different focus found in Italian criticism, Marini was championed first of all as Italy’s greatest living sculptor. At the same time, Italian critics placed an Italian style of modern sculpture as a new model for Europe in general. For Italian critics, however, this also involved a nationalist motive. Though the Italian reception highlighted Marini’s aesthetic advancements, they focused on the importance of Marini as a leader of a new Italian artistic resurgence after Fascism. Importantly, aligned with the discussion in the second chapter of this dissertation, critics did not see these works as autonomous but as part of a reevaluation of earlier modern works created during the Fascist period.

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<sup>539</sup> Jenni, Adolfo. "Marino Marini Ritrattista." *Svizzera Italiana* January (1945): 24.

<sup>540</sup> Exhibitions in 1946: Basel, Switzerland; in 1947: New York, USA; Lausanne and Lucern, Switzerland; in 1948 Göteborg and Stockholm, Sweden; Madrid, Spain; New York, USA; Venice, Italy; in 1949: (multiple Italian exhibitions); Palm Beach, FL, USA; Philadelphia, USA; in 1950: Amsterdam, Netherlands; Brussels, Belgium; Munich, Germany; New York and Washington D.C., USA; in 1951: Antwerp, Belgium; Arnhem, Arnhem, Netherlands; Hanover and Winterthur, Germany; London, UK; Minneapolis, USA; etc. See: *Marino Marini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 347-48.

<sup>541</sup> Valeti, Diego. "Marino Marini." *Servir Lausanne*, Jan. 6, 1945, np.



For one-time Futurist painter and critic Carlo Carrà, Marini represented innovation.<sup>542</sup> Carrà's description differed from much of the contemporary Swiss criticism by describing Marini as "returning to the plastic motives that were already rich [in his work] but with more conclusive experience."<sup>543</sup> This revelation that his most recent work retained affinities with his Fascist Era production is important. For Carrà, it served to reinforce the importance of the modern Italian art scene as generative. Here some of the Carrà's own personal agenda unavoidably is revealed. Deeply implicated in the early Fascist Regime, Carrà not only would have felt the shift that had occurred in the late 1930s but also would have seen Marini's new sculptural production as both building on and turning away from his interwar production.<sup>544</sup> Therefore, Marini's production was not seen as ahistorical but part of a longer history of Italian modernism.

Carrà's description served both to shed Fascist-Era stigmas and also retain a kind of nationalist spirit that ideologically benefited Italian artistic cachet at this moment in the aftermath of war, presenting a view of post-Fascist Italian modernity. For Carrà, Marini and his contemporaries would be "participating in the formation of a new national art."<sup>545</sup> As an artist himself, Carrà's motivations in calling for a "new national art" are clear. He replayed sentiments expressed by artists during late-Fascism. At the same time, his account placed Marini at the heart of this very call for an artistic resurgence. Carrà articulated how Marini was among those who "characterize out epoch," with clarity and "sincerity."<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>542</sup> Like Jenni, Carrà made the connection back to Medardo Rosso, writing that "on the surface of *Sleeping Man* [Marini] was anticipated by the manner of Medardo Rosso." Carrà wrote, "Nella maschera «Uomo dormiante» si attiene invece alla maniera di Medardo Rosso." Carrà, Carlo. "Marino Marini." *Lettere ed Arti*, no. 3 (1945): 29.

<sup>543</sup> "Così Marino Marini ritorna a motivi plastica che già gli furono cari, ma con più libere conclusive esperienze." Carrà, Ibid.

<sup>544</sup> For Carrà as a Fascist, see: Adamson, Walter L. "Ardengo Soffici and the Religion of Art." In *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy*. Edited by Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. 61-3.

<sup>545</sup> "Marino Marini non è un argomento nuovo per nessuno, essendo egli da tempo considerato una di quelle forse che parteciparono alla formazione della nuova arte nazionale." Carrà, Carlo. "Marino Marini." *Lettere ed Arti*, no. 3 (1945): 29.

<sup>546</sup> Carrà, Ibid.

Lamberto Vitali, in his 1948 article, in English translation for the London journal *Horizon*, adhered to the basic generalities about Marini's work described by the Swiss critics but, like Carrà, situated them more specifically in the contemporary Italian sculptural context. Beginning with Martini's 1945 treatise *La Scultura lingua morta*, Vitali both signaled the impact the text had on sculptors in Italy and described its affect on international discourse. "Martini's conclusions can and ought to be rejected," Vitali proclaimed; since the most recent sculptural developments made by non-sculptors, "the gulf between official or rhetorical statuary, and genuine sculpture, has become more and more accentuated."<sup>547</sup> As I have shown in Chapter Two, Vitali argued that most sculptors had been working within an outmoded sculptural language to which Martini's *La Scultura* attested. However, there were some bright spots in recent developments by sculptors that did not rely on the innovations of painter: "Henry Moore's sculpture might well be a considered attempt to fuse the two opposing conceptions [using both traditional media and new forms]. That of Marino Marini belongs decisively to the use of traditional media."<sup>548</sup> Like Carrà, Vitali looks to place Marini's post-war sculptural production in dialogue with his inter-war work.

Vitali described Marini as creating a kind of *scultura viva* through his innovative use of traditional references, yet in a wholly new way:

It is the sculpture of a Tuscan but one whose taste for essential and sometimes bitter forms makes him at home with the romanesque stone-cutters and the masters of the early fourteenth century in Pisa, Lucca and Pistoia. He never, however, lets himself be trapped by the seductions of traditional systems, which would have been easy—I almost put inevitable—for a temperament less full-blooded and lively than his. Those of his family-tree are numerous and diverse, at least in appearance. They always end up with a decided preference for little modulated and closed forms of expression. One could even add that precisely that kind of coherence has enabled Marini to navigate safely between the hidden rocks of aestheticism—rocks that have sunk many another ship in our time. The work of Marino Marini, enriched by the additions of the last few years, has now become outstanding and demonstrates his way of thinking in pure form. His procedure shows

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<sup>547</sup> Vitali, Lamberto. "Contemporary Sculptors: VII-Marino Marini." Trans: Bernard Wall, *Horizon* 17-18, no. 105 (1948): 203.

<sup>548</sup> Vitali, *Ibid.*, 204.

what his aims are. he sets himself a plastic problem which he develops, elaborates and solves in a series of successive and necessary variations until he reaches final deliverance.<sup>549</sup>

With this description Vitali both shows how Marini overcame the seduction of the Tuscan sculptural heritage and surpassed his contemporaries inside and outside of Italy with his inventive use of form. This will be important to keep in mind in comparison to American critics who continued to praise Marini's formal qualities and, at the same time, praised his specific Tuscan qualities.

Though not as explicit as Carrà, Vitali's article set up Marini as a beacon for sculptural resurgence in Italy after war. Marini, in his post-war maturity, had sidestepped the danger of "becoming a plagiarist of his own mannerisms through mechanically repeating some formula he found at the dawn of his career."<sup>550</sup> At the same time, Vitali, going a step further, set up a comparison between Marini and his comparative contemporary, Henry Moore. Marini, Vitali argued, was more successful in creating a new modernist sculpture. Since Moore won the Premio at the Biennale the year of this article's publication (1948) and had presented a large retrospective at MoMA in 1946, Vitali was clearly making an important statement about Marini and Italian sculptural modernism.

When Vitali discussed Marini's contemporary work, his admiration is evident. Illustrated with the article, Marini's 1947 *Cavaliere* [Figures 2.19] represented part of this older series of works, yet Vitali described a not-illustrated recent "*Cavallo e Cavaliere*."<sup>551</sup> About it, he writes that

its beautiful and rigid stance, deriving from the constant between the vertical lines of the human figure and the horizontal line unfolding without pause from the muzzle to the tail of the horse manifests a fresh feeling of tragedy. The horse stretches its neck and has its

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<sup>549</sup> Vitali, *Ibid.*, 204-5.

<sup>550</sup> Vitali, *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>551</sup> The illustration mis-labels the date as "1937." The Figure is likely a different cast, one of four, that is now at AIC.

mane raised in fright as if it had come across a corpse and the man, whose old impassiveness is broken, turns round and raises his head to the sky.<sup>552</sup>

Vitali took time to consider individual works in this lengthy article in *Horizion*, from the *Cavaliere* to the *Pomone*.

Like Carrà, Vitali signaled the turning point in Marini's sculptural development as coming from his Fascist-Era production. Between 1933 and 1935—earlier than I have posited in this dissertation—Vitali explained that a shift took place in Marini's work. Vitali cited three wood sculptures—"Icaro [Figure 1.2], *Nuotatore* (Swimmer), and *Puglie in riposo* (Prizefighter at rest)"—as being innovative because they were "motionless;" they were all "so to say, closed within the crudity of contrasting profiles both vertical and horizontal."<sup>553</sup> This motionless quality continued particularly in Marini's series of *Cavaliere* in the critic's description. The larger European trends toward archaic modernism also played a part in the beginning, and Vitali wrote that he had previously attributed Marini's

horse [as] the outcome of a strange cross-breeding between the horses of Montelupo vases such as were once used at country fairs in Tuscany, and the terra cotta horses of chinese sepulchral[sic.] ware—with perhaps a dash of the archaic [sic.] foals of the Sheikh of Cairo.<sup>554</sup>

However by 1948, he understood Marini's further development to have been such that these influences disappeared. Note here that Marini's work was seen, even in Italian sources, as referencing a very wide breath of citations; this will play a role in the American reception of his work.

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<sup>552</sup> Vitali, Lamberto. "Contemporary Sculptors: VII-Marino Marini." Trans: Bernard Wall, *Horizion* 17-18, no. 105 (1948): 206.

<sup>553</sup> Vitali, *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>554</sup> Vitali, *Ibid.*, 205-6. MoMA curator James Thrall Soby later lamented that "Marini is both more powerful and more original despite the Ming business." Soby, James Thrall. "Letter to Alfred H. Barr, Jr.," Aug. 24, 1948, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154. Emphasis original to text.

Vitali's article concluded with a shift back to consider Marini as set apart from his contemporaries in Northern Europe. He wrote:

His temperament is a Mediterranean one and reason and the senses are balanced in the equilibrium needed for vitality in a work of art. And his sculpture can accurately be called Mediterranean for it can stand up the the test of the full daylight of the piazza and the garden.<sup>555</sup>

This highlighted the importance of the Italian contribution, represented by Marini, to international sculptural developments. Though Vitali categorized Marini as "Mediterranean" rather than with the national term, Italian, his sentiments paralleled those of Carlo Carrà. Vitali set Marini apart. Not only a beacon for modern sculptural development, Marini's work came from a localized context, and this allowed the sculptor unique opportunities to create new forms, modern forms.

For a final example of post-war Italian criticism, it is necessary to look at the later 1955 book by influential art critic Raffaele Carrieri, *Avant-Garde Painting and Sculpture in Italy*. In some ways Carrieri's description fell in line with his Italian counterparts. However, this later publication reflected an engagement with the shifting international critical discourse rather than just a nationalistic one. Carrieri's 1955 description of Marini moved away from the Italian criticism of the immediate post-war years in important ways. Also, as a large anthology, the purpose of this text differed from those of Vitali and Carrà. It was meant to be a more general survey rather than a critical contribution to the discourses on contemporary art.

In the text, Carrieri devoted an entire section of his book to Marini, as with a number of important modern icons like Arturo Martini. The section on Marini outlined the sculptor's important contribution to the history of Italian modern art.<sup>556</sup> Like Carrà and Vitali, Carrieri's

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<sup>555</sup> Vitali, Lamberto. "Contemporary Sculptors: VII-Marino Marini." Trans: Bernard Wall, *Horizon* 17-18, no. 105 (1948): 207.

<sup>556</sup> Carrieri, Raffaele. *Avant-Garde Painting and Sculpture in Italy (1890-1955)*. Milan: Edizioni della Conchiglia, 1955. 18-9.

reading of Marini's work was inclusive of those created during the Fascist Regime. Carrieri offered a number of brief descriptions of Marini's most important works, including *Icaro*, 1933 [Figure 1.2], and highlighted the major shifts in the sculptor's practice.<sup>557</sup> Of Marini's 1934 visit to Germany, he wrote

Marini journeyed through the old Germany of the Gothic cathedrals; he found in Nuremberg, in Cologne and Frankfurt, in all the places he visited, in the sculptures of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, certain fundamental principles in common with his own constructive work.<sup>558</sup>

Carrieri highlighted the important impact this trip had on the sculptor without either reflecting on the political situation in 1934 Germany nor connecting this visit directly to Marini's *Cavaliere* series, a trope typical in the American criticism. The centrality of Marini's visit to Germany does not appear in Vitali's 1937 monograph and seems paradoxically to have risen to importance within Marini's narrative during the war—perhaps pointing to Marini's effort to continue his alliance with the Regime, as Marinetti had, through complex justifications of the viability of his modernist sculpture.

Another difference is that Marini's *Cavaliere* series, the focus of this study, plays very small role in Carrieri's description of the sculptor. Instead, like the Swiss-critic Jenni, he highlights Marini's portraiture. From early busts of the painter Magnelli and his 1937-38 bust of Melotti to his numerous portrait busts of his American donors in the late 1940s and early 1950s, this series played a central role in Carrieri's presentation. For the critic, Marini does not figure as an exemplary post-war Italian sculptor. This is Carrieri's major divergence from Italian criticism of the immediate post-war period. Instead, Marini figures as one of a number of important figures, including Fontana, who deserve to be placed within the canon of Italian modern art—as

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<sup>557</sup> Carrieri, *Ibid.* 18.

<sup>558</sup> Carrieri, *Ibid.*

described in the introduction of this dissertation, Carrieri situated Marini's work within a discussion of inter-war developments rather than post-war ones.

### **Marini's American Support: Collectors and *Twentieth Century Italian Art***

As critics in Europe praised Marini's new sculpture in the midst of the post-war reconstruction, the US Government set in motion the earliest programs of the Marshall Plan—some of which have been described in the previous chapter. These programs played one part in Marini's exhibition in the United States. Since Italy served as a source of cultural capital for the United States, it held an important place within the Cultural Cold War.

Marini's sculpture found its way into the earliest state-sponsored exhibitions in the U.S., like the 1947 *Handicraft as a Fine Art in Italy*. As described in the previous chapter, these handicraft exhibitions had clear economic implications through the Marshall Plan funded *Campagna Nazionale Artigiana* (CNA) as well as political ones. By focusing on handicrafts as goods to be bought and sold, the political ramifications of these programs participated in a broad public discourse. Marking the beginnings of the "Made in Italy" brand, the outcomes of this state support related both to the material production and its strategic critical reception inside the U.S. and Italy.

Within the fine art sphere, State support remained covert during the period. However, its ramifications had very real effects. Through a complex combination of direct and indirect government-sanctioned initiatives the economic effects of American support for Italian fine art played a significant role in the shifts in criticism and collecting in the immediate post-WWII period. The reverberations of Cold War political rhetoric later became imbedded in the art historical legacy of modern Italian art. In particular, the web of public-private support of

Italian art came together in the activities of the newly-established Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

As with many modern museums, private collectors and capital in conjunction with academic guidance created the now-iconic Museum of Modern Art in New York. In the midst of the Depression, a number of prominent art collectors organized the new museum headed by Rockefeller matriarch Abigail (Abby) Aldrich Rockefeller, wife of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.<sup>559</sup> After Abigail Rockefeller and her partners, Lillie P. Bliss and Mary Quinn Sullivan, approached A. Conger Goodyear to manage their museum venture, they immediately proceeded in search of a museum director.<sup>560</sup> On advice from Paul Sachs, Director of the Fogg Museum at Harvard University, they approached Sachs' former student now teaching at Wellesley, Alfred H. Barr.<sup>561</sup> Art and architecture critic Aline B. Saarinen<sup>562</sup> outlined in her study of American art collecting that “the museum [to become MoMA] would be an educational institution, would arrange exhibitions, dispatch shows on the road and have a collection “permanent as a stream is permanent—with a changing content”.”<sup>563</sup>

The most important characters in the early history of MoMA also became the earliest American collectors of Marini. Abigail Rockefeller owned a *Cavaliere* by 1947 [Figure 2.18], and

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<sup>559</sup> See the “Museum History” of MoMA at <http://www.moma.org/about/history>, accessed 9 Mar. 2014.

<sup>560</sup> Bliss was a textile heiress. An avid art collector, she helped organize the 1913 Armory Show before getting involved with Rockefeller in the MoMA venture. Sullivan was likewise a prominent collector of modern art, having studied under Roger Fry at the Slade School of Fine Art in London. Later, she married prominent New York lawyer, Cornelius J. Sullivan.

<sup>561</sup> Saarinen, Aline B. *The Proud Possessors*. New York: Random House, 1958. 364-365.

<sup>562</sup> Aline B. Saarinen, née Aline Bernstein, married architect Eero Saarinen in 1954, taking his last name. She will be referred to by her previous married name, “Aline B. Louchheim,” elsewhere in the dissertation. Louchheim is the surname of her first husband, Joseph H. Louchheim, whom she divorced in 1951. Under this earlier married name she published a number of articles as the art and architecture critic for the *New York Times*.

<sup>563</sup> Quotation source is not cited by Saarinen. Saarinen, *Ibid.* 365.



the work was included in the *Twentieth Century Italian Art* show at MoMA.<sup>564</sup> Likewise, her son Nelson Rockefeller, later MoMA's Director, bought a number of Marini's works: first a *Cavaliere* in 1950 and then two portraits the following year.<sup>565</sup> Curators at MoMA also personally collected Marini's works. James Thrall Soby purchased a *Cavaliere* in 1948 and a *Dancer* a year later in 1949 [Figure 4.4], while finalizing the exhibition checklist for *Twentieth Century Italian Art*.<sup>566</sup>

The connections and influence of members of MoMA's founding families during and after WWII placed them and the new museum at the center of the Cultural Cold War. MoMA's post-war Director Nelson Rockefeller, later 41st Vice-President of the United States (1974-77), worked with the U.S. intelligence agencies during WWII and continued in covert operations after the war.<sup>567</sup> As the younger Rockefeller took over duties at MoMA from his mother in the post-war years, he drew upon his U.S. intelligence network for appointments to the museum's administration.<sup>568</sup> Therefore, on a structural level, politics and art were closely entwined at MoMA. Marini's earliest collectors and curators actively participated in the growing Cultural Cold War.

As has already been elaborated in this and the previous chapter, Italian cultural production was one of the foci of Marshall Plan support. However, there was interest in Italian modern art coming from the U.S. before WWII. As early as 1933, curator Alfred H. Barr was

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<sup>564</sup> See: Soby, James Thrall. "Registrar's List: Italian Show As of March 1, 1949," Mar. 1, 1949, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154.; \_\_\_\_\_. "List of Non-Italian Lenders to Exhibition," Sept. 13, 1949, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154.

<sup>565</sup> See: Rockefeller, Blanchette. Letter to Marina and Marino Marini, Feb. 14, 1950, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID88, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.; \_\_\_\_\_. Letter to Marino Marini, Feb. 20, 1950, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID88, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.

<sup>566</sup> Soby, James Thrall. Manuscript: "My Life in The Art World" Part 2, in *James Thrall Soby Papers*, VIII.A.2, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. 20.8.

<sup>567</sup> Saunders, Frances Stonor. *The Cultural Cold War. The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*. New York: The New Press, 1999. 135-139.

<sup>568</sup> Saunders. *Ibid.* 137.

interested in holding an exhibition of Italian contemporary art—a desire he abandoned in 1940 because he “frankly did not want to collaborate with Fascist Italians.”<sup>569</sup> In fact, the United States had a variety of financial and ideological interests in Italy before the war that translated into the wide breath of support from them after the war.

Despite its opacity at the time, U.S. State support of Italian fine art had similar economic and political ramifications to the more transparent support of handicraft industries. The post-war Venice Biennale is the most apt example. Marini was directly involved with the first two post-war Biennales as one of the eleven Fine Art Commissioners (1948 & 1950).<sup>570</sup> Alongside the most important artists, critics, and intellectuals in Italy, the new Venice Biennale was clearly set out to reestablish Italy’s place within the international community. As art historian Nancy Jachec writes:

Consolidating the centre, winning increased support from persuadable leftists, and strengthening its link with Europe were some of the ways in which that [Italian DC] government responded to these combined threats, using culture, and, specifically painting as a particularly persuasive medium on behalf of these goals. ...The fine arts were therefore unique in the field of Italian cold war culture in that they formally embodied the specific ideological debates at the heart of the national government’s chief policy concerns. Thus the Venice Biennale’s status as Italy’s sole and highly prestigious international fine arts exhibition meant that it was particularly suited to address them.<sup>571</sup>

The U.S. State Department played a central role in the reestablishment of the Biennale. Though they only presented work in the Film Festival until 1950, because of their perceived “communist problem,” American interests were represented by Peggy Guggenheim’s collection in the 1948 Biennale and after the 1952 exhibition Nelson Rockefeller was asked to formalize the American

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<sup>569</sup> See: Alfred H. Barr, Jr. "Memo to Monroe Wheeler and James Thrall Soby," May 23, 1945, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153. Quotation from: Alfred H. Barr, Jr. "Letter to Charles Rufus Morey," Apr. 24, 1948, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154. 1.

<sup>570</sup> Bazzoni, Romolo. *60 Anni della Biennale di Venezia*. Venice: Lombroso Editore, 1962. 139-40.

<sup>571</sup> Jachec, Nancy. "Anti-Communism at Home, Europeanism Abroad: Italian Cultural Policy at the Venice Biennale, 1948-1958." *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 2 (2005): 196-7.

contribution and make MoMA the administrator of the American Pavilion (1954-62).<sup>572</sup> This marked an important point in representing the United States abroad and the exhibitions under their purview “relied on stylistic diversity to demonstrate the range of expression permissible within a true democracy.”<sup>573</sup> MoMA played a direct role in cultural warfare in Europe through their exhibitions in Venice.

Italy needed to be taken seriously as a legitimate Western European nation. Italy was not alone in this. Jachec states that

[c]hallenging the idea that it [the Council of Europe] was ‘apolitical and amoral’, by 1957, Léopold Senghor, the spokesman for the WEU [Western European Union], ranked culture alongside military defense as a means of protecting European unity, seeing it as the source of power, and capable of creating new values.<sup>574</sup>

Trans-Atlantic exhibitions, like the Italian-based Venice Biennale, propagated a new image of modern Italy. This ideological reoriented Italy away from both its Fascist legacy and its late-19th and early-20th century reputation as a country of backwards peasants.

The administration of the U.S. contribution to the Venice Biennale was not the only task given to MoMA. Clearly, the institution held a central place in the complex Cultural Cold War both at home and abroad, and was approached in May of 1945 by Charles Rufus Morey, newly-appointed American cultural attaché in Italy and Acting Director of the American Academy in Rome, to sponsor an exchange of American and Italian painters.<sup>575</sup> Though this initial artistic

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<sup>572</sup> Jachec. Ibid. 197, footnote 14.; \_\_\_\_\_. *Politics and painting at the Venice Biennale, 1948-1964*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007. 3.

<sup>573</sup> Jachec, Nancy. *Politics and painting at the Venice Biennale, 1948-1964*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007. 3.

<sup>574</sup> Jachec, Ibid. 4 Also See: Schmidt, Oliver. "Small Atlantic World: U.S. Philanthropy and the Expanding International Exchange of Scholars after 1945." In *Culture and International History*, edited by Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher, New York: Berghahn Books, 2003. 115-34.

<sup>575</sup> See: Alfred H. Barr, Jr. "Memo to Monroe Wheeler and James Thrall Soby," May 23, 1945, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153.; Wheeler, Monroe. "Letter to Charles Rufus Morey," July 6, 1945, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153.

exchange request was rejected by MoMA's exhibitions committee, behind the scenes an idea for an exhibition of Italian art had already been on the agenda since before the war. In the proceeding year, Monroe Wheeler, Director of Exhibitions and Publications planned an exhibition of contemporary Italian art for MoMA with oversight by Morey's office in Italy.<sup>576</sup> By the next year, 1946, the plans for an exhibition of contemporary Italian art had been approved and the exhibition was officially put on the museum's calendar.

In April 1946, Wheeler informed the co-curators of the exhibition, Alfred H. Barr Director of Collections and James Thrall Soby Director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, that the American Office of International Information and Cultural Relations (OIC) in Rome had "approved" funding for the planned exhibition of Italian modern art.<sup>577</sup> This letter also outlined the OIC-funded exploratory mission to Italy for Barr and Soby to compile a most up-to-date list of exhibitors. Early on, the OIC and the State Department's Paul Hyde Bonner facilitated the initial financial and foreign intelligence support for the planning of the exhibition.<sup>578</sup>

With the interest of the MoMA curatorial staff and the financial backing of the U.S. Government, the largest exhibition of Italian art in the United States was organized. *Twentieth Century Italian Art* would showcase over two-hundred works of painting, sculpture, prints and drawings, giving the exhibition a truly grand scale. Though it focused heavily on earlier-twentieth-century artistic developments, including work of the Futurists and *Scuola Metafisica*, a

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<sup>576</sup> Wheeler, Monroe. "Memorandum to Alfred Barr and James Thrall Soby," April 17, 1946, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153.

<sup>577</sup> Wheeler, Ibid.

<sup>578</sup> See: Wheeler, Monroe. "Letter to Charles Rufus Morey," Feb. 24, 1947, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153.; Bonner, Paul Hyde. "Letter to Monroe Wheeler," Oct. 8, 1947, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153.

number of post-WWII works were included. Italian sculptors garnered particular attention. Marini, Manzù, Martini, Fontana, and other sculptors had works included in the exhibition and many of their works were pictured in the catalogue. The exhibition included six sculptures by Marini, along with a number of drawings—the sculptures included: *Prizefighter*, 1935; *Nude [Young Girl]*, 1943; *Portrait of Lamberto Vitali*, 1945; *Horse and Rider*, 1947; *Portrait of Carlo Carrà*, 1947; and *Horse and Rider*, 1948 [Figures 2.18-19, 4.5-9].<sup>579</sup>

Despite its initial financial support by Marshall Plan funds, the organizers of *Twentieth Century Italian Art* quickly distanced themselves from any official government connections. Unlike *Handicraft as a Fine Art in Italy* before or *Italy at Work: her renaissance in design today* a year later, which boasted in both exhibition catalogues and press releases their collaborating government-funded organizations, the MoMA exhibition did not divulge this information. In confidential letters to Morey and other cultural elites in both governments, the curators emphasized over and over the importance of their public image as objective, portraying MoMA's exhibition as unallied to either government, U.S. or Italy.<sup>580</sup> This served two purposes: first, it freed their choice of individual artists and works, for example including artists like the ardent-socialist Renato Guttuso, from

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<sup>579</sup> Soby, James Thrall, and Alfred H. Barr Jr. *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1949. 131.

<sup>580</sup> See: Alfred H. Barr, Jr. "Confidential Memo to Monroe Wheeler and James Thrall Soby," Jan. 29, 1947, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154.; \_\_\_\_\_ "Letter to Charles Rufus Morey," Mar. 25, 1948, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153.; \_\_\_\_\_ "Letter to Charles Rufus Morey," Apr. 24, 1948, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154.; Wheeler, Monroe. "Letter to Charles Rufus Morey," Feb. 24, 1947, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153.; Zevi, Bruno B. "Letter to Alfred H. Barr, Jr.," Feb. 17, 1947, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153.

conforming to either states' ideology; and second, it reflected an important rhetoric of professional objectivity that was propagated in the exhibition's texts.<sup>581</sup>

Presenting the exhibition as without any government involvement served the greater purpose of Marshall Plan funds in the first place, as it reflected an image of inter-national democratic corporation that was free of political allegiances. However, the museum's independent curatorial vision when choosing included works was a hard pill to swallow for many Italian collectors and intellectuals. This was reflected most poignantly in a number of petitions received by MoMA curators recommending shifting the exhibition towards certain artists, particularly older, more established ones. Artists like Guttuso and Marini, still in their early careers, were seen to be merely commercial ventures that were replacing established examples of Italian modern art, like Carlo Carra's post-Futurist work. The Italians felt that these more established artists better reflected an Italian modern canon which they wanted to portray in the first important international museum exhibition outside of Italy since the war.<sup>582</sup> Among the many petitions, the most forceful pleas came from the Director of the Pinacoteca di Brera, Fernanda Wittgens.<sup>583</sup> In one letter, she argued that other private institutions who were

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<sup>581</sup> Tellingly, in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1939 address at the ten year anniversary of MoMA's creation, he proclaimed that: "As the Museum of Modern Art is a living museum, not a collection of curios [sic.] and interesting objects, it can, therefore, become an integral part of our democratic institutions — it can be woven into the very warp and woof of our democracy. Because it has been conceived as a national institution, the museum can enrich and invigorate our cultural life by bringing the best of modern art to all of the American people. ...And most important of all, the standards of American taste will inevitably be raised by thus bringing into far-flung communities results of the latest and finest achievements in all the arts."Advancing Roosevelt's sentiments, the 1949 MoMA catalogue claimed to enrich American knowledge and culture as well as bring a democratic reading of Italian modern art. Both of these high-minded goals feed directly into the early activities of the Cultural Cold War. See: Roosevelt, Franklin Delano. "Transcript of Roosevelt's Address on Museum of Modern Art (Herald Tribune), President Rockefeller, Friends of the Museum of Modern Art," May 11, 1939, Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF 3153. 1.

<sup>582</sup> See: Soby, James Thrall. "Memo, re: Italian Show to Monroe Wheeler," Feb. 9, 1949, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Paper. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154.

<sup>583</sup> Wheeler, Monroe. "Letter to Charles Rufus Morey," Feb. 24, 1947, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153.; Wittgens, Fernanda. "Letter to Alfred H. Barr, Jr.," Jan. 26, 1949, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154.

organizing shows simultaneously had not eschewed such input from Italian scholars.<sup>584</sup> However, it was not lack of Italian input that Wittgens truly disapproved of but instead her judgement was focused on the artists initially chosen by the Americans. They were too contemporary and therefore related too closely to the market. She felt that this exhibition should instead reflect an already established canon of modern Italian art.

There were, however, a number of Italian collaborators. They mainly sourced from a group of Milanese collectors and gallerists connected with a friend of Wheeler's, Angelo Toninelli. Headed by Toninelli, the Milanese group *Circolo delle Arte*, named the *Tre Grazie* in a later iteration, comprised a number of important commercial gallerists and collectors in the city.<sup>585</sup> For Wittgens in particular, these gallerists and collectors were too entrenched in the commercial aspects of the contemporary art market to make objective suggestions for exhibition content. Though not stated explicitly, this may not have been her only objection in reality. Among the *Circolo delle Arte* group were the Ghiringhelli brothers, directors of the important *Il Milione* gallery in Milan—the same the exhibited Melotti's early *Sculture* series in 1935 [Figures 0.5-6, 1.6, 2.5-6]. The brothers were at the center of a still developing conflict in post-war Italian history since they had been accused of helping deport resistance fighter-artists after the liberation of Rome when the North of the country was still under German occupation. Though they were officially acquitted of wrong doing, their pro-Fascist activities were well known and made some uneasy.

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<sup>584</sup> Wittgens, Fernanda. "Letter to Alfred H. Barr, Jr.," Jan. 26, 1949, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154.

<sup>585</sup> Toninelli, Angelo. "Letter to Monroe Wheeler," Dec. 27, 1946, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154.

Barr and Soby, cognizant of this recent history, asked the advice of Italian architect and scholar, Bruno Zevi. In his lengthy response, he wrote a description of the events as he knew them which illustrated the complications that came with working in Italy at the time.

You were kind enough, however, to ask my opinion as to whether you might proceed to work with [the Ghiringhellis]. This is a very difficult question, and I do not feel able to answer it. It is a matter of feeling about Fascists and anti-Fascists, and I would not like that my personal opinion might impair an activity of the Museum. This opinion is naturally strictly personal and confidential for you. ...Then came the amnesty done by the new King Umberto. After strong protests on the part of the anti-Fascist parties, something incredible happened. Togliatti, chief of the Communist Party, then Minister of Justice, perhaps in order to show that the Communists were better forgivers than the King, proposed a law of general amnesty. Fascist leaders, criminals of all sorts came out of prison. Obviously by this time, everybody like the Ghiringhellis were absolved. Who could punish them after such a scandal? The problem not is this [*sic.*]: should we speak of Fascists and anti-Fascists anymore, or should we forget the whole question, and start all over again? It is a decision difficult to take. The Ghiringhellis are working in Italy and there is no legal reason why they should not work in the States. Let us suppose that they are really guilty (if they were not Fascist criminals, Fascists they certainly were, and to be Fascists in 1944, when the Allies were in Italy, is certainly showing little political sensitivity; at that time nobody could make such mistakes honestly). Well, a lot of people are making business also with the States, who have a dirtier past than the Ghiringhellis. On the other side: why should the Museum choose the Ghiringhellis when there are different and better galleries and people in Italy who could do the same and an even better job with them? I would hate to see somebody accuse the Museum of collaborating with ex-Fascists.<sup>586</sup>

It is clear from his response to MoMA's curators that Zevi understood not only that this issue pointed to larger socio-political currents in Italy but that it also would remain unresolved even if the MoMA committee choose to exclude these important gallerists from the organizing committee. In the end, the *Circolo delle Arte*, with the Ghiringhellis, remained an important source of information for the organization of *Twentieth Century Italian Art* exhibition.

The exhibition opened for museum members on June 28th 1949. As the "Forward" to the *Twentieth Century Italian Art* catalogue outlined,

[t]his book and the exhibition on which it is based have been planned as a general introduction to modern Italian art. The field is one that we in America have tended to

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<sup>586</sup> Zevi, Bruno B. "Letter to Alfred H. Barr, Jr.," Feb. 17, 1947, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3153. 1-2.



neglect, not only because of our rightful interest in our own contemporary painting and sculpture, but also because of two formidable counter-attractions in Europe—the Parisian present and the Italian past.<sup>587</sup>

The exhibition both pointed to and tried to move beyond important prejudices about Italian modern artwork: first, it was not Parisian and therefore not part of the Modern canon; and, second, Italy's glorious past had produced artwork that outshone any being done in the present. This easily-digestible narrative connected existing American sensibilities of European high culture to the work of these modern Italian artists.

Set up to appear as an educational endeavor, the MoMA curators proceeded to *teach* American viewers about twentieth century developments. Centralizing the impact of the Italian Futurists, their historical moment served as an illustrative counterpoint to the contemporary post-WWII one. The text claimed that another liberation was happening to Italian art in 1949:

The climate for art is propitious in Italy just now, with the shackles of Fascist isolationism rusting empty on the ground, and we have sought—again without claim to finality—to indicate what directions the newer creative impetus is taking.<sup>588</sup>

*Twentieth Century Italian Art*, therefore, sparked Italian artistic resurgence just as Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto had in 1909.

This pre-WWI analogue for post-WWII modernism held a central place within the exhibition's didactic text. Since the majority of the work displayed originated from before the Second World War, MoMA's intervention both remedied the American ignorance of modern Italian art and created interest in the best new aesthetic innovations that they were fostering in their critical support. Moving through the Futurists, the Scuola Metafisica, and the Novecento, *Twentieth Century Italian Art* presented a thorough view of the major developments in Italian modernism.

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<sup>587</sup> Soby, James Thrall, and Alfred H. Barr Jr. *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1949. 5.

<sup>588</sup> Soby et al, *Ibid.* 5.

The description of the Novecento group is particularly important to the present study. Barr and Soby laid out the narrative of pre-1945 Italian art in terms of a formalist view of modernism that separated art from any political context.<sup>589</sup> *Twentieth Century Italian Art* described the work of Mario Sironi, for example, as having “an archaic formalism, the result perhaps of his earlier preoccupation with large-scale fresco and mosaic decorations.”<sup>590</sup> Despite the thoughtful handling of Fascist-era art, the Fascist period was vividly described as a moment of stifled creativity. As described in the *Forward*,

[the] climate for art is propitious in Italy just now, with the shackles of Fascist isolationism rusting empty on the ground, and we have sought—again without claim to finality—to indicate what directions the newer creative impetus is taking.<sup>591</sup>

Despite this, the *Novecento* “proposed a revival of more traditional subjects and techniques; it hoped to recapture the inspirational solemnity of the great Italian past.”<sup>592</sup> The catalogue described Novecento artists as being “unquestionably affected by the Fascist regime[...which] imposed a certain provincialism on Italian painters by officially rewarding their more chauvinistic efforts and by discouraging cultural ties with the outside world.”<sup>593</sup> Though, it rightly pointed out that Fascist support of the arts “did not emulate the harsh Nazi persecution of “modern” artists until after the outbreak of the recent war,” the awkward handling of Margherita Sarfatti and her *Novecento* group reflected the complicated stance taken by MoMA curators.<sup>594</sup> Mimicking the way in which Italian critics handled the Fascist production of Marini however, the MoMA text

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<sup>589</sup> Art historian Sybil Gordon Kantor explains how Alfred Barr’s view of modern art ‘paved the way for Greenberg’ through this type of exhibition style. See: Kantor, Sybil Gordon. *Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002. 323-31.

<sup>590</sup> Soby, James Thrall, and Alfred H. Barr Jr. *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1949. 27.

<sup>591</sup> Soby, James Thrall, and Alfred H. Barr Jr. *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1949. 5.

<sup>592</sup> Soby, et al. *Ibid.* 27. Emphasis original to text.

<sup>593</sup> Soby, et al. *Ibid.*

<sup>594</sup> Soby, et al. *Ibid.* Emphasis original to text.

denounced the totalitarian regime at the same time as showcasing Fascist era artworks in order to present contemporary production as new.

When considering contemporary post-war artistic production, the exhibition's Cold War influences were more evident with its representation of Italy's "shackles of Fascist isolationism" being broken by American intervention. This newly found freedom allowed for vibrant democratically-led creativity just as Marinetti's manifesto had in the beginning of the century. Marino Marini held a central place in this construction. Barr and Soby emphasized that Marini's "presence in Italy today is an extraordinary asset in the resurgence of creative impetus among the younger men."<sup>595</sup> Marini alongside Giacomo Manzù and Arturo Martini made up the "Three-M's," as they were termed.<sup>596</sup>

The "Three-M's" exemplified the best of contemporary sculptural production and symbolized a fresh start for the brand new Italian Republic. Arturo Martini was described as "erratic" and his work was portrayed as an eclectic bringing together of "primitive and Mannerist sources."<sup>597</sup> Included in the show was his terracotta *The Fisherman's Wife* [Figure 4.10]. Though no real discussion of the work accompanied its illustration in the catalogue, Martini's innovative use of media showed through in its utilization of the earthly medium to conjure both the wife's separation from her water-bound husband and also a metaphoric connection to an Etruscan heritage. Using more traditional media, the Fascist-era *Daedalus and Icarus* [Figure 4.11] challenged the bronze medium's canonical characteristics. Here Martini contested the perceived permanence of bronze and showed it melting away like Icarus's wings.

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<sup>595</sup> Soby, et al. Ibid. 33.

<sup>596</sup> Soby, et al. Ibid.

<sup>597</sup> Soby, et al. Ibid.

Martini's famous 1945 treatise *La Scultura lingua morta*'s absence from the MoMA description was the most striking feature. Despite the memorial to Martini at the 1948 Venice Biennale being described in the exhibition text, the special second edition of *La Scultura* was not.<sup>598</sup> In the important article published discussing Martini's treatise two years earlier in 1948 by Vitali—who corresponded with the curators about the show—was likewise absent from the text.<sup>599</sup> By leaving out Martini's treatise on sculpture, the exhibition glossed over one of Martini's important contributions to debates about the future of sculptural modernism.

Second, the youngest of the “Three-M's,” Giacomo Manzù was portrayed as the youthful idealist, “a different kind of sculptor altogether—warm, tender, romantic, belonging to older sculptural traditions.”<sup>600</sup> Highlighting his use of ecclesiastic imagery, the catalogue elaborated that “Manzù [was] a deeply religious man.” Only one of his *Cardinals* represented this series [Figure 4.12]—and none of his iconic series of dancers [Figure 4.13] appeared. Manzù's more representative works were sidestepped for the presentation of his 1941-42 *Christ and the German Soldier* [Figure 1.15].

Part of a unique series of friezes, this work's singularity made it a telling choice for the curators to highlight. In *Christ and the German Soldier*, Manzù portrayed a naked German soldier, as proxy for a Roman one, in the scene of Christ's crucifixion. This work was not a simple religious work, but instead an overtly political work created in war-time Fascist Italy. It functioned as a critique of the Regime by likening their Axis Alliance with the Roman persecution of Christ in the Biblical tale.

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<sup>598</sup> Soby, et al. Ibid. 131.

<sup>599</sup> See: Vitali, Lamberto. "Contemporary Sculptors: VII-Marino Marini." Trans: Bernard Wall, *Horizon* 17-18, no. 105 (1948): 203-07.; Soby, James Thrall. "Letter to Lamberto Vitali," Feb. 3, 1949, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154.

<sup>600</sup> Soby, James Thrall, and Alfred H. Barr Jr. *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1949. 33.

This work's inclusion showed, for Barr and Soby, the traditional language of representation in which Manzù worked. Bronze reliefs with religious imagery could be easily consumable by an international audience in the MoMA exhibition regardless of specific political meanings. Therefore, the curatorial choices reflected a wider undercurrent in contemporary artistic production: a return to traditional iconography. Instead of highlighting artistic resistance under the Fascist Regime, the exhibition's somewhat ambiguous treatment, "[during] the recent war [Manzù] courageously executed a fine series of bas-reliefs on the Crucifixion, in one of which the mocking soldier is a helmeted German infantryman"<sup>601</sup> served a second purpose had the description not been so covert, the central idea theme of the exhibition that American intervention brought cultural freedom to a post-Fascist Italy would have crumbled.

Lastly, Marino Marini was singled out from the "Three-M's" as a guiding light for young Italian sculptors [Installation view, Figure 4.14]. The *Twentieth Century Italian Art* catalogue introduced his work as "notable for its steady growth in eloquence and authority."<sup>602</sup> Barr and Soby wrote that Marini was "one of the few major figures of his generation in European sculpture" with a reputation for being "[a]n immensely cultivated man, who [had] lived much abroad and traveled widely..."<sup>603</sup>

Included in the exhibition, and also acclaimed by Lamberto Vitali as among Marini's first mature works in his oeuvre, *Prizefighter [Puglie/Boxer]*, 1935 [Figure 4.5] represented Marini's earlier Fascist-era production. Four of the five additional works represented Marini's contemporary post-war production, including two portraits of Marini's championing critics, Carrà and Vitali and two *Cavaliere*. The *Horse and Riders*, as they were titled in the exhibition

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<sup>601</sup> Soby, et al. Ibid. 34.

<sup>602</sup> Soby, et al. Ibid. 33.

<sup>603</sup> Soby, et al. Ibid.

showed two forms of the artist's famous theme [Figure 4.9]. Both made of bronze, Rockefeller's 1947 work represented a static horse, whose head juts straight out ahead [Figure 2.18]. Though its body is rigid, Marini's placement of the horse's front legs suggested an anticipation of forward movement. While the horse looks ahead, presumably to the future as in his *Angelo della Città* [Figures 0.19, 4.1-3], the rider looks skyward. With his hands hanging in front of him, the rider's body made a straight vertical line juxtaposed to the horizontal of the horse. In addition to these striking lines, the form of this sculpture is indicative of Marini's use of a canonical sculptural medium. As I have described in detail in Chapter Two, through a series of pre-casting mark making and the post-casting treatments, Marini not only gave a tapestry of textures but transformed the appearance of the object's physical form. Some marks suggest illusionistic depictions of clothing and riding paraphernalia, while others create an illusion of contour and shadow that contradicts the natural shapes of the bronze.

In the reviews that the exhibition elicited, the reading of Italian art for the most part followed the program set up by the MoMA texts.<sup>604</sup> *New York Times* art critic Howard Devree's review titled "Italian Modernism: Futurism to the Present in Museum Show" gave an overall view of what was included in the exhibition. His review also pulled out Marini as an interesting example to consider. Though the sculpture of Manzù and Percile Fazzini got highest acclaim and images of their work were reproduced in the newspaper, Devree wrote that Marini's *Cavaliere* referenced a "strange antique Chinese admixture."<sup>605</sup> For Devree, Marini's *Cavaliere* were part of an international modern archaism.

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<sup>604</sup> Most of the publications were shorts published the New York newspapers that were derived from MoMA press releases. This also included a publicity campaign about the Museum acquisition of many of the works from the exhibition. See: "Modern Art Museum Buys Italians' Works." *New York Times*, Sept. 14, 1949, 29.

<sup>605</sup> Devree, Howard. "Italian Modernism: Futurism to the Present In Museum Show." *New York Times*, Jul. 3, 1949, X6.

The success of this grand American exhibition likewise garnered press in Italy. In a lavishly illustrated article for the Milanese magazine *Il Tempo*, Raffaele Carrieri praised the show which “200 thousand Americans” visited in just the first two-and-an-half months.<sup>606</sup> The exhibition, he wrote, “arrived late! Late, but arrived well.”<sup>607</sup> Highlighting the exhibition’s widespread success, Carrieri reaffirmed that it was high time Italian art was being put in the international spotlight. Since it was now being reproduced in important international news outlets, it could reach an even wider audiences “not talking [in] specialized publications and art magazines” but major newspapers. Carrieri praised “A success, a huge success!”<sup>608</sup>

One of the major foci of the article was the publicity of Italian contemporary art afforded by the MoMA exhibition. More than any previous endeavor, this exhibition’s influence showcased Italian contemporary art. A second focus of the article was the non-Governmental Italian input into the exhibition,

on the part of the Italian Government, their support was never made to promote initiatives that would make our painting known abroad. Moreover, this exhibition was realized through the initiatives of a private citizen, Romeo Toninelli, Milanese industrialist, admirer and collector, and editor of art books.<sup>609</sup>

For Carrieri, the Italian Government showed “indifference to the problem of exporting art.”<sup>610</sup>

The politics of the exhibition of fine art during the Cultural Cold War clearly shines through.

The scope of the exhibition also held importance for Carrieri, writing that from “Milan to Rome, from Florence to Venice” artists of all types were chosen.<sup>611</sup> This included “significant personalities like Campigli, Marini, Sironi, Martini, Tosi, De Pisis, Scipione,” fulfilling of a long

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<sup>606</sup> Carrieri, Raffaele. “200 mila Americani per l’arte italiana contemporanea.” *Il Tempo*, Sept. 17-24, 1949, 18.

<sup>607</sup> “Siamo arrivati tardi! Tardi, ma bene.” Carrieri. *Ibid.*

<sup>608</sup> Carrieri. *Ibid.*

<sup>609</sup> “Non c’è da parte del governo italiano nessun incoraggiamento a promuovere iniziative che facciano conoscere all’estero i nostri pittori. E anche questa Mostra se si è realizzata lo si deve all’iniziativa di un privato cittadino, a Romeo Toninelli, industriale milanese, amatore e collezionista, editor di libri d’arte” Carrieri. *Ibid.* 19.

<sup>610</sup> Carrieri. *Ibid.* 18.

<sup>611</sup> Carrieri, *Ibid.* 19.

fight for the recognition of Italian contemporary art.<sup>612</sup> Though individual works or artists did not receive specific treatment in Carrieri's article, three of the six large photographs reproduced in the article showed works of art being admired by American visitors at MoMA. At the top of the article, an installation view showed Marini's 1947 *Cavaliere* being gazed upon by a young woman [Figure 4.15]. The caption reads: "It is at least monumental, at most polemical."<sup>613</sup>

Both American and Italian critics saw the MoMA exhibition as a great success and, as one of the most important living artists, Marini always held a key spot in this characterization. The exhibition of his work at *Twentieth Century Italian Art* set the framework in which Marini's work was understood in the United States. Its formal attributes were foregrounded as advanced and modernist. Additionally, though he was widely seen as the most prominent Italian sculptor in Italy at the time, his work was legitimated for an international audience through his inclusion in this exhibition. The MoMA exhibition presented his work as part of an international dialogue about post-war international modernism.

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<sup>612</sup> Carrieri, *Ibid.*

<sup>613</sup> Carrieri, *Ibid.* 18.



## Marino Marini's Fame in the United States

The success of Italian artists on the American market after the MoMA show, added to preexisting collecting interest in modern Italian art.<sup>614</sup> Marini in particular benefited, becoming not just a symbol of modern Italian sculpture but of post-war European modernism. Alongside Henry Moore, who had already been widely exhibited and collected during the war with a large retrospective at MoMA in 1946, American collectors wanted Marini to round out their collections of European modern art.<sup>615</sup> Collected by Mary Gates Lloyd (Henry Gates Lloyd was on the board at MoMA), Lyonel and Julia Feininger, Walter A and Elisa S. Haas, A. Conger Goodyear (MoMA's founding Chairman), and Alexandre Rosenberg, just to name a few, Marini received commissions and sold existing works to dozens of prominent American collectors on the East and West Coasts. Paralleling Melotti's collaboration with modernist architects, Marini's work was chosen by a number of collectors to complement their modernist homes, designed by the best contemporary architects. For example, department store owner and philanthropist Edgar Kaufmann had his *Cavaliere* installed at his brand new house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright,

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<sup>614</sup> Even as the MoMA exhibition was being organized, a number of prominent citizens in New York called on the Museum's curators to help organize such a show. In a note to Barr, Roberta "Bobby" Fansler Alford, at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, forwarded a request from a Sofia Richards for help with the organization of a show of recent Italian paintings. Significantly, Alford forwarded Richards' request to MoMA because she knew that it was "an idea that has already interested the State dept.[...] apparently to bring over from Italy a show of Italian paintings of the late 19th and 20th centuries." Alford went on to say that Richards had "a good many pretty valuable lines out and a number of people [were] interested in it..." Richards was not alone in her desire to organize a show of Italian art, Eleanor P. Blow was in the midst of organizing an exhibition of Italian art. also had contacted the publisher Roger W. Straus, Jr. about a similar show. What this shows is the larger interest in Italian modern art at the time, not just from the two governments but by the New York collecting elites. Alford, Roberta "Bobby" Fansler. "Letter to Alfred Barr," Mar. 11, 1946, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF 3153. Also See: Straus, Roger W., Jr. "Letter to Irene Guggenheim," Nov. 25, 1946, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF 3153.; Wheeler, Monroe. "Letter to Eleanor P. Blow," Nov. 27, 1946, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF 3153.; \_\_\_\_\_. "Letter to Eleanor P. Blow," Dec. 1, 1946, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF 3153.

<sup>615</sup> See: Rose, Pauline. *Henry Moore in America : art, business and the special relationship*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2014.

known as Fallingwater.<sup>616</sup> Wright himself placed Kaufmann's *Cavaliere* at the Bear Run stream under the house's cantilever.<sup>617</sup> Likewise, Blanchette Rockefeller's "little modern house" in Manhattan displayed Marini's *Cavaliere*—Blanchette would become MoMA President in 1972. The "little modern house" she referred to was a guest house designed by Phillip C. Johnson (1949-50), built with the express interest to both display Blanchette's collection of modern art—and also entertain guests. Located on 242 East 52nd Street in New York, it has been designated a historic landmark and is now owned by MoMA.<sup>618</sup>

For a time, Marini became the *it* sculptor to own for public and private collectors at least in part because he represented the most advanced European contemporary art. Even more than with Moore, Marini represented a clearer connection to a long humanist tradition connecting the United States to the Renaissance and Ancient Rome. Marini symbolized for these collectors the culturedness of the American elite because his works reflected connections to democratic high culture and, just because of his being Italian, to a tradition of so-called "Western Culture."

Though the United States perceived itself as the inheritor of this tradition, it was just beginning

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<sup>616</sup> There is some uncertainty as to the date of this work since there are no surviving records at Fallingwaters. Teresa Meucci claims that the Guggenheim example was the first )Meucci, Teresa. "Marino Marini e Curt Valentin: La fortuna dello scultore in America." *Quaderni di scultura contemporanea*, no. 8 (2008): p.8) while, in his unpublished memoir, James Thrall Soby claimed that Peggy Guggenheim's *Angelo della Città* [Figure 4.1] came second after Kaufmann's horse. See: Soby, James Thrall. Manuscript: "My Life in The Art World" Part 2, in *James Thrall Soby Papers*, VIII.A.2, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. 20.7. A third and final cast was made in 1950 for Dr. C. J. Engels in Curaçao, then bought in 1971 by Broadway and film producer Ray Stark, now at the Getty [Figure 4.2]. See: Bedford, Christopher. "No. 18 Marino Marini, Angel of the Citadel - Horse and Rider - Town's Guardian Angel." In *The Fran and Ray Stark Collection of 20th-Century Sculpture at the J. Paul Getty Museum*, edited by Antonia Boström, 118-21. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008.

<sup>617</sup> "Marino Marini's Horseman, part of the Kaufmann outdoor sculpture collection, was lost during a flood at Bear Run in August of 1956. In the Bruno Zevi's *L'architettura* (agosto 1962) the author indicates that the sculpture was placed over the Bear Run by Wright. Fallingwater houses the fragments found in the stream after the flood in its offsite storage." Carapella, Aleksandra. Email Correspondence with Fallingwater's Curator of Collections. July 31, 2013.

<sup>618</sup> See: Rockefeller, Blanchette. Letter to Marina and Marino Marini, Feb. 14, 1950, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID88, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.; Postal, Matthew A. "Rockefeller Guest House." Research Department. New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2000. Available at: [http://www.neighborhoodpreservationcenter.org/db/bb\\_files/00-ROCKEFELLER-GUESTHOUSE.pdf](http://www.neighborhoodpreservationcenter.org/db/bb_files/00-ROCKEFELLER-GUESTHOUSE.pdf) [Accessed: June 17, 2014]

to generate its own contemporary artists who could stand up to their European counterparts. Therefore, at the very beginnings of the Cold War, Marini's work represented for American collectors an important participation in high culture. With this, they fought against the image propagated by the Soviets of the U.S. as "culturally barren."<sup>619</sup>

Marini's 1950 solo-show at his New York dealer Curt Valentin's Buchholz Gallery only heightened Marini's popularity. As well as sparking a wider critical reception of the sculptor, this exhibition allowed collectors to see a much larger variety of works. Valentin, a German-Jewish immigrant who came to the United States in 1939, opened his gallery soon after escaping the Nazi Regime—in 1951 he was forced to change the gallery's name from Buchholz Gallery to the Valentin Gallery to avoid a suit with his former colleague, Karl Buchholz, still in Berlin.<sup>620</sup> Before the war in Germany and continuing after his emigration to in the U.S., Valentin represented the so-called "Degenerate" artists and was particularly important for European sculptors trying to find a place in the American market.<sup>621</sup> His importance and influence was described as a "renaissance [in] the appreciation of sculpture in America."<sup>622</sup>

For the 1950 show, Marini and his wife Marina traveled to New York, dining with Nelson Rockefeller and his wife, visiting Louisa and Alexander "Sandy" Calder at their Connecticut

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<sup>619</sup> Saunders, Frances Stonor. *The Cultural Cold War. The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*. New York: The New Press, 1999. 19.

<sup>620</sup> Meucci, Teresa. "Marino Marini e Curt Valentin: La fortuna dello scultore in America." *Quaderni di scultura contemporanea*, no. 8 (2008): 8.

<sup>621</sup> Meucci. *Ibid.* 9 Also See: Fabi, Chiara. "1958: Medardo Rosso at the Peridot Gallery, New York." Paper presented at the College Art Association, New York, Feb. 12, 2015.

<sup>622</sup> Meucci. *Ibid.*

home,<sup>623</sup> staying at Fallingwater—Marini was caught in the middle of the night working on *Angelo della Città* down by the stream<sup>624</sup>—and dining with Blanchette Rockefeller, wife of John D. Rockefeller III at their Manhattan Guest House.

Valentin's 1950 exhibition, Marini's first solo exhibition in the United States, consisted of work from Marini's Swiss period and immediately following his return to Milan in 1946.<sup>625</sup> Therefore, unlike the MoMA show, this exhibition presented the most recent works from his oeuvre. Twenty-seven bronzes created between 1942-49, a *Cavaliere* in wood, and almost two dozen drawings and lithographs were presented.

A polychrome wood version of the 1947 Abigail Rockefeller bronze work exhibited at MoMA adorned the catalogue's cover for the show and its subsequent review by Sam Hunter [Figures 2.18, 4.16-17].<sup>626</sup> This work was the linchpin in Valentin's presentation of the sculptor's work and he insisted that Marini refuse a call from Brussels to exhibit the work there instead.<sup>627</sup> The large scale of the Buchholz Gallery show afforded Valentin room to showcase the greater variety of innovative works by the sculptor. This wood *Cavaliere*, though identical in subject and

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<sup>623</sup> Calder had met Marini previously at the Biennale the same year, 1950. He had wrote the Marini about his trip in May and had begun to learn Italian in anticipation of Marini's visit to the States. After the Marini's visited Calder and his wife at their home, the two sculptors exchanged a number of correspondences over the next few years. See: Calder, Alexander (Sandy). Letter to Marina and Marino Marini, Apr. 7, 1950, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID142, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.; \_\_\_\_\_. Letter to Marina and Marino Marini, 1951, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID141, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.; \_\_\_\_\_. Letter to Marina and Marino Marini, July 11, 1952, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID175, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.; \_\_\_\_\_. Letter to Marino Marini, 1953, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID222, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.; \_\_\_\_\_. Letter to Marina and Marino Marini, 1954, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID274, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.

<sup>624</sup> James Thrall Soby recounted in his never-published autobiography that Marini admitted that, ““I'm very afraid of refinement in my sculptures,” he had said, “so I like to roughen up the bronzes a bit after they've been cast.”” Later, Soby caught Marini chiseling Kaufmann's new *Cavaliere* and “I yelled for Edgar Kaufmann, and he and I managed to lure Marini back into the house.” See: Soby, James Thrall. Manuscript: "My Life in The Art World" Part 2, in *James Thrall Soby Papers*, VIII.A.2, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. 20.7.

<sup>625</sup> Cavadini, Luigi. "Marino in Switzerland." In *Marino Marini*, Translated by Georgina Dennis. Edited by Pierre Casè. Milan: Skira, 2000. 29-39.

<sup>626</sup> Hunter, Sam. "European Sculpture. Work by Modern Artists -- Painters in Contrast." *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1948, X13.

<sup>627</sup> Meucci, Teresa. "Marino Marini e Curt Valentin: La fortuna dello scultore in America." *Quaderni di scultura contemporanea*, no. 8 (2008): 10.

composition, gave a dramatically different effect from its bronze sibling. Its painted surface created a greater vibrancy and movement. Like other similar works, the paint did not merely offer an illusionistic representation of clothing or the animal's coat, instead it played with space and form. The textured wood surface, highlighted with paint, constantly oscillated between the figurative and the abstract.

In addition to the seven *Cavaliere* of varying types and sizes, three of Marini's *Pomona* series were included. These Etruscan goddesses were all table-top size, ranging from around sixteen inches in height. The 1943 *Small Pomona* bronze [Figure 4.18-19], illustrated in the catalogue, reflected the typical style of these works. A nude female figure with wide hips and full thighs stands in contrapposto. Here the figure's hands are up at her head, as if she had been bathing or fixing her hair, though this is not typical of his figures of *Pomona*. As with the other bronzes of this period, at first glance the handling is Rodinesque but the mixture of marks that reference something other than the artist's hand subjugate this simplistic reading. Even in the black and white reproduction in the catalogue [Figure 4.18], the strangeness of the markings shone through. This *Small Pomona* has a series of markings on her face that neither represent the figure's face nor a mode of making. Instead they are reminiscent of symbolic mark-making, but one that cannot be labeled or tied down.

Marini's bread and butter, his portraits, were also heavily represented. The works chosen also reflect the market for these works in the United States. Copies of famous personalities would be commissioned in multiple, for example those of Carlo Carrà or Marini's wife, while at the same time collectors commissioned portraits of family members. The *Portrait of Nelly* [Soby] from 1948 [Figure 4.20] was likely commissioned on the MoMA curator's first tour of Italy in 1947. As with Jenni earlier, Soby highlighted Marini's description of the work as "an impression, often

instantaneous, whose impact I try to reserve,” thereby connecting Marini to Rosso’s own conception of sculpture.<sup>628</sup> The work’s sense of Rosso’s influence is particularly evident in the modeling of the hair that creates a frontality to the work. As with Marini’s other portraits, there is both a sense of naturalism, that this is a recognizable image of the sitter, coupled with an interpretation of their personality. Nelly Soby’s prominent nose is slightly lifted, giving the portrait a sense of style and presence.

The text for the Buchholz Gallery catalogue, written by none other than MoMA’s *Twentieth Century Italian Art* curator James Thrall Soby, gave more of Marini’s own perspective than had the earlier catalogue. Soby wrote: “We were talking in Marini’s modern apartment in Milan, a city which favors his intense working schedule because it provides a surrounding contemporary energy, of life and industry.”<sup>629</sup> Keeping in mind that Hans Namuth’s film of Jackson Pollock painting was filmed the following year in 1951, Soby’s focus on Marini’s studio and working environment, if brief, fits into a larger interest in process that captivated American audiences and critics alike.

In addition to giving a very visual description of the artist’s working environment, Soby explicitly situated Marini’s work in the Italian humanist tradition of

the equestrian monument of Marcus Aurelius in the Piazza del Campidoglio at Rome; the medieval sculpture of Giovanni Pisano and Tino da Camaino; the huge wooden horse that served as the model for Donatello’s *Gattamelata*; the paintings of Paolo Uccello.<sup>630</sup>

Soby quoted Marini as saying:

It is necessary to preserve the emotion which generates an image. You cannot do so by posing a model, for then you get lost in details that weaken or discolor the original emotion. My sculpture starts from an impression, often instantaneous, whose impact I try

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<sup>628</sup> Jenni, Adolfo. "Marino Marini Ritrattista." *Svizzera Italiana* January (1945): 24.

<sup>629</sup> Soby, James Thrall. "Marino Marini." In *Marino Marini, February 14 - March 11, 1950*, edited by Buchholz Gallery. New York: Curt Valentin, 1950., 1.

<sup>630</sup> Soby, Ibid. 1-2.

to reserve. I include details only if they confirm the impact, as in the case of the rings on the fingers of this woman in bronze—*very Italian*. I saw the woman herself in the fields, a large woman with powerful legs. She stood like this, and I remember her, and now here is her sculpture.<sup>631</sup>

Marini's "enthusiasm" for iconic Italian sculptural types gave a strong footing to his place as inheritor to an Italian artistic patrimony. Closest to Lamberto Vitali's description of Marini, Soby's introduction to Marini's references reinforced an image of Marini as inheritor of the grand humanist tradition.

In addition to contextualizing the sculptor's subject matter, Soby's essay situated Marini within a larger landscape of contemporary sculpture. Marini's work was set in contrast to his more well-known contemporary, Henry Moore. Soby wrote that Marini's "philosophy is different from Moore's [...] in that he shows little faith in the modern doctrine of "truth to material".<sup>632</sup> Soby explained that Marini's patina referenced the making of the sculpture when the "plaster sticks to the bronze after casting."<sup>633</sup> His works' materiality also referenced duration, Soby explained, because the plaster and wax, left over from the casting process, would deteriorate over time. Marini described this process as passing "from sensuality toward music."<sup>634</sup>

This distinction between Marini and Moore at this early stage shifts latter on in the century as the debates shift to the Trans-Atlantic rivalry between European-types and American-type sculptural modernism hashed out between Greenberg and Read. Soby's detailed description of the material aspects of Marini's works went farther than the previous english-language descriptions. At the same time, it deviated from the Italian descriptions that focused on form rather than the material. This signaled a broader historical understanding of modernist ideals for

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<sup>631</sup> Soby, *Ibid.* 3. [emphasis added]

<sup>632</sup> Soby, James Thrall. "Marino Marini." In *Marino Marini, February 14 - March 11, 1950*, edited by Buchholz Gallery. New York: Curt Valentin, 1950. 3. [emphasis original to text]

<sup>633</sup> Soby, *Ibid.*

<sup>634</sup> Soby, *Ibid.*

sculpture. From Rodin to Hildebrandt, the debates between modeled versus direct carving held an importance place in sculptural discourse.<sup>635</sup>

The exhibition at Curt Valentin's Buchholz Gallery garnered Marini a number of commissions from American collectors in addition to numerous group shows across the country.<sup>636</sup> In the five years immediately following Valentin's exhibition, Marini added to his collector base the New York architect Ed Bullerjahn,<sup>637</sup> President and Chairman of Levi Strauss & Co. Walter A. Haas,<sup>638</sup> modern art collector Eleanor "Lallie" Biddle Barnes Lloyd,<sup>639</sup> and then Director of the St. Louis Art Museum Perry T. Rathbone<sup>640</sup> among many others.<sup>641</sup> Another collector Mrs. Charles Grace, so excited by her new purchase of a fighter, sent Marini's dealer, Curt Valentin, a photograph of her riding with it in their car during a 1952 move [Figure 4.21].<sup>642</sup> Also among his continued American clients were the Rockefellers. Nelson Rockefeller

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<sup>635</sup> See: Hildebrand, Adolf von. "from *The problem of Form in the Fine Arts.*" In *Modern Sculpture Reader*, edited by David Hulks & Alex Potts Jon Wood, Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007 (1893). 1-12.

<sup>636</sup> Italian collector Emilio Jesi lamented even that his commission would not be fulfilled in a timely manner because of all Marini's new American clients. See: Jesi, Emilio. Letter to Marino Marini, Aug. 22, 1945, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID17, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.

<sup>637</sup> Bullerjahn, Ed. Letter to Marino Marini, July 13, 1953, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID246, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.

<sup>638</sup> Barr, Alfred H., Jr. Letter to Marino Marini, May 2, 1951, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID145, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.; Haas, Elisa S. Letter to Marino Marini, Aug. 28, 1951, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID149, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia

<sup>639</sup> Lloyd, Lallie. Letter to the Marino & Marina Marini, Mar. 15, 1951, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID154, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia. Also see: Lloyd, H. Gates. *Selected Works from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. H. Gates Lloyd*, University of Pennsylvania. Institute of Contemporary Art: Philadelphia, 1967.

<sup>640</sup> Valentin, Curt. Letter to Marina Marini, May 11, 1954, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia

<sup>641</sup> See list of works included from American collectors: Eisendrath, William N., Jr. *Contemporary Italian Art. Painting, Drawing, Sculpture*. St. Louis: City Art Museum of St. Louis, 1955.; and *Marino Marini. Sculpture and Drawings*. Cincinnati Art Museum. Cincinnati: Cincinnati Modern Art Society, 1953. Marini was also collected by a number

of major museum collections, including the Tate Gallery in London. See: Allen, Ronald. Letter to Marino Marini, Oct. 15, 1953, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID250, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.; Valentin, Curt. Letter to Marino Marini, July 14, 1951, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID144, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.

<sup>642</sup> Grace, Mrs. Charles. Note to Curt Valentine with Photo, 1952, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID210, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.



added to his collection of Marini with two new portraits in 1951.<sup>643</sup> Marini also gained the attention of American universities for a teaching engagement.<sup>644</sup>

Though the MoMA exhibition elicited a number of general reviews, it was this 1950 exhibition at Buchholz that elicited a broadest critical response to Marini's work in the United States. The response was so strong that Gino Ghiringhelli wrote to Marini soon after the exhibition opened to say that the massive interest might result in a second edition of the sculptor's monograph.<sup>645</sup> Mimicking the rhetoric of Soby's texts, both for the Buchholz and the MoMA catalogues, these exhibition reviews set out to show the importance of the sculptor both as representative of modernity and as part of the ancient lineage of European high culture. In general, the reviews reiterated Marini's importance as conveyer of the humanist tradition through his Italian, and sometimes even Chinese, references. They also went further than earlier reviews in giving a detailed description of Marini and his work to a broader American audience.

By tracking the historiography, it has become clear to me that Marini quickly embraced these readings, even taking them a step further by constructing his own artistic identity as a rustic Tuscan, a *true* Etruscan sculptor. At this point, Marini's formal training at the Accademia di belle arti di Firenze or his established critical status in Italy disappeared from the American discourse. As one of the major shifts in the critical discourse coming from the United States, Marini's image as a rustic tuscan sculptor paralleled the emphasis on Henry Moore's working class roots.<sup>646</sup>

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<sup>643</sup> Rockefeller, Nelson. Letter to Marino Marini, Feb. 12, 1951, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID213, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.

<sup>644</sup> It is unclear from the archives whether or not Marini ever did teach courses in the United States. Permissions were made from the Italian government to vacate his position at Brera temporarily but any other archive evidence is missing. See: Boubous, Franco. Letter to Marino Marini, Jan. 31, 1950, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID91, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.; Ministro della Pubblica Istruzione. Letter to Marino Marini, Mar. 28, 1950, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID106, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.; Marini, Marino. Letter to the Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 1950, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID129, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.; Candiani, Paolo. Letter to Marino Marini, Mar. 4, 1952, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID99, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.

<sup>645</sup> Ghiringhelli, Gino. Letter to Marino Marini, March 8, 1950, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID128, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.

<sup>646</sup> Rose, Pauline. *Henry Moore in America : art, business and the special relationship*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2014. 15-19.

Under the subtitle “Modern with Tradition,” art critic Howard Devree immediately set the tone of the critique of Marini’s solo exhibition. Devree designated the relationship between modernity and tradition as the most important aspect of the work of the sculptor. He explained that Marini, “seems to me to have been remarkably successful in effecting a fusion of tradition and modernism, both in spirit and form.”<sup>647</sup> In these vague terms, therefore, Marini’s work reflected a kind of archaism that both brought together references from the Italian humanist tradition alongside extra-European traditions.

As with his earlier mention of the sculptor in his review of the MoMA exhibition, Devree claimed a correlation between Marini’s works and Han dynasty Chinese bronzes.<sup>648</sup> Not stopping there, Marini became, for Devree, a symbol of a multifarious ancient lineages coalescing in modern art. He wrote that

[a]cross space and time certain artists seize upon forms which are always there. A Han dynasty Chinese, an Egyptian of the great age, and ancients Cretan, a medieval guildsman and a contemporary America may share in this.<sup>649</sup>

More than merely a connection to the general trend of archaism within modernism, Devree raised up Marini’s work because the sculptor used the whole world as referent. For Devree, Marini became the consummate modern artist, whose appeal could be universal. As with MoMA’s Cultural Cold War rhetoric, Devree’s description of Marini made the sculptor a linchpin between ancient humanist traditions and “contemporary America.”<sup>650</sup>

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<sup>647</sup> Devree, Howard. “Diverse Modernism: Early and Recent Paintings by Picabia—Marini’s sculpture—John von Wicht,” *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1950, p. X9

<sup>648</sup> Devree wrote that “a single figure in a Ghiberti relief may recall something evanescently Hindoo [*sic.*], so a flicker of Ghiberti lingers in a Marini head, and something old Chinese is recalled by his horse and riders—something, perhaps, of the rough Tibetan pottery funerary figures.” All of these multifaceted aspects were “indelibly Marini.” Devree. *Ibid.*

<sup>649</sup> Devree. *Ibid.*

<sup>650</sup> Devree. *Ibid.*

More traditional aspects of Marini's themes were modernized by the sculptor's contemporary references. Devree recounted the story that James Thrall Soby used to describe Marini's *Cavaliere* in the Buchholz catalogue that the early WWII bombings of Northern Italy inspired this series in Marini's oeuvre. Therefore, Marini combined modern observation with more traditional aspects "not put at the service of literal transcription but metamorphosed into his own individual style."<sup>651</sup>

Since Marini came to the United States for the opening of the Buchholz show, he met many of the collectors and critics. The review by Aline Louchheim reflected this.<sup>652</sup> As Devree had, Louchheim highlighted the duality in Marini's work between old and new. This theme held a central place throughout the lengthy review. Louchheim described Marini's work as a "revelation," saying that he "rediscovered plastic values and expressed them in wholly contemporary terms"—a sentiment that closely allied with contemporary Italian readings of Marini's sculpture.<sup>653</sup>

Early in the article, Louchheim moved away from a description of the artist's work to his person. For her the traditionalism highlighted by other American critics was not confined to Marini's sculptural production, Louchheim portrayed Marini, the artist, as the exotic other from another era. He was, in her estimation, the Tuscan prototype artisan and his very physiognomy reflected this connection to an older time. Under the heading "The Tuscan," Louchheim wrote that,

[t]he moment you meet him you know he comes from Tuscany. You try to decide specifically what this agile face recalls. The gently sensual lips, the delicate retroussé nose, the steeply arched eyebrows, the high forehead—was the ancestor one of the Florentines who wind through the fairy-tale landscapes of the Val d'Arno in Benozzo Gozzoli's fresco,

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<sup>651</sup> Devree. Ibid.

<sup>652</sup> Aline Louchheim is earlier referred to by her second-married-name "Saarinen." See note 562.

<sup>653</sup> Louchheim, Aline B. "Tradition and the Contemporary." *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1950, X9.

or one of those whose pristine profiles was caught by Antonio Pollaiuolo? Or, as you look at the sprightly eyes and the black hair curling down the nape of the neck, is this a descendant of Verrocchio's "David"?<sup>654</sup>

Marini's work, even in absentia, could be understood through the artist's own physical appearance. Marini's archaism was personal, literally part of his body. Louchheim's description used his facial characteristics as proxy for the works' Italian humanist qualities.

When she began to turn toward a description of the work itself, his personal identity as Tuscan remained the focus of Louchheim's description. She wrote:

When you speak to this sculptor, his Tuscan background and temperament are confirmed. For he speaks in terms of plastic values, in terms of the expressive power of bold form and the discoveries and point of departure of Masaccio and Donatello and, as the Italian critic Lamberto Vitale [*sic.*] points out, of the even earlier romanesque stonecutters and the masters of the fourteenth century in Pisa, Lucca and Pistoia are remembered, especially Giovanni Pisano. It is this belief that the Italian temperament is eternally grounded in the definitive and the construction—almost in an architectural concept—by which Marini explains the "new renaissance" of sculpture in Italy.<sup>655</sup>

Vitali's reading of Marini was far less heavy handed and his exotic appeal became the overarching theme of Louchheim's review, contrasting with both Soby and Devree in their descriptions of Marini's references.

Louchheim outlined Marini's aesthetic criteria as: tuscanness; formalism, meaning that his works were neither molded or carved, but in a way "constructed;" and trauma, or "a sense of bewilderment after the war."<sup>656</sup> Deviating from Soby's model by not referencing any WWII bombings, she went further to represent Marini's *Cavaliere* as reflections of war in general.

Louchheim wrote that "the horse became a symbol of the most helpless, terrified and lost of living creatures, the rider tragically letting himself be led, his arms in resigned agony." The most

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<sup>654</sup> Louchheim. *Ibid.*

<sup>655</sup> Louchheim. *Ibid.* Louchheim's reference to Vitali's description, she was likely referencing his 1948 article in the London-based publication *Horizon*. See: Vitali, Lamberto. "Contemporary Sculptors: VII-Marino Marini," *Horizon*. no. 105 (September, 1948), p. 203-207. However, she might have also been referring to the monograph, the first on Marini, published in Italian before WWII. \_\_\_\_\_. *Marino Marini : 33 tavole*. Edited by Giocanni Scheiwiller, Arte Moderna Italiana N. 29. Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1937.

<sup>656</sup> Louchheim. Aline B. "Tradition and the Contemporary." *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1950, X9.

recent riders began to show hope, Louchheim explained. Marini was quoted as saying that “[in] a recent horse and rider—which is not in the exhibition [at the Buchholz Gallery]—the rider lifts his hands to the sky to welcome life.” Harking back to the way in which MoMA presented his work, Louchheim ahistoricized any references. Like the Fascist ideal of *Italianità*, Marini was the epitome of the vague “Tradition and the Contemporary.”

For Louchheim, Marini’s last sculptural characteristic was his “symbolic form” that highlighted the universality of Marini’s work. Unlike Devree, Louchheim described Marini as offering a sense of “awesomeness” and a depiction of humanity rather than a menagerie of world references.<sup>657</sup> These aspects were revealed through plastic form, with “a debt to the Etruscans” that was not merely archaism:

[c]ertainly Marini has not simply reused or even renewed traditional plastic forms. He has grown from them to something new, personal, and contemporary. His statements, too, are both timeless and acutely of our time. And in a conception which welcomes life even in the midst of the most profound despair, there is a majesty in which a whole world can take hope.<sup>658</sup>

Here akin to Vitali’s description, Louchheim placed Marini at the center of this resurgence of plastic values with links to the past but that were also wholly new and applicable to the contemporary context.

After this initial wave of overwhelmingly positive criticism, the next American critic to consider Marini’s was the critic Clement Greenberg. In 1952, Greenberg considered Marini in an effort to set new terms for sculpture as an autonomous medium. Subsequent studies of the sculptor incorporated Greenberg’s new criteria for advanced sculpture when investigating Marini’s work.

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<sup>657</sup> Louchheim. Ibid.

<sup>658</sup> Louchheim. Ibid.

In the essay, “Feeling Is All,” Greenberg’s first description of Marini signaled the coming dramatic shift in the critical reception of sculptor’s work. True to Greenberg’s form, he began this review of Matisse’s latest show at the Museum of Modern Art (1951-52) with discussions of “honesty” in art, all while reinforcing the hierarchy of painting over sculpture. Matisse, Greenberg argued, had come to sculpture through a use of the decorative in a moment of uncertainty in his painting.<sup>659</sup> This move from craft paralleled other sculptor’s recent work—Greenberg discussed Gerhard Marcks specifically but also mentioned Rodin, Maillol, Lehmbruck, and Kolbe as having been part of this trend. Matisse however did not succeed in his sculpture, as Marcks had with his “[tautness] of feeling... flattening out of convexities and concavities.”<sup>660</sup>

As a brief aside, Greenberg mentioned Marini in association with Ben Shahn and Giacometti. Marini, in this initial characterization was described by Greenberg as two-times removed from the most advanced sculpture—first in medium and second in form. In contrast to the “strongest [aspects] in post-Cubist art,” these European sculptors reflected the “flashiness” utilized to move past the artistic “strain” of the moment.<sup>661</sup> In the end, Greenberg presented a broad criticism of European advancements in sculptural modernism. For him Matisse’s flight of fancy into sculpture was one reaction to this post-Cubist moment, a moment in which Americans later flourished.

Greenberg’s next and much more in depth consideration of Marini came later that year. In the summer edition of *Art News*, Greenberg began to outline his conception of a post-war modern sculptural ideal in the seminal essay, “Cross-Breeding of Modern Sculpture.” In the

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<sup>659</sup> Greenberg, Clement. "Feeling is All (1952)." In *The Collected Essays and Criticism*. Edited by John O'Brian. 4 vols. Vol. 3. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986-1993. 99-101.

<sup>660</sup> Greenberg. *Ibid.* 102.

<sup>661</sup> Greenberg. *Ibid.*

introductory paragraph, the terms for Greenberg's analysis were clearly set out. There have been two simultaneous "rebirths" in sculpture, one via Brancusi and Picasso and the second via the "old Gothic-Renaissance tradition of sculpture."<sup>662</sup> Importantly, though sculpture was reborn, painting sparked this reemergence. "The connection of sculpture and painting is closer today than for a long time in the past," Greenberg explained.<sup>663</sup>

After a lengthy review of historic precedents for the meeting of painting and sculpture, Greenberg went on to discuss nineteenth century sculpture, marking the shift towards modern sculpture. He wrote that "under the tutelage of painting," sculpture began a rebirth after three-hundred years of remaining largely unrecognized.<sup>664</sup> This trend "culminated in Rodin," who's sculpture "became loose and spontaneous."<sup>665</sup> Rodin, as the furthest "traditional" sculptor of the period, sparked the Avant-Garde's "notion of a maximum "aesthetic purity"."<sup>666</sup> Greenberg described the next generation of Rodinesque sculptors, including Maillol, Despiau, Lehmbruck, Kolbe and Marcks, as being

indebted at the same time to painting for a certain approach to proportion and shape— [they] carved and modeled now with an eye to simplified, abiding, compact form that would call back to mind the original block of stone or lump of clay. Brancusi drove this canon to an ultimate conclusion, and suddenly arrived back at architecture—and painting.<sup>667</sup>

In contrast, Greenberg described how, "the new, "open" sculpture," was "pictorial" and "[tended] to converge toward architecture ...more than anything else."<sup>668</sup> Simultaneously, "new" sculpture and advanced "traditional" sculpture were being created by twentieth century

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<sup>662</sup> Greenberg, Clement. "Cross-Breeding of Modern Sculpture (1952)." In *The Collected Essays and Criticism*. Edited by John O'Brian. 4 vols. Vol. 3. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986-1993. 107.

<sup>663</sup> Greenberg. Ibid.

<sup>664</sup> Greenberg. Ibid. 110.

<sup>665</sup> Greenberg. Ibid.

<sup>666</sup> Greenberg. Ibid.

<sup>667</sup> Greenberg. Ibid. 111.

<sup>668</sup> Greenberg. Ibid.

sculptors. Here Greenberg singled out, what he termed as the “Italian archaicizers” as taking up where Rodin had left off:

Marini, Manzù and Fazzini—have talent, especially the latter two, but it is all they can do to produce work that transcends superficiality and fashion; and whether Europe has other younger sculptors in the traditional line capable of doing more than they is not clear.<sup>669</sup>

Along with the aforementioned traditional sculptors (Maillol, Lehmbruck, Marcks, et al.), Greenberg’s “new” sculptors, the American “constructor-sculptors,” would soon be recognized as superior.

In essence, Greenberg set up American production as superior to European. Though he acknowledged their skills in terms of the traditional canon, Greenberg claimed that European sculptural achievements were nothing new, and he devoted the first half of the essay to recounting the ancient origins of their characteristics to hammer home this point. The American David Smith was “the most powerful yet subtle sculptor” of this new type while the “Italian archaicizers” were merely kicking a dead horse.<sup>670</sup>

In its labeling of Marini, Manzù and Fazzini as “Italian archaicizers,” Greenberg made Marini and his contemporaries synonymous with their nationality. Though a focus on Marini’s Italianness was also central to Aline Louchheim’s portrayal of the sculptor, Greenberg’s characterization carried a far different tone. Their connections to the history of Italian culture jeopardized their ability to be truly modern for Greenberg, rather than being a desired aspect. It is clear that in the early 1950s, the broader critical landscape was rapidly changing.

Despite Greenberg’s initial Communist leanings, he was embroiled in a post-WWII conservative backlash against the newly perceived Communist threat.<sup>671</sup> This paralleled the

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<sup>669</sup> Greenberg. *Ibid.* 112.

<sup>670</sup> Greenberg. *Ibid.*

<sup>671</sup> See: Bloom, Alexander. *Prodigal sons: the New York intellectuals & their world.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. 47. ; Saunders, Frances Stonor. *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters.* New York: The New Press, 1999. 158.



about-face for the *Partisan Review*, one of the magazines in which Greenberg frequently published, that saw the publication's pro-democratic American allegiance at the very start of WWII. More still, the connection between the *Partisan Review* and the American CIA has been well documented.<sup>672</sup> After 1937, the "new" *Partisan Review* fostered the ideals of radical liberalism.<sup>673</sup> As part of the larger group that ran the Congress for Cultural Freedom at the behest of the CIA,<sup>674</sup> the *Partisan Review* supported a wide range of "literary and political figures, including Philip Rahv, William Phillips, Lionel Trilling, Diana Trilling, Meyer Shapiro, Clement Greenberg, Harold Rosenberg, Dwight Macdonald, Elliot Cohen, and Sidney Hook."<sup>675</sup>

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<sup>672</sup> See: Bloom, Alexander. *Prodigal sons: the New York intellectuals & their world*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. 261-2.; Troy, Thomas M.Jr. "Review of "The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters," by Frances Stonor Saunders." *Studies in Intelligence* (2000), <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol46no1/article08.html>. [Accessed: July 7, 2014]

<sup>673</sup> Bloom, Alexander. *Prodigal sons: the New York intellectuals & their world*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. 71.

<sup>674</sup> "The ex-CIA official Thomas Braden's admissions included the direct role the CIA took in both the congress and its magazine. "We had placed one agent in a European-based organization of intellectuals called the Congress for Cultural Freedom," Braden reported in the *Saturday Evening Post*." Bloom, Ibid. 267. Also see: Gienow-Hecht, Jessica C.E. "Culture and the Cold War in Europe." In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume 1*. Edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 398-419.; Krabbendam, Hans, and Giles Scott-Smith. "Introduction: Boundaries to Freedom." In *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960*. Edited by Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, The Intelligence Series. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003. 2.; Lucas, Scott W. "'Total Culture' and the State-Private Network: A Commentary." In *Culture and International History*. Edited by Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher. New York: Berghahn Books, 2003. 209.; Lucas, W. Scott. "Revealing the Parameters of Opinion: An Interview with Frances Stonor Saunders." In *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960*. Edited by Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, The Intelligence Series. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003. 15-40.; Saunders, Frances Stonor. "Modern Art was CIA 'weapon'." *The Independent*, 22 October 1995.; Saunders, Frances Stonor. *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*. New York: The New Press, 1999.; Schmidt, Oliver. "Small Atlantic World: U.S. Philanthropy and the Expanding International Exchange of Scholars after 1945." In *Culture and International History*. Edited by Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher. New York: Berghahn Books, 2003. 121.; Wilford, Hugh. "Calling the Tune? The CIA, The British Left, and the Cold War, 1945-1960." In *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960*. Edited by Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, The Intelligence Series. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003. 44-46. For examples of the Congress for Cultural Freedom writings, see: Aron, Raymond. "Nations and Ideologies." In *The Future of Freedom*, 1-21. Milan, Italy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1955.; Freund, Michael. "Tradition and Freedom." In *The Future of Freedom*, 158-65. Milan, Italy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1955.; Kohn, Hans. "Rethinking Nationalism." In *The Future of Freedom*, 345-56. Milan, Italy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1955.; Litt, Theodor. "Reason, Tradition and Freedom." In *The Future of Freedom*, 147-57. Milan, Italy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1955.

<sup>675</sup> As historian Alexander Bloom argues, the "New York Intellectuals [like Greenberg] began as radicals, moved to liberalism, and sometimes ended up as conservatives. But they were always intellectuals. *Partisan Review* started as a magazine dedicated to radical literature and then rededicated itself to radical culture, only outside the world of the proletarian literature and Communist party politics. The New Yorkers held out for the preeminence of art, not devoid of social context but reflective of it. ...Furthermore, they held strongly to ideas about the special and crucial role for critics and for intellectuals in general." Bloom, Alexander. *Prodigal sons: the New York intellectuals & their world*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. 6-7.

Reflected in his descriptions of new post-WWII art, Greenberg's "great American theme"<sup>676</sup> was clearly apparent. By focusing on the dichotomy between "new" American sculpture and its "old" European counterpart, Greenberg set up a space not only to work through his own ideas about what sculpture should be and do, first developed in his 1939 essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch,"<sup>677</sup> but also a space to focus on the supremacy of American culture over its older European counterpart. Just months before *Twentieth Century Italian Art* was due to open at MoMA in 1949, Greenberg participated in the Americans for Intellectual Freedom (AIF) action against the League of Cultural Freedom and Socialism (LCFS) Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace taking place at the New York Waldorf-Asotira in March of 1949.<sup>678</sup> Greenberg's post-war activities reflected his political agenda, one that informed his art criticism more and more in the following decade. It is clear that art critical theory could go hand in hand with a growing Cold War nationalism.

### **Marini's Sculptural Change in the 1950s**

In the late 1950s, Marini's marketability seemed to shift away from American collectors. This was likely in part due to the death in 1954 of his main American champion, his dealer Curt Valentin. Yet, at the same time, it is clear that there was a shift in the American market towards indigenous aesthetic developments in sculpture. Marini's archives likewise reflect a shift towards a

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<sup>676</sup> Bloom. *Ibid.* 27.

<sup>677</sup> Greenberg, Clement. "Avant-Garde and Kitsch (1939)." In *Art and Culture*, edited by Clement Greenberg, 3-21. London: Thames and Hudson, 1973. Bloom writes that, "'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' was significant not just because it launched the career of one of America's important art critics. Greenberg's argument added to [Philip] Rahv's notion about the radical impact of modern culture. Going beyond Rahv's identification of writers with radical 'sensibilities,' Greenberg offered a schematic guide for an understanding of which art forms actual aided radicalism and which impeded it. ... While the avant-garde propelled society, 'kitsch'—middlebrow culture, movies, comic books, Tin Pan Alley, Coca-Cola, Luce publications, and rayon stockings—helped perpetuate the capitalist system of class interests." Bloom, Alexander. *Prodigal sons: the New York intellectuals & their world*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. 90

<sup>678</sup> Bloom, Alexander. *Prodigal sons: the New York intellectuals & their world*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. 260-61. Note that out of the AIF sprung the Congress for Cultural Freedom.

vibrant market for Marini's work in Europe, South America, and Japan in the second-half of the decade.

Though Marini's collector based shifted away from the United States in the mid-1950s, the effects of the exhibition and critical reception of his work in the U.S. were reflected in the formal shifts his work took during the rest of the decade. Marini both incorporated some of the Americanized readings of *Italianità* into his self-presentation and at the same time that shifts in the aesthetic qualities of his work in the 1950s can be seen as taking on the later critiques of his work by Clement Greenberg.

In her recent study of Marini, art historian Teresa Meucci suggests that the impact Marini felt from his American popularity was reflected in his work most clearly in his sculptures representing performers.<sup>679</sup> She writes that

[i]n the Tuscan artist, the New York stimuli renewed an expressive liberty that surely must have come from his contact with American action painting. An echo of the disquiet sign/gesture of the *action painters* is comparable, in many details, in the synthetic abbreviation, serving, for Marini, as a definition of a thread of a sign in the small *Giocolieri* [*Jugglers*] of 1953 [compare to Figure 4.22].<sup>680</sup>

Meucci's reading is reminiscent of the 1950s readings of the American influence on Italian artists —bringing the democratic spark that reignited the post-war artistic resurgence. Though, I agree that Marini was influenced by new American trends in art, the marks and gestures in his work, to which Meucci refers, were present in earlier works. However, Marini's work did change after his encounter with the United States; his aesthetic shifts were not swayed by politics but instead responded to the changing definitions of sculptural modernism put forth with increasing volume

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<sup>679</sup> Teresa Meucci, Teresa. "Marino Marini e Curt Valentin: La fortuna dello scultore in America." *Quaderni di scultura contemporanea*, no. 8 (2008): 13-15.

<sup>680</sup> "New York stimolò quindi nell'artista toscano una rinnovata libertà espressiva, che sicuramente doveva qualcosa alla pittura d'azione americana. Un'eco del segno/gesto inquieto degli *action painters* è riscontrabile, in modo particolare, nell'abbreviazione sintetica operata da Marini nella definizione del segno filiforme dei piccoli *Giocolieri* del 1953." *Ibid.* 14 Emphasis original to text. Author's translation into English.

by critics like Clement Greenberg. His focus remained on the advancing of Italian modern sculpture. Marini became acquainted with new work by Americans like David Smith and created deeper connections to other American sculptors like Alexander Calder.

Despite Greenberg's critical snub, Marini actually did engage with contemporary shifts in the sculptural discourse and the broader shifts in modern sculpture internationally. His close relationship with sculptors like Calder and Moore, among others, and his varied group exhibitions evidences his active dialogue with some of the most iconic sculptors of his day. He strove to make work in dialogue with the most advanced work formally while still working with his favored media and preferred iconography.

Like his contemporaries, Moore and Giacometti, Marini never did leave behind figuration. As scholars like Alex Potts have argued, however, even the traditional, or in this case Greenbergian, canon of abstract sculpture has the ghost of figuration.<sup>681</sup> This allows for a new look at the divided set up in the Greenberg/Read debate that I described at the beginning this chapter. At the time, the divide between abstract and figurative was not as vast as the trans-Atlantic debate of the mid-1950s made it seem. Marini's work in the last half of 1950s shows both an adherence to his earlier archetypes and also a clear shift towards a dialogue with changes in sculptural modernism internationally.

Anticipated in earlier *Cavaliere*, Marini shifted to a new series of horse and riders as early as 1951 with a series titled, *Miracolo* [*Miracle*, Figure 4.23]. Referencing the biblical story of St. Paul's conversion, Marini again utilized canonical imagery. This horse and rider was no mere equestrian. Continuing the tradition of Manzù's *Christ and the German Soldier* [Figure 1.15],

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<sup>681</sup> See: Potts, Alex. "Personages: Imperfect and Persistent." In *David Smith Personages*, (New York: Gagosian Gallery, 2006), 7-19.

Marini's *Miracoli* utilized Catholic imagery to make reference to the falling apart of the Italian State. At the same time, the iconic biblical story allowed Marini even greater formal space to experiment with new sculptural ideas without completely leaving behind figuration.

For example, his 1953-4 *Miracolo* [Figure 4.24] shows a horse upended, his rider horizontal to the ground as if suspended in air. As in his earlier works, the formal materiality of the bronze continues the sculptor's complex combining of figurative marks with other planes, lines, and shapes that negate any simple figurative reading. This work, now on a truly monumental scale at over two meters high, reverses the relationship between horse and rider. Hands grasped, the rider's prayer to not fall to his death is neither answered nor denied. He is suspended, mid-air, neither returning to his seat nor falling to the ground beneath his colossal steed. Much more than his *Cavaliere* series, Marini's *Miracoli* series utilized the two figures, horse and rider, to create a dynamic composition of shapes and forms, inconstant in their weight or movement.

Marini's *Guerriero* [Warrior] from 1959-60 [Figure 4.25] flips the *Cavaliere* on its head. Here the horse has almost disintegrated completely into blocky forms, while the "warrior" is recognizable by two small circles, signaling eyes. Similar to his series of *Compositions* [Figure 4.26-27], the figurative nature of *Guerriero* has virtually evaporated. Many of these later works create a sense of semi-zoo- or anthropomorphic forms that serve as mere apparatus in which to make formal experiments. The disintegration and reemergence of form and figure creates a new sense of instability. Rather than a physical instability between horse and rider, these later works reflect a more primal set of instabilities. The mass or weight is never constant, and like David Smith's earlier *Australia* [Figure 4.28] or Richard Serra's later work in lead [Figure 4.29], there is

never a recovery of static balance. These later works, with their piled up forms, are always on the verge of collapsing.

## Epilogue

### Beyond the Fifties: The Legacy of Italian Sculptural Modernism

The two sculptors at the heart of this study fared differently over the course of the 1950s. As the previous chapter showed, Marini had huge success in the United States in the decade after the Second World War. Likewise, Marini was also widely exhibited and collected throughout Europe.<sup>682</sup> Even before WWII, Marini was already a national icon of modernist sculpture due to his 1935 Quadriennale win, and then after the war, as Teresa Meucci has shown, American dealer Curt Valentin played an active role in Marini's commercial success on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>683</sup> In addition to Valentin's efforts, MoMA curators Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and James Thrall Soby were also enthusiastic champions of Marini's work and added to his success among American collectors, in particular.<sup>684</sup> Likewise, James Thrall Soby wrote to Nelson Rockefeller

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<sup>682</sup> Some of his early post-war collectors in Italy included Adriano Pallini, Giampiero Giani, Emilio Jesi, and Gianni Mattioli. See: Fabi, Chiara. *Marino Marini: La collezione del Museo del Novecento*. Milan: Silvana, (forthcoming). np.

<sup>683</sup> Meucci, Teresa. "Marino Marini e Curt Valentin: La fortuna dello scultore in America." *Quaderni di scultura contemporanea*, no. 8 (2008): 6-21.; \_\_\_\_\_. "Il debutto di Marino sulla 57<sup>a</sup> Strada di New York." In *Manzù/Marini: gli ultimi moderni*. Edited by Laura D'Angelo and Stefano Roffi. Milan: Silvana, 2014. 69-77.

<sup>684</sup> There are a number of letters from Barr and Soby to Marini about perspective collectors on tours of Italy that they sent to meet the sculptor. See: Barr, Alfred H., Jr. Letter to Marino Marini, March 29, 1955, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID343, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia; \_\_\_\_\_. Letter to Marino Marini, May 2, 1951, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID145, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia; Soby, James Thrall. Letter to Marina and Marino Marini, Feb. 21, 1949, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID84, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.

that there is “a sculptor named Marino Marini who is among *the best sculptors of our day...*”<sup>685</sup> Marini also actively cultivated his own strong collector base.<sup>686</sup> As a result, Marini’s sculptures were sought to occupy the interior spaces of the new modernist-designed homes of the American elite, as described in Chapter Four, by the mid-1950s becoming seemingly ubiquitous within the American visual landscape—one work found its way into a Hollywood production by Billy Wilder, 1954’s *Sabrina* starring Audrey Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart.<sup>687</sup>

At the same time, Marini’s contemporary correspondences, when placed alongside the American critical response to him and his work, point to why he received such success in becoming an icon of European sculptural modernism after WWII.<sup>688</sup> As a letter from Roland Allen, Assistant Keeper at the Tate Gallery in London shows, there was particular interest in Marini’s work as a representation of wartime trauma. Referencing Soby’s preface of the 1950 show at Buchholz Gallery, Allen writes to ask if Marini’s “full realization of the horseman theme began after [he] had seen ‘the Lombard peasants fleeing the bombings of their frightened horses’” was accurate, and that “[a]ny confirmation of this would be most interesting.”<sup>689</sup> Likewise, the humanist qualities of the sculptures appealed to Marini’s post-war publics. The art historian and museum director Edward H. Dwight wrote that Marini’s sculptures were “very

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<sup>685</sup> Soby, James Thrall. "Letter to Nelson A. Rockefeller," June 8, 1948, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers. Owned by Museum of Modern Art, New York; microfilmed by Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. MF3154. Emphasis added to text.

<sup>686</sup> See details in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

<sup>687</sup> One of Marini’s small *Cavaliere* sculptures sits on pedestal by the window in the Larrabee’s business office, filmed at 30 Broad Street in Manhattan. See: Wilder, Billy. "Sabrina." 113 min. Paramount Pictures, 1954. The Museo Marino Marini recently [June 20, 2015] pointed out this reference via their social media accounts [<https://m.facebook.com/museomarinarini/posts/10153465627993535:0>].

<sup>688</sup> See: Hunter, Sam. "European Sculpture. Work by Modern Artists -- Painters in Contrast." *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1948, X13.; Louchheim, Aline B. "Tradition and the Contemporary." *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1950, X9.; Soby, James Thrall. "Marino Marini." In *Marino Marini, February 14 - March 11, 1950*. Edited by Buchholz Gallery. New York: Curt Valentin, 1950. 1-5.

<sup>689</sup> Allen, Ronald. Letter to Marino Marini, Oct. 15, 1953, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID250, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia



strong, yet delicate and sensitive, real full-blooded sculpture.”<sup>690</sup> Marini’s equestrians, dancers and portrait busts were easily digestible images that retained an exciting modernist aesthetic that gained the sculptor much success.

Melotti had neither have the same kind of success as Marini in Italy nor the United States during the years immediately after the war. The majority of Melotti’s success came from his large-scale collaborative projects with Gio Ponti, including the *Alitalia* headquarters in Milan and New York (1955) and Ponti’s *Villa Planchart* in Caracas, Venezuela (1954).<sup>691</sup> Though Melotti gained some critical success outside of Italy, through exhibitions like *Italy at Work*, his works were not widely collected. Though his friend and colleague Lucio Fontana would eventually have works in almost every major American and European collection, as Anthony White points out, Fontana’s success among international critics was hard fought.<sup>692</sup> Upon his first solo show in the U.S. in 1961, Fontana’s mixture of high and low confused American critics who saw this element as bordering on kitsch.

Like Fontana, Melotti’s works from the 1930s, 40s, and 50s played with the boundaries between art and craft. While this resonated in his collaborations with Ponti, his sculptural work of the period did not bring the same kind of press.<sup>693</sup> As Carlo Belli writes in 1968, Melotti and Fontana had been under-appreciated because they were simply ahead of their time.<sup>694</sup> Melotti’s work after 1962 would nevertheless become iconic in the scholarship alongside the purely abstract works from 1934-35 that Belli highlighted. The work in-between, the focus of this

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<sup>690</sup> Dwight, Edward H. Letter to Marino Marini, Apr. 24, 1953, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID236, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia

<sup>691</sup> Marzari, Giovanni. "Profilo biografico di Fausto Melotti." In *Fausto Melotti: L'opera in ceramica*. Edited by Antonella Commellato and Marta Melotti. Milan: Skira, 2003. 452.

<sup>692</sup> White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 1-15.

<sup>693</sup> As I have mentioned in the introduction, my understanding of Melotti’s professional correspondences are relegated to a few letters he exchanged with Belli—at the *Archivio del'900*.

<sup>694</sup> Belli, Carlo. *Fausto Melotti sculture e disegni 1962-1967*. Roma: Galleria "Il Segno", 1968. 1.

dissertation, has only now begun to be considered because its material properties—the same that gained Fontana the label of “successful decorator”—have segregated this period of his work from the “high art” that came before and after. However, as I have shown here, these works of 1935-62, in terracotta and ceramics, get to the heart of Melotti’s abstractionist project. The *Teatrini* challenge the boundaries of sculptural communicability as well as material presence.

However, for both Marini and Melotti, their work across the Fascist divide came to represent the diversity of Italian cultural production in the post-war period. American audiences used the work of both artists in order to construct a post-Fascist understanding of Italian culture that was connected to a humanist past, deeply concerned with aesthetics, and engaged with a democratic rebuilding after the devastation of war. For Italian critics, Marini was one of the representatives of advanced modern sculpture and his work represented another marker in Italy’s glorious modern art canon. Melotti was also a part of this canon, being included in Carrieri’s 1950 survey, but for Italian audiences his work was at the heart of the effort to revitalize the lived life of the Italian populace through his close association with Ponti and *Domus*.<sup>695</sup>

The different trajectories of the two sculptors, and subsequently the diverse post-war understandings of them, have effected the historiographic record. For Marini, the American Cold War rhetoric has overwhelmingly represented the reading of his work. Melotti’s legacy has been connected, as Belli articulated, to a purely aesthetic project that was pragmatically supplemented by lucrative commissions for ceramic works. I hope to have presented a richer understanding of the work of these two sculptors, and their contemporaries, as well as highlight the larger contexts in which their work was critically received. This study opens new lines of

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<sup>695</sup> Melotti’s ceramic sculptures are some of the showpieces highlighted in Ponti’s survey of new apartments in 1950. Ponti, Gio. "Considerazioni su alcuni mobili." *Domus*, no. 243 (1950): 26-29. Also see: "Camini, figure e vasi di Fausto Melotti." *Domus*, May 1950, 38-42.; "Nuova birreria." *Domus*, January 1950, 17-18.; Ponti, Gio. "Alcune opere d'arte sul "Conte Grande"." *Domus*, no. 244 (1950): 14-26.

investigation for each artist's post-war sculpture to include issues such as connections to Fascism, market pressures, and artistic agency.

### **Sixties Italy: In Context**

The late 1950s and the 1960s saw a series of often-violent transitions in both Italian politics and culture. These shifts were the result of the post-war geo-political climate, the development of aesthetic modernism, and the growing Italian consumer culture. By 1960 the United States had loosened its ties with Italy, partially because their Marshall Plan funds were thought to have been misappropriated.<sup>696</sup> At the same time, issues of Italian national identity, still without a clear self-image, came again to a head. The 1961 World's Exposition held in Turin, marking of the modern country's centennial, became a locus for growing political, cultural, and economic tensions within the country.

The 1960s would see the Venice Biennale shut down by protesters in 1968 and an acceleration of violence between the factions on the far left and right.<sup>697</sup> At the heart of the battle was a need to identify what constituted Italian culture. Artists associated with *Arte Povera*, coined by Germano Celant in the 1967 *Flash Art* manifesto, appropriated the language of violence from "urban guerrilla movements" in their own work as a response.<sup>698</sup> It was clear that, though Italy had begun to see the economic "miracle," it did not lessen the disillusionment of the Italians with

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<sup>696</sup> Bouchard, Norma. "Italia '61: The Commemorations for the Centenary of Unification in the First Capital of the Italian State." *Romance Studies* 23, no. 2 (2005): 119.

<sup>697</sup> See: Di Stefano, Chiara "The 1968 Biennale. Boycotting the exhibition: An account of three extraordinary days." In *Starting from Venice*. Edited by Clarissa Ricci and Angela Vettese. Milan: Et al. Edizioni, 2010. 130-33.; Venanzi, Marinella. "'I would like to introduce myself with the *Ambiente spaziale*': Lucio Fontana and the Biennali in the post-war years." In *Starting from Venice: Studies on the Biennale*. Edited by Clarissa Ricci. Milan: et al. Edizioni, 2010. 119-29.

<sup>698</sup> Cullinan, Nicholas. "From Vietnam to Fiat-nam: The Politics of Arte Povera." *October*, no. 124 (2008): 12.

the constitutional government or the perceived cultural domination of the United States.<sup>699</sup> The aftereffects of Italy's new post-Fascist modernity, brought about by the economic miracle, manifested through a broad rejection, and recreation of, a Italian culture. Artists began to feel dissatisfied with modernism and too searched for something new.

### ***Italia '61***

The *Italia '61* exposition represented the state of Italian culture and industry in the home of FIAT, Turin.<sup>700</sup> Marin Sullivan has shown that the work in the exposition by Melotti [Figure 5.1] and Fontana [Figure 5.2] represented the blurred lines between art and craft that had continued to be central to the conception of a unified Italian culture.<sup>701</sup> Showcased at the Esposizione Internazionale del Lavoro (International Labor Exposition, EIL), the two sculptors' work were central to the Italian national display designed by Gio Ponti. Their works, Sullivan shows, reflected the kind of Italian labor championed in the exposition and by the ruling party, the DC (Christian Democrats); one in which teamwork coincided with labor and artists coming together to create Italian products.<sup>702</sup>

White's reading of Fontana's neon sculptures complicates this situation further, by reading his neon works as pointing to and undermining the autographic gesture.<sup>703</sup> Therefore, "[t]hrough

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<sup>699</sup> Bouchard. "*Italia '61*": 124.; Duggan, Christopher. "Italy in the Cold War Years and the Legacy of Fascism." In *Italy in the Cold War. Politics, Culture and Society 1948-58*. Edited by Christopher Duggan and Christopher Wagstaff. Oxford & Washington D.C.: Berg Publishers Limited, 1995. 1-24.

<sup>700</sup> See: *La Celebrazione del primo centenario dell'unità d'Italia*. Turin: Comitato nazionale per la celebrazione del primo centenario dell'Unità d'Italia, 1961.

<sup>701</sup> Sullivan, Marin. "The Material of Labor: Art, the Esposizione Internazionale del Lavoro, and Italia 1961." Paper presented at the College Art Association, New York, 2014.

<sup>702</sup> This is similar to how the "Made in Italy" brand is defined. See: Corbellini, Erica. "'Made in': dalla denominazione di origine alla costruzione di un immaginario." In *La scommessa del Made in Italy e il futuro della moda italiana*. Edited by Erica Corbellini and Stefania Saviolo. Milan: RCS Libri, 2004. 39.; Saviolo, Stefania. "Made in Italy: ieri-oggi-domani." In *La scommessa del Made in Italy e il futuro della moda italiana*. Edited by Erica Corbellini and Stefania Saviolo. Milan: RCS Libri, 2004. 1-20.

<sup>703</sup> White, Anthony. *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 163.

this inclusion of mass-cultural elements [neon], [Fontana] subverted the autographic reading of form and robbed the gesture of its capacity to signify a living human presence.”<sup>704</sup> This, combined with an element of the spectacle, allowed everyone access to the “wonderful visions of luxury.”<sup>705</sup> Therefore, in an installation like that at EIL, spectacle of a huge installation piece, both Fontana’s and Melotti’s, utilized the reference to artistic labor to simultaneously connect the viewer to ideas of rarified luxury and the existence of the every person. This played out in a vivid spread for *Life* magazine in 1961, where models, dressed in the latest Italian fashion, posed in front of the exhibitions at the EIL [Figure 5.3] and captions provided factual information about the exhibits.<sup>706</sup>

However, it was particularly this type of presentation that reflected the incongruity between the image of Italy and its realities. As Italian studies scholar Norma Bouchard has shown, when organizing the *Italia '61* exposition the DC had in mind its previous failures “to project a coherent image of its cultural and political ambitions regarding Italy.”<sup>707</sup> Therefore, from choosing Turin as the site—it was the Italian State’s first capital in 1861 and being the home of Italy’s most successful export, FIAT—to the choice of partners, each aspect of the project was meant to portray a clear image of a unified Italian culture.

However, *Italia '61* was not the great success that the DC had hoped for. Unlike the quinquagenary in 1911, which was enthusiastically celebrated across the then new nation, the centennial received no universal celebration or praise from the populace. This lack of spirit was partly due to the legacy of Fascism and partly to the “forms of secular individualism [brought on

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<sup>704</sup> White. *Ibid.* 165.

<sup>705</sup> White. *Ibid.* 168.

<sup>706</sup> Kauffman, Mark. "Dramatic Decade of Italian Style." *Life (International)*, Nov. 20, 1961, 42-55.

<sup>707</sup> Bouchard, "*Italia '61*": 119.

by the economic miracle], which were at odds with the collective models of national integration.”<sup>708</sup>

Along with Fontana and Melotti, Marini’s work was included in *Italia ’61*. At the Palazzo a Vela in the “Fashion Style Customs” exhibitions, one of Marini’s *Cavaliere* was presented within the “Figurative Arts” section of this “lifestyle event,” curated by Franco Russoli [Figure 5.4].<sup>709</sup> In a similar fashion to the 1950-51 *Italy at Work* show in the U.S., this exhibit was

conceived as an immediate and succinct display, appealing to both an elite and popular market, of the profound bond between fashion, lifestyle and the customs of society; it conveys the effects of this time in history and the turbulent period of transition between one civilisation to another.<sup>710</sup>

As architectural historian Michela Rosso explains, this exhibition was meant to be an “attempt at promoting a “white Italy,”” a city of progress, and was “an attempt to reconcile the eternal conflict between Art and Industry.”<sup>711</sup> It is clear why critics found the rhetoric suspect; culture and commodity were presented as one and, moreover, as representative of a unified Italian civilization. Though the close structural and personnel similarities between the DC and the Fascist Regime was well known, their parallel cultural tactics showed the strong Fascist legacy in *Italia ’61*.<sup>712</sup>

The overwhelming sentiment was that *Italia ’61* was not only a failure in presenting a new and unified post-war Italian culture but also disconnected from and working against the

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<sup>708</sup> Bouchard, *Ibid.* 124.

<sup>709</sup> Rosso, Michela. "The city and nation on show. The centenary exhibitions." In *Italia '61: The Nation on Show*, Translated by Valentina Relton. Turin: Umberto Allemandi, 2006. 68.

<sup>710</sup> Organizing Committee Chairman, Pinin Farina as quoted in Rosso, *Ibid.* 67.

<sup>711</sup> Rosso, *Ibid.* 76. As Sergio Pace describes “..the “black city” of work and social conflict and very different to the Exposition’s “white city”, city of recreation and delight.” Pace, Sergio. "The never-ending parable. The myths, decline and possible revival of Turin's Italia '61." In *Italia '61: The Nation on Show*, Translated by Valentina Relton. Turin: Umberto Allemandi, 2006.12.

<sup>712</sup> “With ideology set aside, the Christian Democrats relied heavily, like the fascist party before them, on their capacity as the dominant party of government to mediate between the main economic interest groups and to use their control of public funds to create huge clienteles.” Duggan, Christopher. "Italy in the Cold War Years and the Legacy of Fascism." In *Italy in the Cold War. Politics, Culture and Society 1948-58*. Edited by Christopher Duggan and Christopher Wagstaff. Oxford & Washington D.C.: Berg Publishers Limited, 1995. 23.

contemporary problems facing the nation.<sup>713</sup> Despite this, the work by Fontana and Melotti did reflect a movement towards new ideas about art. Fontana who had written the *White Manifesto* in Argentina (1946), returned to Italy full of excitement the following year and began to experiment with his idea of Spazialismo. Art critic Guido Ball has described how Fontana’s “spatial environments,” like the one at *Italia ’61*, not only owed a debt to the Futurists’ “urge to surpass the two dimensions” but also moved beyond them by overcoming “the pictorial two dimensions and by [exploiting] the impact of the surroundings on [the spectator’s] behaviour.”<sup>714</sup> *Fonti d’energia* [*Spring of Energy*, Figure 5.2], he explained,

was a linear design in neon evoking, as the artist himself said, “the trail of a torch brandished in the air.” So this too was a kind of gestural sign, materialized through a constructed model in the guise of a luminous labyrinth.<sup>715</sup>

Therefore, Sullivan’s apt reading of the bringing together of DC/EIL ideals in Fontana’s work—a bringing together teamwork of industrial labor in the creation of the neon with Italian artistic labor—can be furthered by looking at the sculpture’s new relationship to the viewer.

Likewise, Melotti’s *L’evoluzione della forma nell’artigianato* [*Evolution of Form in Craft*, Figure 5.1] presented an experiential environment for the craft medium, ceramic. With over 800 individual ceramic tiles, Melotti transposed the ideal of handmade craft into the multiple, into production on a mass scale. In a sense, these works too point ahead, away from his previous forays into the medium, even beyond his previous large-scale collaborations with architects like Gio Ponti. These works were both eternal and ephemeral. The tiles continued to exist but as artifacts of the unified work that ceased to exist as it had in the installation at *Italia ’61*. For Melotti, the idea of the multiple and the artifact continue on through his later work and perhaps

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<sup>713</sup> Bouchard. “*Italia ’61*”:124.

<sup>714</sup> Ballo, Guido. “The Artistic Climate of the Sixties.” In *Arte Italiana: 1960-1982*, Translated by John Mitchell. Edited by Carlo Pirovano. Milan: Electa, 1982. 15.

<sup>715</sup> Ballo, *Ibid.* 15.

point to the kind of consumerist critique—a year later he rhetorically separated his industrious ceramic work (the in-between work of 1935-1962) from his “sculptural” production.<sup>716</sup>

Melotti's *I Sette savi*, 1960 [Figure 5.5], a return to his inter-war motif of the *Coerenza Uomo* [Figure 0.4], anticipated a shift away from the ceramic media while, at the same time, reflected the same themes present in *L'evoluzione della forma nell'artigianato*. These new works in stone were initially installed at the Liceo Carducci in Milan. In this project for the City of Milan with architect Nichelli, Melotti's return to his *Coerenza Uomo* imagery but without the handprint of Pressutti was designed to “create a contrapuntal frame with the work of art in a simple form of a standard sequence, or rather a sequence in which a single theme repeats many times pervading with harmonic measure.”<sup>717</sup> As laid out in the introduction to this dissertation, Melotti perceived the works of the intervening period (1935-1962), those considered in the present study, as different.<sup>718</sup> Perhaps, conceptually, *I Setti savi* helped Melotti start to close those parentheses.<sup>719</sup>

For Melotti, both the *I Sette savi* and *L'evoluzione della forma nell'artigianato* reflected a return to the idea of sculpture prescient in the 1934-35 series of *Sculture* [Figures 0.5-6, 1.6, 2.5-6]: a sense that the object was ephemeral outside of a rhythmic repetition of forms. Yet, they move beyond and even leave behind the earlier Fascist-Era works. After having worked through sculptural

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<sup>716</sup> Melotti, Fausto. "Sculture astratte del '35 e del '62 di Fausto Melotti." *Domus*, no. 392 (1962): 48.

<sup>717</sup> “Ricevuto dal Comune di Milano, e per questo dall'architetto Nichelli progettista del nuovo Liceo, l'incarico di un monumento, lo scultore Melotti è ritornato a questa sua vecchia idea: creare lo scheltro contrappuntistico dell'opera d'arte nel modo semplice del canone, della sequenza cioè in cui un unico tema si ripete più volte componendosi in modo armonico.” “I Sette Savi a Milano.” *Domus*, May 1963, 51.

<sup>718</sup> Melotti, Fausto. "Sculture astratte del '35 e del '62 di Fausto Melotti." *Domus*, no. 392 (1962): 48.

<sup>719</sup> This was and still is a polemical work. In its first version, a public display at the high school, it was vandalized almost immediately after its installation [Figure 5.6]. Subsequently, this edition of the work was removed from public view and presumed destroyed—there are three later editions recognized by the Melotti Estate, in addition to the original plaster maquette. In 2009, however, a group of students with their professor claimed to have found the lost works, though the sculptor's estate emphatically refutes their authenticity. See: “I Sette Savi a Milano.” *Domus*, May 1963, 50-51.; Celant, Germano. *Melotti. Catalogo generale. Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. vol 1. Milano: Electa, 1994.121-123.; Sacchi, Annachiara. "L'artista offeso si rifiutò di restaurarle: Carducci, i «Savi» di Melotti abbandonati." *Corriere della Sera* (2009), [http://milano.corriere.it/cronache/articoli/2008/02\\_Febbraio/26/carducci\\_savi\\_melotti\\_abbandonati.shtml](http://milano.corriere.it/cronache/articoli/2008/02_Febbraio/26/carducci_savi_melotti_abbandonati.shtml). [Accessed: May 28, 2014]; \_\_\_\_\_. "I Sette savi di Fausto Melotti? Sono del liceo Carducci." *Corriere della Sera* (2009), [http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/09\\_novembre\\_16/sette-savi-fausto-melotti-liceo-carducci-1602015646244.shtml](http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/09_novembre_16/sette-savi-fausto-melotti-liceo-carducci-1602015646244.shtml). [Accessed: May 28, 2014]



problems brought up in the *Teatrini* [Figures 2.7-9, 2.11-12], this new generation of sculpture began to show a transformed vision of the sculptural object. Though in a new medium, mainly brass tubing, works like *La Pioggia* [Rain], 1966 [Figure 5.7] utilized the same language of signs and symbols developed in the *Teatrini* but with a much different material effect. As painter, critic and philosopher Gillo Dorfles aptly describes, these works' "fragility and equilibrium, stable and unstable at the same time, ...give[ing] these works a lofty vitality outside of time."<sup>720</sup> Rather than being framed within the theatrical box like his *Teatrini*, these new works inhabited the space of the viewer, sitting on the floor and not a pedestal. At the same time, these metal repetitive forms created the harmonic quality that affects the viewer's perception.

Melotti's sculptures never went as far as Fontana's in creating an environment which the viewer inhabits, like *Ambiente spaziale*, 1968 [Figure 5.8]. The closest to this was his *Tema e Variazioni II* [*Theme and Variations II*], 1981 [Figure 5.9], now in the Gori Collection, created for Melotti's 1981 exhibition at the Forte Belvedere in Florence.<sup>721</sup> Melotti's work, like Marini's, never left the realm of the modernist sculptural object.

For Marini, his series of *Miracoli* [Figure 4.23-24] became symbols through monuments all over Europe to champion the triumph over Fascism for a long time after their initial conception. For example, his *Miracolo: L'idea di un'Immagine* [*Miracle: The Idea of an Image*], 1969-70 [Figure 5.10-11] was installed at the Deutscher Bundestag in 2005, over twenty years after the sculptor's death, opposite the Wilhelminian Reichstag in Berlin. As art historian Peter-Klaus Schuster explains,

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<sup>720</sup> "...l'estrema sottigliezza delle strutture metalliche, la loro fragilità e l'equilibrio, stabile e instabile a un tempo, che dà a questi lavori una vitalità aerea e fuori dal tempo." Dorfles, Gillo. "Fausto Melotti. Un presentazione." In *Fausto Melotti lo spazio inquieto*. Edited by Micaela Sposito. Rovereto: Transarte srl, 2009. 10.

<sup>721</sup> See: Hammacher, A.M. "La casa e le stanze di Fausto Melotti - I teatrini." In *45° Maggio Musicale Fiorentino*. Edited by Stefano Succi. Florence: Ente Autonomo Teatro Comunale di Firenze, 1982. 115-18.

[a] flight of stairs cascades down from the terrace to the river Spree, which used to be the inner German broader dividing Germany. It leads down to precisely the spot where, on the opposite riverbank of the former West, small crosses commemorate the GDR fugitives who were killed at the broader. ...Amid this central memory landscape of German history, Marino Marini's *Miracolo* stands high up on its pedestal on the terrace, a true focal point: the horse rearing towards the sky with its rider who cannot be shaken off symbolically signals the miracle that Germans no longer believed they could place any trust in [the GDR]: [and] the survival of their downfall and at the same time a resurrection, a chance to return to humanity.<sup>722</sup>

Marini's *Miracolo* became a reflection of a unified humanism that could be representative of human triumph just as had the equestrian monuments of antiquity and middle ages.<sup>723</sup> His work became symbolic of a larger International struggle for freedom—casts of this work were also installed at The Israel Museum in Jerusalem and the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo.<sup>724</sup>

Melotti's works were imbedded in the debates about the effects of the economic miracle on Italian culture. Curator and collector from Rovereto, Sergio Poggianella, has outlined Melotti's engagement with questions about art and the market. Moreover, these later works from the 1960s, presented an open idea of what modern sculpture could do and how it could create meaning or meanings for the viewer. Melotti's continued use of extra-sculptural materials (brass, ceramics, etc.) alongside the aesthetic qualities created sculptures that

resulted in a transitory moment of fluctuating awareness: the formal crystallization around a brief poetic story made of unidentifiable sensations, emotions, passions and sentiments, liberally playing between intuition and logic in the imaginary confines [of the sculpture].<sup>725</sup>

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<sup>722</sup> Schuster, Peter-Klaus. "Zeichen Des Wunders - Marini's *Miracolo* am Reichstag/Symbol of the Miracle: Marini's *Miracolo* at the Reichstag." In *Marino Marini Miracolo*, Translated by Logan Kennedy and Leonhard Unglaub. Edited by Cristina Inês Steingraber. Ostfildern: Hetje Cantz Verlag. 2006. 77.

<sup>723</sup> Schuster, Ibid. 50-61.

<sup>724</sup> *Marino Marini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 327.

<sup>725</sup> "Se la 'mobilità' ideale e fisica di una realtà vibrante è una caratteristica primaria dell'arte di Melotti in opere come "Dei Due", la 'stabilità' esteriore de "L'Araba Fenice" è semplicemente il risultato di un momento transitorio di un flusso di coscienza: la cristallizzazione formale di un breve racconto poetico fatto di sensazioni, emozioni, passione e sentimenti non etichettabili, liberamente giocato tra i confini immaginari dell'intuizione e della logica." Poggianella, Sergio. "Melotti... da due all'infinito." In *Fausto Melotti lo spazio inquieto*. Edited by Micaela Sposito. Rovereto: Transarte, 2009. 15.

This happened through the material used (industrial or craft related), the material quality (ephemeral and airy), and the imagery (use of text, symbols, signs, and allusions).

Therefore, in works like the 1965 *Il Cinema* [*The Cinema*, Figure 5.12], the text-sign points to the commercial advertising outside the theater as much as it signifies the subject of the work. The cinema goers are almost floating heads, many look out to the viewer rather than at the scene to the left. Still using the visual rhetoric of the *Teatrini*, this work goes further. To the left, a scene plays out, though it is ambiguous if it represents the film or the street outside the cinema. Though not the clearer contemporary critiques being made about consumer culture by artists like Alberto Burri, Melotti's work still achieves a commentary on it through the enclosed space of the cinema. The figures, like stick men and women, have emotionless faces, stand motionless in their uniform lines, and have seemingly no interaction with one another. They are individuals and automatons at the same time.

### **From Modernism to Neo-Avant-Garde**

A work like *Il Cinema* would have resonated with neo-avant-garde artists of the late 1950s and 1960s. As the German artist and co-founder of Group Zero Otto Piene outlined, the group

is not a group in the usual sense—there is no president, no leader, no secretary, there are no members. It is only a human relation between several artists, and an artistic relation between different individuals.<sup>726</sup>

Formed in 1958, Group Zero embraced a fluctuating cadre of artists that included the Italians Fontana, Piero Manzoni, Turi Simeti, and Agostino Bonalumi. One of their important contributions was the series of international happenings that operated in two realms: as “New

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<sup>726</sup> Piene, Otto. "Group Zero." *Art Education* 18, no. 5 (1965): 22.

Realism” and as “idealistic (occasionally romantic) trend[s] towards and alteration[s] of objects and man from the dark to the bright.”<sup>727</sup>

Their aesthetic experiments, over time, began to take on an overt rhetoric of political critique. Art historian Thomas Crow indicates how, in happenings like those carried out by Group Zero,

the play of chance and group improvisation took over from the authority of any single artistic intention. Begun for the sake of an aesthetic liberation, that activity too found its way to an overt connection with politics.<sup>728</sup>

These new modes of creation were not merely aesthetic but political. For example, Mimmo Rotella’s *décollage* technique [See: Figure 5.13] functioned as an “anti-American protest,” at the same time that it used the playful techniques of the Surrealists.<sup>729</sup>

For the Italian neo-avant-garde, as it had been for the DC, “Italian” culture, or the lack there of, was one of the issues that reoccurred in their work. Sharon Hecker’s close study of Luciano Fabro’s *Italie* series (1968-2005) shows one way in which an *Arte Povera* artist’s work “can lead an observer to reflect upon the wider implications regarding the relationship between artistic creation and the imaginings of Italy’s identity.”<sup>730</sup> At the same time, the works speak the language of consumerism. The 1971 version, *L’Italia d’oro* [*Golden Italy*, Figure 5.14] suggests to the viewer to read the “economic miracle” as an event in which “the country might be overturned, with the poor south placed on top of the rich north.”<sup>731</sup> At the same time, Hecker points out, its rich gold finish alludes to the “increasingly consumerist art world.”<sup>732</sup> Works like Fabro’s reflect the kind of multiplied possibilities implicit in the signs and symbols of an *Arte Povera* work. This one in

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<sup>727</sup> Piene, *Ibid.* 23.

<sup>728</sup> Crow, Thomas. *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996. 11.

<sup>729</sup> Crow, *Ibid.* 54-5.

<sup>730</sup> Hecker, Sharon. "If the boot fits... Luciano Fabro's *Italie*." *Forum Italicum* 47, no. 2 (2013): 431.

<sup>731</sup> Hecker, *Ibid.* 436.

<sup>732</sup> Hecker, *Ibid.*

particular reflects both the issues of Italian identity and the political unrest brought about by the increased consumer culture after WWII.

As curator and art historian Nicholas Cullinan argues, throughout the 1960s there was increasing outrage about the Vietnam War combined with a critique of consumer, industrialized culture, both steeped in anti-American sentiment.<sup>733</sup> This led to Celant's call to arms for *Arte*

*Povera* to

call the American media into question. *Arte Povera* was therefore a legitimate defense of a historic culture run on the rocks—as European culture was. The only hope for salvation lay in rejecting Puritanism and homogenization, in contaminating them and ripping them open with soft and acid matter, with animals and fire, with primitive craft techniques like axe-blows, with rags and earth, stones and chemicals. The important thing was to corrode, cut open, and fragment—to decompose the imposed cultural regime.<sup>734</sup>

Here, Celant's retrospective look at what he had wanted from *Arte Povera* shows the interconnection of the aesthetic and the political. Importantly, as with Greenberg's reading of sculpture discussed in the previous chapter, the divide was between the European and American, the old and new worlds.

Turning back to *Italy '61*, it becomes even clearer how it fed the perception that European or Italian culture had “run on the rocks.” Not only had the whole project meant to show Italian integration into the Trans-Atlantic community, it was also visibly connected to the United States' consumer culture. Even in just one example, the presence of American industry in the presentation of Italian culture was pervasive: at *Italia '61*, the “Circarama” was sponsored by Walt Disney. The Circarama showed a “bizarre” film by Disney about Italy and the company's namesake toured the facility himself [Figure 5.15].<sup>735</sup> Therefore, when the *Arte Povera* artists translated their “cultural heritage into a contemporary language and context,” they did so as a

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<sup>733</sup> Cullinan, Nicholas. "From Vietnam to Fiat-nam: The Politics of Arte Povera." *October*, no. 124 (2008): 8-30.

<sup>734</sup> Celant reproduced in Cullinan, *Ibid.* 18.

<sup>735</sup> Pace, Sergio. "The never-ending parable. The myths, decline and possible revival of Turin's Italia '61." In *Italia '61: The Nation on Show*, Translated by Valentina Relton. Turin: Umberto Allemandi, 2006. 13-14.

violent reaction to the whitewashing of Italian culture, literally presented by Disney in 1961, by the Americans.<sup>736</sup>

Aesthetically, the new avant-garde both looked to modernist precedents while at the same time moving away from an object based practice; instead, they tried to removed import from the unique object and look past the value of innovative process.<sup>737</sup> Art historian Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev writes that the *Arte Povera* artists and those who preceded them “were concerned with expanding the canon of art and exploring what would be defined as postmodernism as well as with critiquing modernization and consumer society.”<sup>738</sup> The heterogeneity of the work by *Arte Povera* artists reflected a “profoundly anti-academic and anti-intellectual” mode of working that moved beyond modernist work like that of Melotti and Marini.<sup>739</sup>

At the same time, their neo-avant-garde work built upon the presentations of art and labor exemplified in Melotti’s and Fontana’s contributions to *Italia ’61*. The central theme of exchange and interrelation, coming from American philosopher John Dewey’s theories, were built upon, with the idea that the audience needed to be actively engaged in order to activate the work of art.<sup>740</sup> Therefore, the experiential nature of both sculptor’s works coupled with the focus on collaborative labor were clear antecedents and also counterexamples to the later developments of *Arte Povera*.

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<sup>736</sup> Christov-Bakargiev, Carolyn. "Thrust into the Whirlwind: Italian Art Before Arte Povera." In *Zero to Infinity: Arte Povera 1962-1972*. Edited by Richard Flood and Rances Morris. Minneapolis and London: Walker Art Center and Tate Modern, 2001. 22.

<sup>737</sup> Christov-Bakargiev, Ibid. 22-26.

<sup>738</sup> Christov-Bakargiev, Ibid. 28.

<sup>739</sup> Christov-Bakargiev, Ibid. 39.

<sup>740</sup> Criticos, Corrina. "Reading Arte Povera." In *Zero to Infinity: Arte Povera 1962-1972*. Edited by Richard Flood & Frances Morris. Minneapolis and London: Walker Art Center and Tate Modern, 2001. 69.

**Figures:**

**Figure 0.1:** Photo of Melotti (top left), Pollini, Belli and Baldessari at the *Veglia futurista* organized by Depero in the new Casa d'Arte Futurista in Rovereto, 10 Jan. 1923



Source: Celant, Germano. *Melotti. Catalogo generale. Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Vol 2. Milano: Electa, 1994. 715

**Figure 0.2:** Bar Craja designed by Baldessari, Figini, and Pollini in Milan, 1930-31



Source: *Melotti*. Edited by Germano Celant, Museum of contemporary Art DonnaREgina Milan: Mondadori Electa S.p.A., 2011. 35-372. 45. Figure 24.

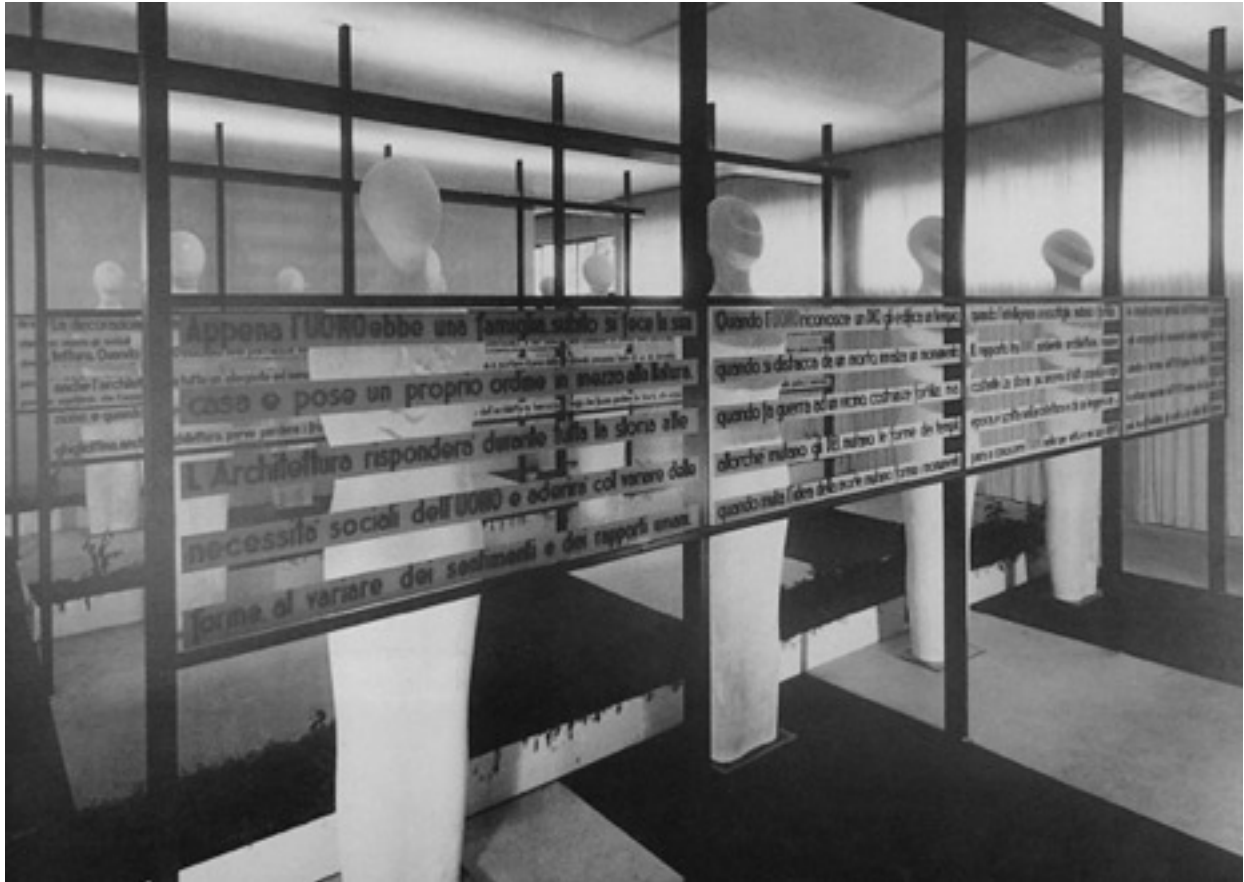
**Figure 0.3:** Fausto Melotti, *Sensa titolo [Icaro che fugge le stelle]*, 1930-31 (nickel-plated iron, installed at the Bar Craja)



Source: Celant, Germano. *Melotti. Catalogo generale. Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. vol. 1, Milano: Electa, 1994. 193. Figure 1930-1931.1.



**Figure 0.4:** Fausto Melotti, *Uomo Coerenza* [or *Costante uomo*], 1936 (installation view in the Sala di Coerenza by BBPR at the Milan Triennale, gesso, 12 pieces, 225x55x31cm)



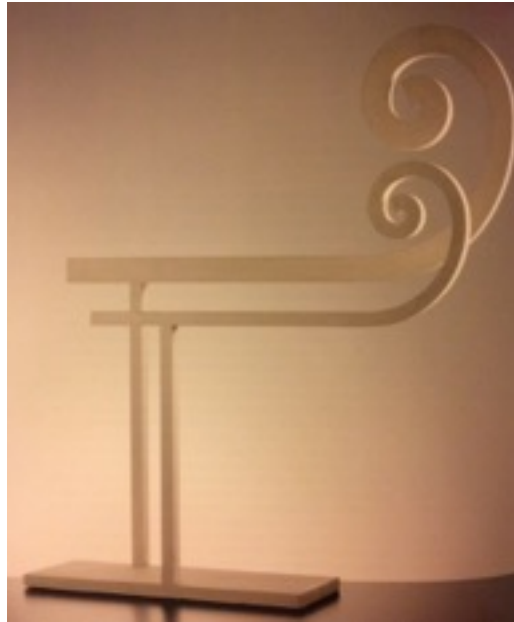
Source: Celant, Germano. Melotti. Catalogo generale. Sculture 1929-1972. 2 vols. Vol 1. Milano: Electa, 1994. 37. Figure 1936.1.

**Figure 0.5:** Fausto Melotti, *Scultura n. 17*, 1935 (1968) (stainless steel, 196.8x59.3x24cm)



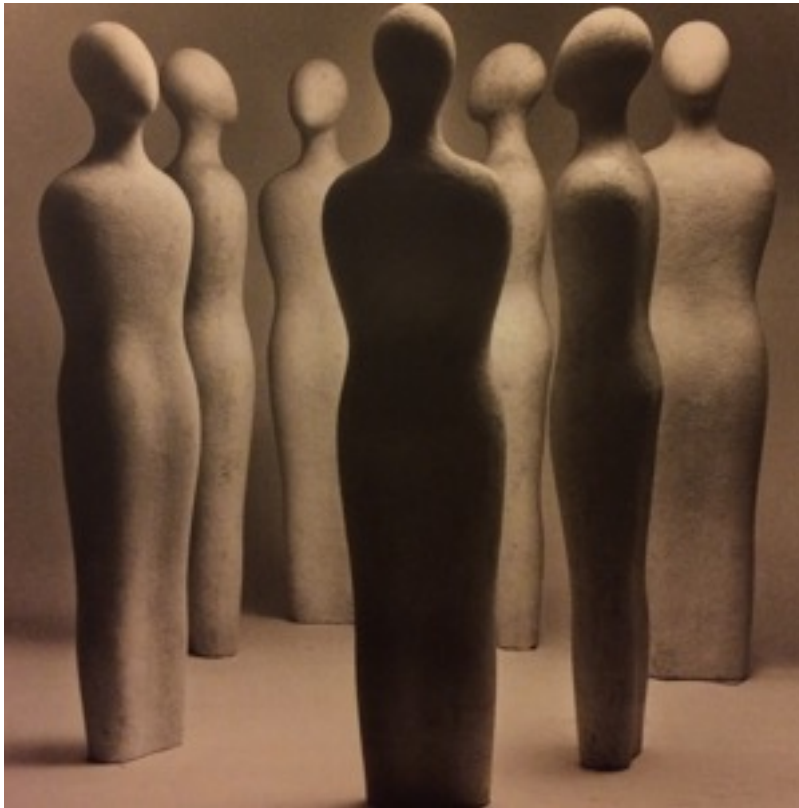
Source: Photo by the author at the Museo del Novecento, 2011

**Figure 0.6:** Fausto Melotti, *Scultura n. 11*, 1934 (plaster, 80x70x14.5cm)



Source: *Melotti*. Edited by Germano Celant, Museum of contemporary Art DonnaREGina Milan: Mondadori Electa S.p.A., 2011. 35-372. 68. Figure 61.

**Figure 0.7:** Fausto Melotti, *I Sette Savi*, 1960 (1978) (plaster, 225x55x31cm)



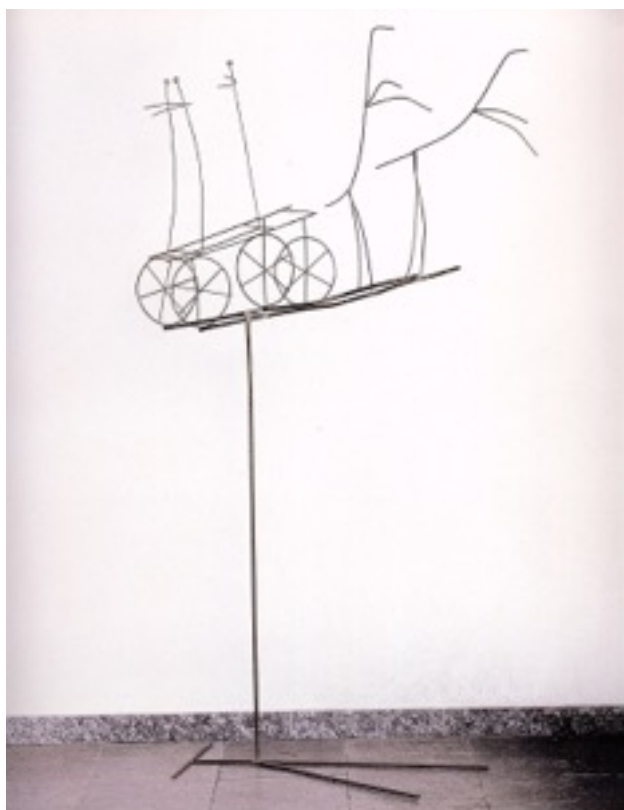
Source: *Melotti*. Edited by Germano Celant, Museum of contemporary Art DonnaREGina Milan: Mondadori Electa S.p.A., 2011. 35-372. 177. Figure 231.

**Figure 0.8:** Fausto Melotti, *La Casa dell'orologiaio*, 1960 (brass, 113.5x37.7x16.4cm)



Source: *Melotti*. Edited by Germano Celant, Museum of contemporary Art DonnaREgina Milan: Mondadori Electa S.p.A., 2011. 35-372. 183. Figure 246.

**Figure 0.9:** Fausto Melotti, *Il carro*, 1966 (brass, 243x160x45cm)



**Figure 0.10:** Pablo Picasso, *Figure (proposé comme projet pour un monument à Guillaume Apollinaire)*, 1928 (Iron wire, sheet metal: 50.5x18.x40.8cm)



Source: <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/97-003305-2C6NU0STZGLT.html> [Accessed: 26 April 2015]

**Figure 0.11:** Photograph of Marino and his twin sister Egle in Rotterdam, 1956



Source: *Marino Marini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 345.

**Figure 0.12:** Arturo Martini, *Le Sete*, 1934 (pietra di finale, 78 x 110 x 164 cm)



Source: Fergonzi, Flavio, and Massimo De Sabbata. "Arturo Martini." In *Museo del Novecento: The Collection*. Edited by Flavio Fergonzi, Antonello Negri and Marina Pugliese. Milan: Electa, 2010. 133.

**Figure 0.13:** Marini's works at the 1935 Rome Quadriennale, Room XXI



Source: Pontiggia, Elena. "La Grande Quadriennale." In *La Grande Quadriennale. 1935 La Nuova Arte Italiana*. Edited by Elena Pontiggia and Carlo F. Carli. Vol. 3, I Quaderni della Quadriennale. Milano: Mondadori Electa, S.p.A., 2006. 12.



**Figure 0.14:** Marino Marini, *Piccolo Cavaliere* (sketch), 1942 (polychrome terracotta, 31.1x29.5x16.4cm)



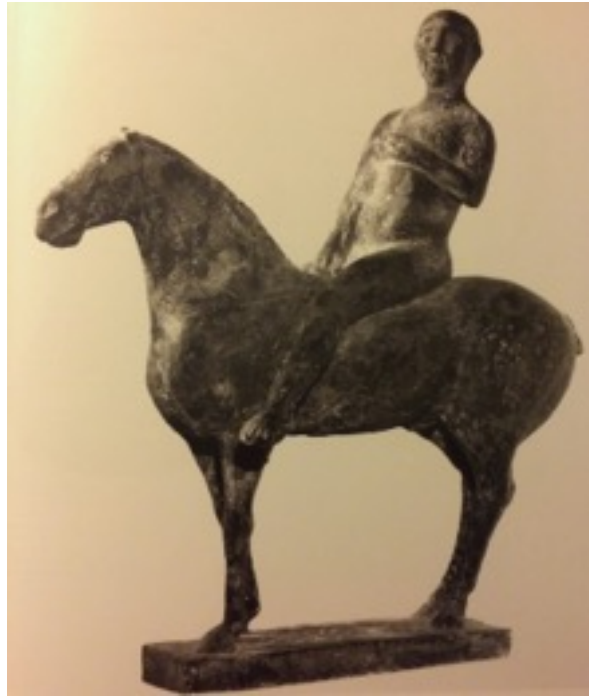
Source: *Marino Marini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 124. Figure 175.

**Figure 0.15:** Marino Marini, *Cavaliere*, 1943 (polychrome terracotta, 25x39.7x10cm)



Source: *Marino Marini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 150. Figure 209

**Figure 0.16:** Marino Marini, *Cavaliere*, 1945 (polychrome bronze, one of three casts, 103x56x24cm)



Source: *Marino Marini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 199. Figure 285.

**Figure 0.17:** Marino Marini, *Pomona*, 1947 (bronze, unique case, 150x50x62cm)



Source: *Marino Marini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 210. Figure 299.

**Figure 0.18:** Marino Marini, *Miracolo*, 1959-60 (bronze)



Source: Photo by the author at the Kunsthau Zürich, 2014

**Figure 0.19:** Marino Marini, *Angelo della Città*, 1949-50 (bronze, three casts, 172x167x106cm)



Source: Photo by the author at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, 2011



**Figure 1.1:** Facade of the Palazzo Centrale (arch. Duilio Torres), 1932



Image Source: Bazzoni, Romolo. *60 Anni della Biennale di Venezia*. Venice: Lombroso Editore, 1962. 85.

**Figure 1.2:** Marino Marini, *Icaro*, 1933



Image Source: *Marino Marini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 65. no. 87.

**Figure 1.3:** Marino Marini, *Ritratto*, ca. 1939



Source: *III Quadriennale d'arte nazionale: catalogo generale*. Rome: Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 1939. 91.

**Figure 1.4:** Lucio Fontana, *Paoletta*, 1938 (polychrome ceramic, 68x64.5x32.5cm)



Image Source: *III Quadriennale d'arte nazionale: catalogo generale*. Rome: Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 1939. 141.

**Figure 1.5:** Italo Grisellis, *S.M. la Regina Margherita*, 1939



Source: *III Quadriennale d'arte nazionale: catalogo generale*. Rome: Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 1939. 50.

**Figure 1.6:** Fausto Melotti, *Scultura no. 21*, 1935 (stainless steel, 150x110x100cm)



Source: Photograph by the Author at the Museo Novecento, Milan (2011)

**Figure 1.7:** Giovanni Muzio (arch.), *Palazzo dell'Arte*, 1933



Source: *La Triennale di Milano e il Palazzo dell'Arte*. Translated by Denis Bathish and Fulvia Tassini. Edited by Dario Marchesoni. Milan: Electa 1985. 25. no 10.

**Figure 1.8:** Photo of Architect Giovanni Muzio showing Benito Mussolini around the construction site of the *Palazzo dell'Arte*, Oct. 1932.



Source: *La Triennale di Milano e il Palazzo dell'Arte*. Translated by Denis Bathish and Fulvia Tassini. Edited by Dario Marchesoni. Milan: Electa 1985. 22. no. 5.



**Figure 1.9:** Photo of the setting of foundation for the *Palazzo dell'Arte*, October 28, 1932.



Source: *La Triennale di Milano e il Palazzo dell'Arte*. Translated by Denis Bathish and Fulvia Tassini. Edited by Dario Marchesoni. Milan: Electa 1985. 20. no.2

**Figure 1.10:** Installation view of Lucio Fontana, *Vittoria*, 1936 inside Marchello Nizzoli, Giancarlo Palanti, Edoardo Persico's *Sala di Vittoria* at the 1936 VI Triennale di Milano



Source: *La Triennale di Milano e il Palazzo dell'Arte*. Translated by Denis Bathish and Fulvia Tassini. Edited by Dario Marchesoni. Milan: Electa 1985. 41. no. 38.

**Figure 1.11:** Installation view of Fausto Melotti, *San Tommaso*, 1939-40 at the back left. Renato Camus's impluvium floor, ca. 1939 and Basin decorations by Enrico Ciuti, ca. 1939.



Source: *La Triennale di Milano e il Palazzo dell'Arte*. Translated by Denis Bathish and Fulvia Tassini. Edited by Dario Marchesoni. Milan: Electa 1985. 43. no. 40.

**Figure 1.12:** Fausto Melotti's series of personifications of the arts, 1939-40, at left, in the atrium vestibule designed by Renato Camus, ca. 1939



Source: *La Triennale di Milano e il Palazzo dell'Arte*. Translated by Denis Bathish and Fulvia Tassini. Edited by Dario Marchesoni. Milan: Electa 1985. 42. no. 39.

**Figure 1.13:** Fausto Melotti, *San Tommaso*, 1939-40 (plaster, destroyed), installed in the facade over the entrance into the VII Triennale di Milano 1940.



Source: Celant, Germano. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 41. no. 1939-40.9.



**Figure 1.14:** Renato Guttuso, *Crucifixion*, 1941 (oil on canvas, 200 x 200 cm)



Source: Celant, Germano. *The Italian metamorphosis, 1943-1968*. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1994. plate 15.

**Figure 1.15:** Giacomo Manzù, *Christ with General*, c. 1947 (Bronze bas-relief, 71x51cm)



Source: *Manzù*. Edited by Livia Velani. Milan: Electa, 1987. 92. no. 57



**Figure 1.16:** Fausto Melotti, *La Pittura*, 1939-40 (plaster, now destroyed)



Source: Celant, Germano. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 40. no. 1939-40.7.

**Figure 1.17:** Faust Melotti, *L'Architettura*, 1939-40 (plaster, now destroyed)



Source: Celant, Germano. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 40. no. 1939-40.8.

**Figure 1.18:** Fausto Melotti, *La Scultura*, 1939-40 (plaster, now destroyed)



Source: Celant, Germano. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 40. no. 1939-40.5.

**Figure 1.19:** Fausto Melotti, *La Decorazione*, 1939-40 (plaster, now destroyed)



Source: Celant, Germano. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 40. no. 1939-40.6.

**Figure 1.20:** *Manifesto ufficiale dell'Esposizione*, Oct. 1939. (architects: Giuseppe Pagano, Marchello Piacentini, Luigi Piccianto, Ettore Rossi, and Luigi Vietti)



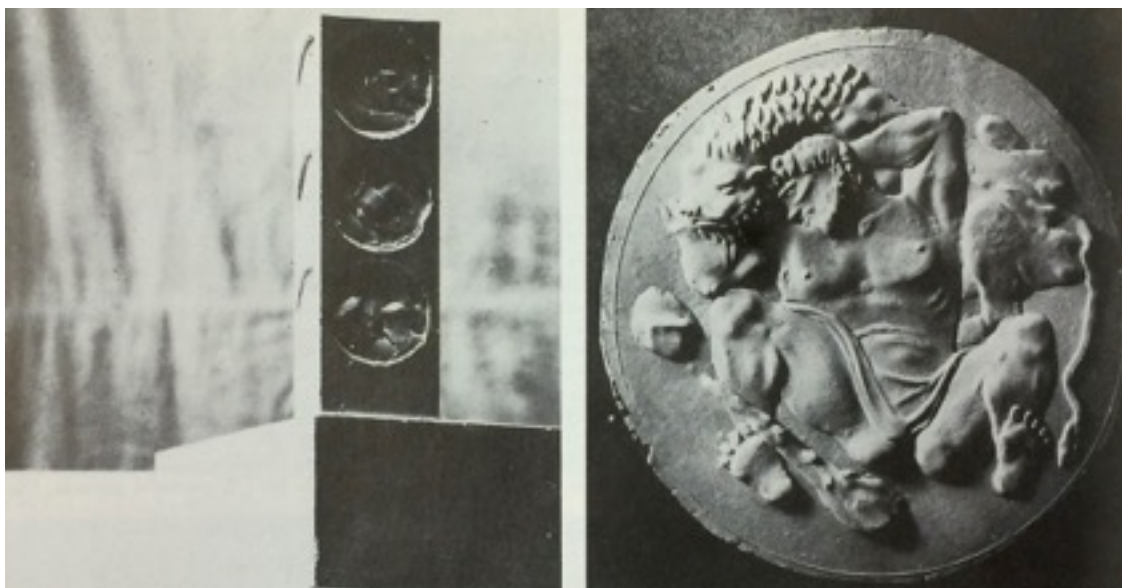
Source: *E 42: Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Edited by Mauricio Calvesi, Enrico Guidoni and Simonetta Lux. Vol. II. Venice: Cataloghi Marsilio, 1987. Figure 1.

**Figure 1.21:** BBRP, *Mostra della civiltà italiana* (first view: front prospect), 1935-36



Source: Guidoni, Enrico. "L'E 42, città della rappresentazione. Il progetto urbanistico e le polemiche sull'architettura." In *E 42: Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Edited by Mauricio Calvesi, Enrico Guidoni and Simonetta Lux. Vol. II. Venice: Cataloghi Marsilio, 1987. 20

**Figure 1.22:** Arturo Martini, *Decorazione della scalinata*, maquette (details), ca. 1939-42



Source: *E 42: Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Edited by Mauricio Calvesi, Enrico Guidoni and Simonetta Lux. Vol. II. Venice: Cataloghi Marsilio, 1987. 430.

**Figure 1.23:** Fausto Melotti, *Si fondano le città*, 1942 (variant no. 2, clay model)



Source: Celant, Germano. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 44. no. 1942.2.



**Figure 1.24:** Fausto Melotti, *Si fondano le città*, 1941 (variant no. 1, plaster maquette)



Source: Celant, Germano. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 44. no. 1941.3

**Figure 1.25:** Fausto Melotti, *Si redimono i campi*, 1941 (variant no.2, plaster maquette)



Source: Celant, Germano. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 44. no. 1941.1

**Figure 1.26:** Fausto Melotti, *Si redimono i campi*, 1942 (variant no. 4, clay model) 260 cm



Source: Celant, Germano. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 45. no. 1942.1

**Figure 1.27:** Fausto Melotti in the studio with the model of *Si redimono i campi*, ca. 1942



Source: *E 42: Utopia e Scenario del Regime*. Edited by Mauricio Calvesi, Enrico Guidoni and Simonetta Lux. Vol. II. Venice: Cataloghi Marsilio, 1987. 434.

**Figure 1.28:** Fausto Melotti, *Si redimono i campi*, 1943 (variant no. 4, detail of Maternità)  
marble, 520cm



Source: Celant, Germano. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 47. no. 1943.1

**Figure 1.29:** Fausto Melotti, *Si redimono i campi*, 1943 (variant no. 4, detail of marble, 520cm)



Source: Celant, Germano. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 47. no. 1943.2

**Figure 2.1:** Destroyed Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, 1942 (Image shows scaffolding at center, behind which Leonardo's *Last Supper* fresco escaped destruction.)



Image Source: Victor R. Boswell, Jr., National Geographic Creative, ID: 296795, <http://www.natgeocreative.com/photography/296795>

**Figure 2.2:** Photo of Melotti's bombed studio on via Leopardi in Milan, ca. 1943



Image Source: Celant, Germano. *Melotti*. Milan: Electa, 2011, 85. no. 79.



**Figure 2.3:** Photo of Fontana in the ruins of his studio in Milan, 1946



Image Source: Loredana Mascheroni, "Alfredo Jaar, Venezia Venezia" in *Domusweb*, [http://www.domusweb.it/es/arte/2013/06/24/alfredo\\_jaar\\_venicevenice.html](http://www.domusweb.it/es/arte/2013/06/24/alfredo_jaar_venicevenice.html) [accessed 13 May 2015]

**Figure 2.4:** Adolf von Hildebrand, *Dionysus*, 1890, terracotta



Image Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dionysos\\_Hildebrand.JPG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dionysos_Hildebrand.JPG), Photographer: James Steakley, 8 January 2009

**Figure 2.5:** Fausto Melotti, *Scultura n. 15*, 1935



Image Source: <http://www.fondazionefaustomelotti.org/it/works/scultura-n-15/> [accessed 13 May 2015]

**Figure 2.6:** Fausto Melotti, *Scultura n. 23*, 1935



Image Source: Celant, Germao. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 32. no.1935.14

**Figure 2.7:** Fausto Melotti, *Il Diavolo che tenta gli intellettuali*, 1940 (terracotta with slip, 51.5x50.8x12.2cm)



Source: *Fausto Melotti: Teatrini 1931-1985*. Edited by Carlo Pirovano. Verona: Charta, 1996. 57 Plate 4.

**Figure 2.8:** Fausto Melotti, *L'Eco*, 1945 (terracotta, 38x32.8x16cm)



Source: *Fausto Melotti: Teatrini 1931-1985*. Edited by Carlo Pirovano. Verona: Charta, 1996. 67 Plate 9.

**Figure 2.9:** Fausto Melotti, *Solo coi cerchi*, 1944 (terracotta, 43x28x24cm)

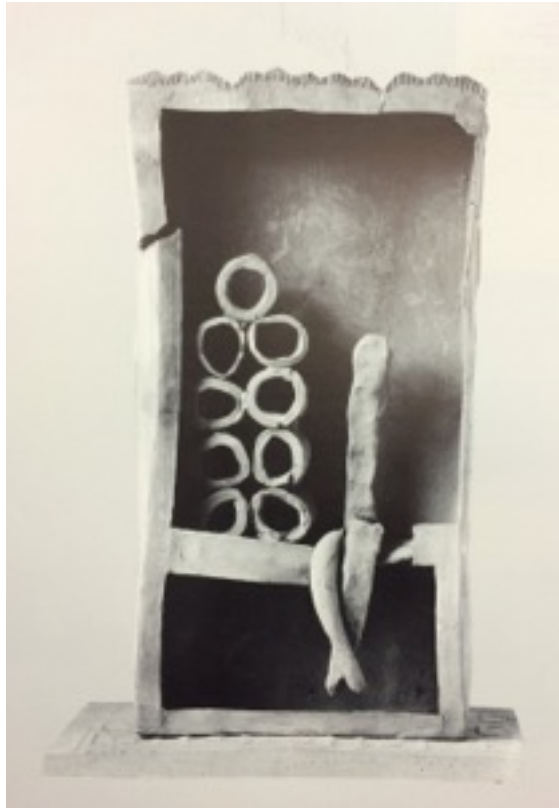


Image Source: Celant, Germao. *Melotti. Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 57. no. 1944.4.

**Figure 2.10:** Fausto Melotti, *Sculpture C (L'Infinito)*, 1969

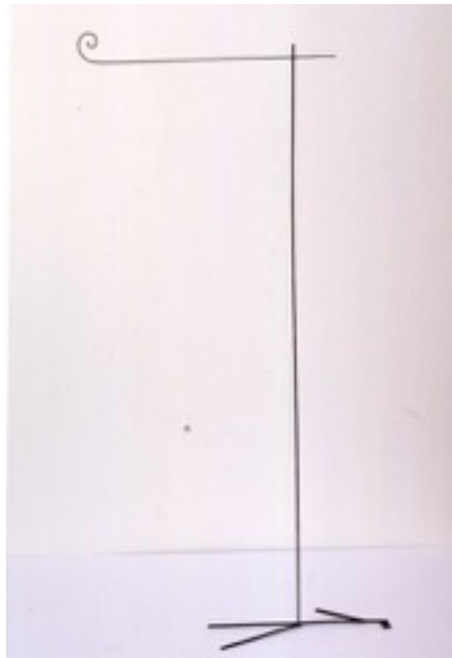


Image Source: <http://www.repubblica.it/2006/08/gallerie/spettacoliecultura/mostra-cortenuova/12.html> [Accessed: 15 June 2008]

**Figure 2.11:** Fausto Melotti, *Il Sogno di Wotan*, 1958 (painted terracotta, fixative, brass, 52.8x39.2x11cm)



Image Source: *Fausto Melotti: Teatrini 1931-1985*. Edited by Carlo Pirovano. Verona: Charta, 1996. 79 Plate 15.

**Figure 2.12:** Fausto Melotti, *Il Museo*, 1959 (painted terracotta and ceramic, 26cm)



Image Source: Celant, Germao. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Tomo Primo Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 108. no. 1959.3.



**Figure 2.13:** Fausto Melotti, *Dopoguerra*, 1946 (painted clay, 44x93x6cm)



Source: *Return To Earth: Ceramic Sculpture of Fontana, Melotti, Miró, Noguchi, and Picasso 1943-1963*. Edited by Jed Morse. Dallas: Nasher Sculpture Center, 2013. fig. 24.

**Figure 2.14:** Arturo Martini, *Donna alla finestra*, 1931-32



Source: *Arturo Martini: Catalogo delle sculture e delle ceramiche*. Edited by Guido Perocco. Treviso: Neri Pozza Editore, 1966. fig. 188.

**Figure 2.15:** Marino Marini, *Cavaliere*, 1936-37 (polychrome wood, 160x205x96cm)

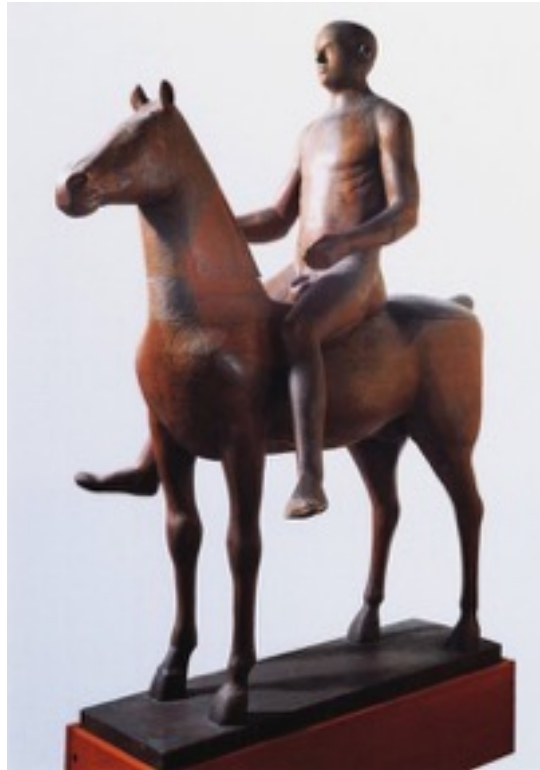


Image Source: *Marino Marini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 90 Plate 127.

**Figure 2.16:** Anonymous, *Bamberg Rider*, ca. 1230 (stone, 292.1 cm)



Source: Fozi, Shirin. "The Bamberg Rider." *Conversations: An Online Journal of the Center for the Study of Material and Visual Cultures of Religion* (2014), <http://mavcor.yale.edu/conversations/object-narratives/bamberg-rider>. [Accessed: May 22, 2015]

**Figure 2.17:** Marino Marini, *Piccolo cavaliere*, 1948 (polychrome plaster, 60x23.62cm)



**Figure 2.18:** Marino Marini, *Cavaliere*, 1947 (bronze 66in high)



Image Source: Soby, James Thrall, and Jr. Alfred H. Barr. *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1949. plate 119  
(Titled in catalogue: "Horse and Rider")



**Figure 2.19:** Marino Marini, *Cavaliere*, 1947 (bronze, four casts, 97x65x37cm)

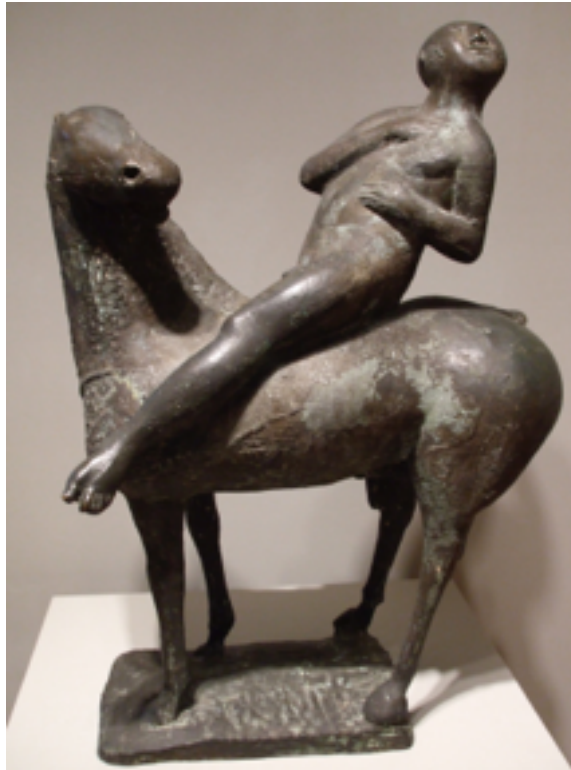


Image Source: Photo by the Author at the Art Institute of Chicago, 2008

**Figure 2.20:** *Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius*, in Piazza del Campidoglio, ca. 161-180 CE (photo by Alinari, 1933)



Image Source: *James Thrall Soby Papers*, I.171, Museum of Modern Art, New York

**Figure 2.21:** Emilio Gallori, *Monumento a Giuseppe Garibaldi*, 1895 (Rome)



Image Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rima\\_Gianicolo\\_Monumento\\_a\\_Garibaldi.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rima_Gianicolo_Monumento_a_Garibaldi.jpg) [Accessed: 13 May 2015]

**Figure 2.22:** Giacomo Brogi, *Monumento a Emanuele Filiberto di Savoia*, ca. 1865 (Turin)

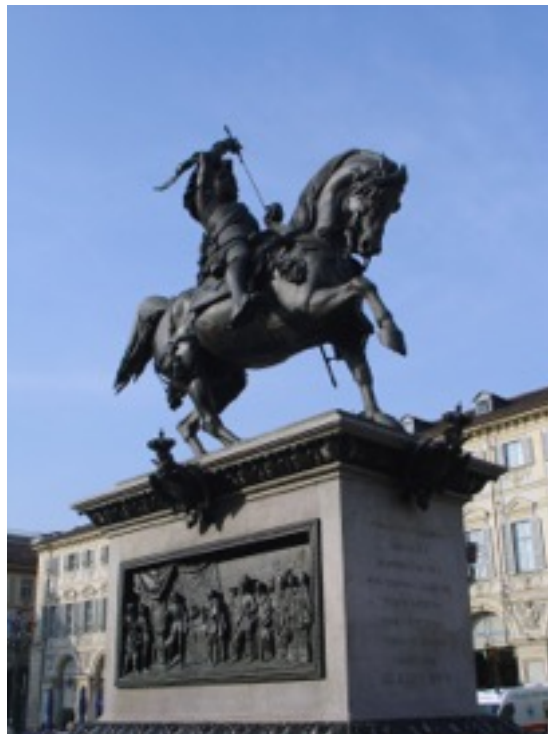


Image Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monumento\\_a\\_Emanuele\\_Filiberto\\_1.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monumento_a_Emanuele_Filiberto_1.jpg) [Accessed 13 May 2015]

**Figure 2.23:** Giorgio de Chirico, *The Red Tower*, 1913 (Oil on canvas, 73.5 x 100.5 cm)



Image Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Red\\_Tower.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Red_Tower.jpg) [Accessed: 13 May 2015]

**Figure 2. 24:** Primo Conti, *Il Duce*, ca. 1939 (220x210cm)



Source: Source: *III Quadriennale d'arte nazionale: catalogo generale*. Rome: Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 1939. Plate 1.

**Figure 2.25:** Eugene Colmo, *San Giorgio Benito Uccide il Mostro delle Sanzioni* (*St. George Benito [Mussolini] Kills the Monster of Sanctions*), 1935 (maiolica plate)



Image Source: Crum, Roger J. "Shaping the Fascist "New Man" - Donatello's St. George and Mussolini; Appropriated Renaissance of the Italian Nation." In *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Edited by Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005. 133-44. 141. Fig. 59.

**Figure 2.26:** Publicity Photomontage, Mussolini Mounted on a Horse, 1935



Image Source: Malvano, Laura. *Fascismo e politica dell'immagine*. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1988. no. 74

**Figure 2.27:** Filippo Sgarlata, *It Is the Plow That Draws the Sickle, but It Is the Sword Which Defends It*, 1938

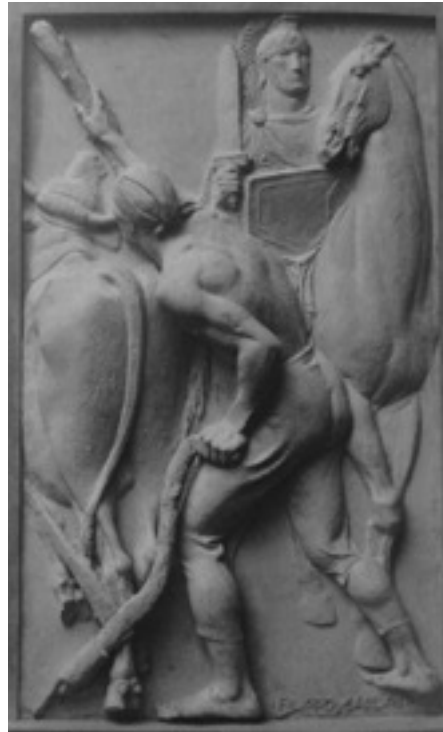


Image Source: Stone, Marla. "The State as Patron: Making Official Culture in Fascist Italy." In *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy*. Edited by Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. 230, no. 37.

**Figure 2.28:** Publicity Photo, Mussolini in Libya Mounted on a Horse



Image Source: Malvano, Laura. *Fascismo e politica dell'immagine*. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1988. no.80



**Figure 2.29:** Giorgio Gori, *Genio del Fascismo* on the cover of *L'Illustrazione del Medico*, July 1937.

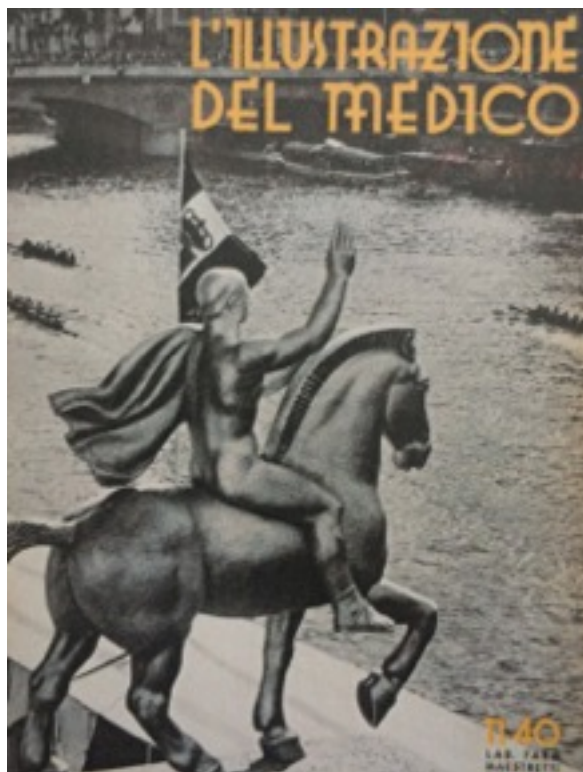


Image Source: *The Thirties : the arts in Italy beyond fascism*. Translated by Stephen Tobin and Lara Fantoni. Edited by Antonello Negri, Silvia Bignami, Paolo Rusconi and Giorgio Zanchetti, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi. Florence: Giunti, 2012. 211.

**Figure 2.30:** Marino Marini, *Pomona*, 1945 (bronze, 162 x 66 x 53 cm)



Source: Marino Marini. *Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Fondazione Marino Marini. First ed. Milan: Skira, 1998. 187. Plate 268b

**Figure 3.1:** Melotti's Ceramic Marks



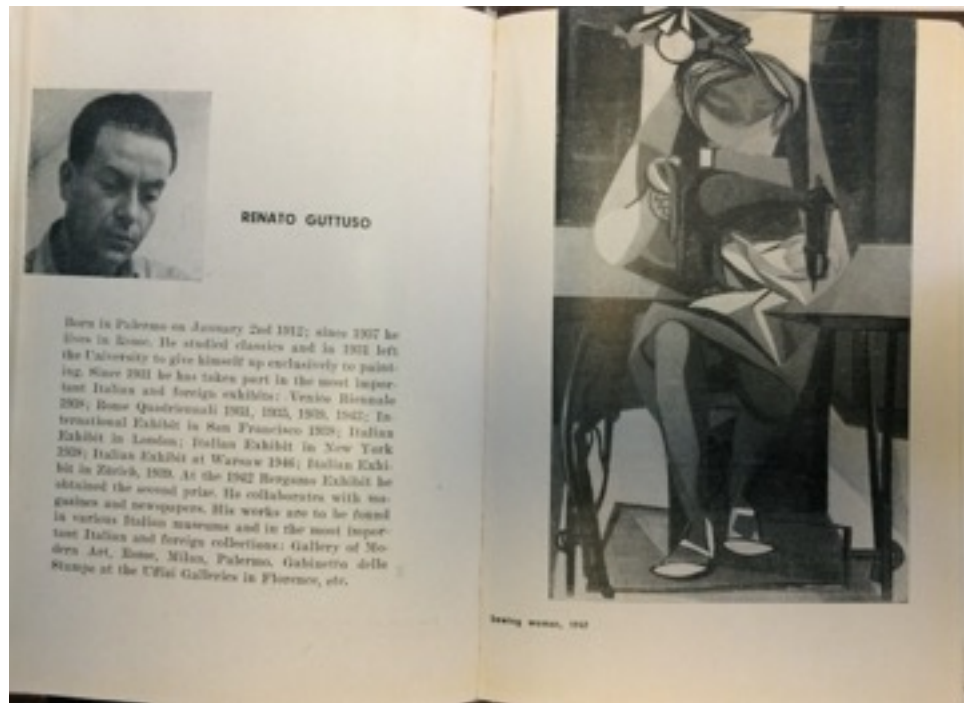
Source: Fausto Melotti. *L'opera in ceramica*, edited by Antonella Commellato and Marta Melotti, Milan: Skira, 2003. 445.

**Figure 3.2:** Catalogue Cover: *Italy at work: her renaissance in design today*, 1950



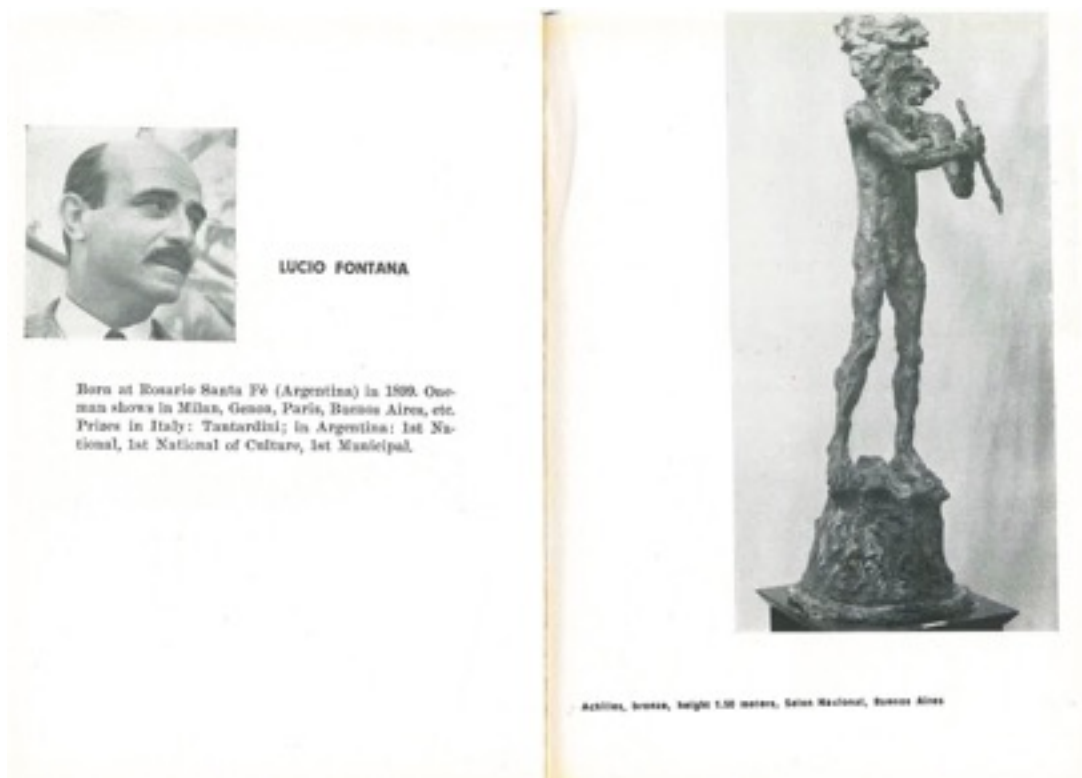
Source: *Handicraft as a Fine Art in Italy*. New York: House of Italian Handicraft, 1947.

**Figure 3.3:** Renato Guttuso in *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy*, 1947



Source: *Handicraft as a Fine Art in Italy*. New York: House of Italian Handicraft, 1947. (unnumbered pages)

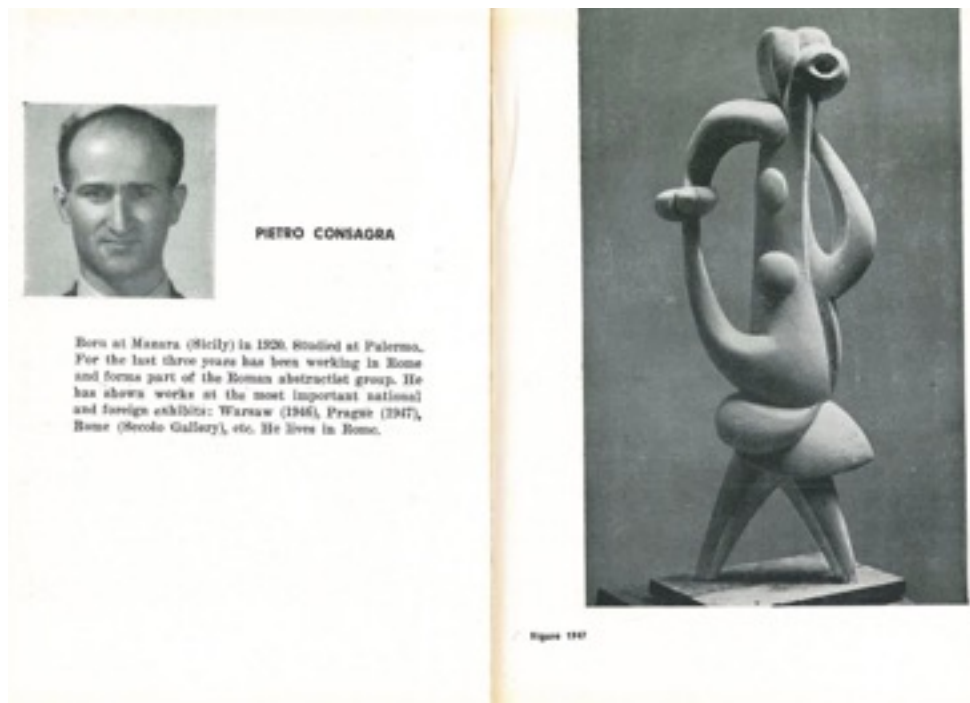
**Figure 3.4:** Lucio Fontana in *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy*, 1947



Source: *Handicraft as a Fine Art in Italy*. New York: House of Italian Handicraft, 1947. (unnumbered pages)

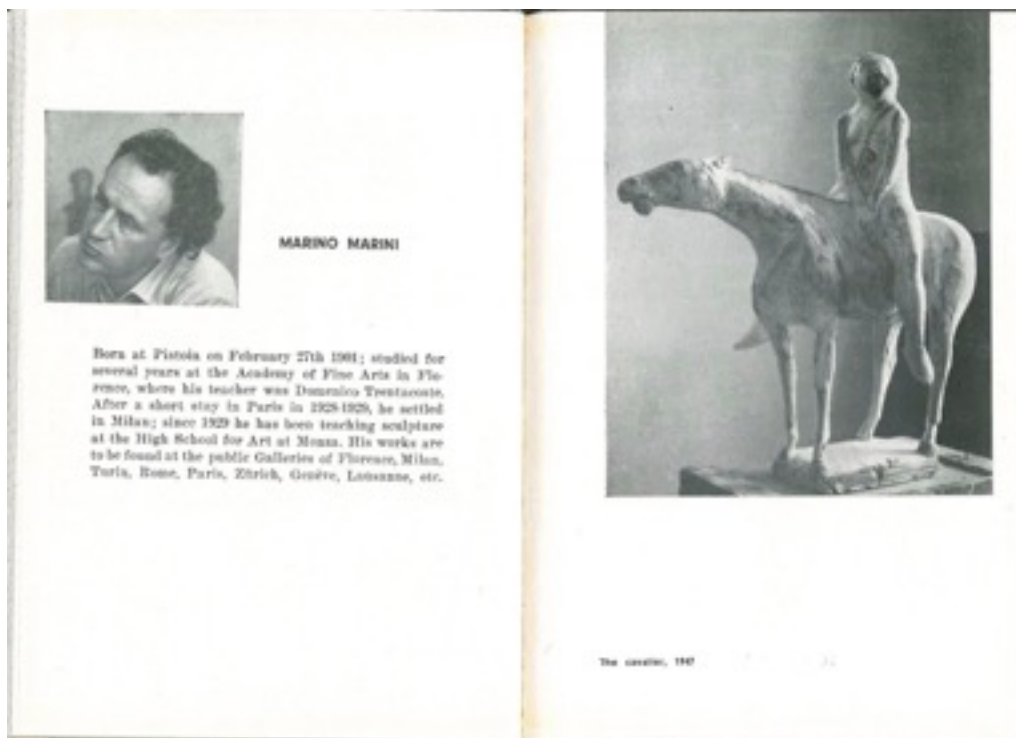


**Figure 3.5:** Pietro Consagra in *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy*, 1947



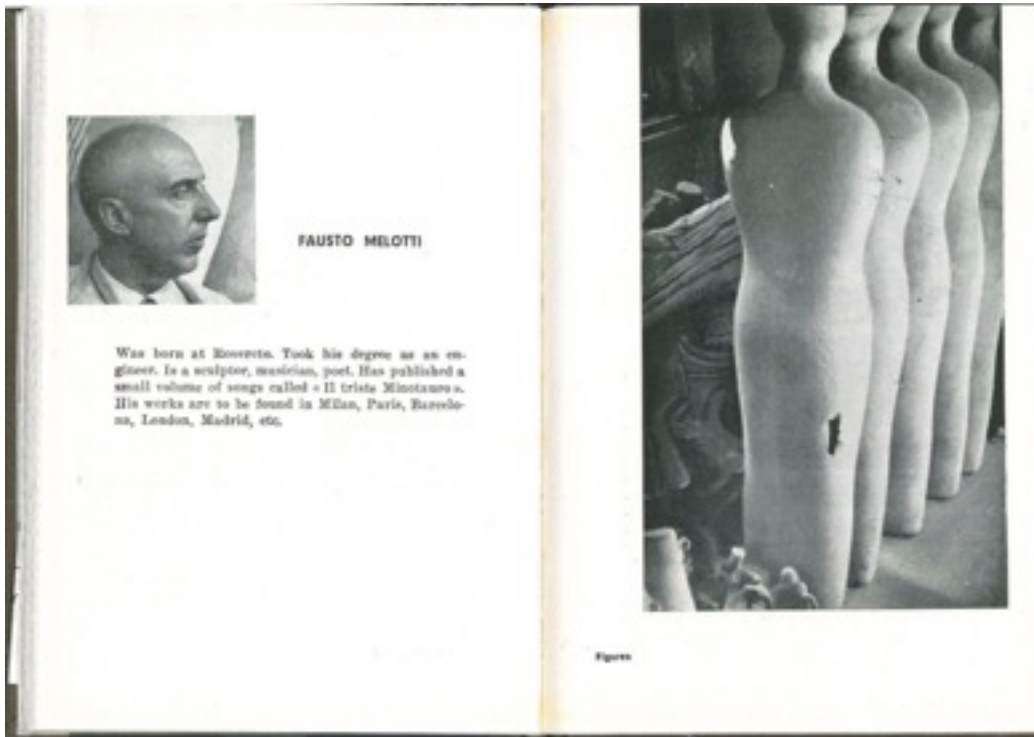
Source: *Handicraft as a Fine Art in Italy*. New York: House of Italian Handicraft, 1947. (unnumbered pages)

**Figure 3.6:** Marino Marini in *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy*, 1947



Source: *Handicraft as a Fine Art in Italy*. New York: House of Italian Handicraft, 1947. (unnumbered pages)

**Figure 3.7:** Fausto Melotti in *Handicraft as a fine art in Italy*, 1947



Source: *Handicraft as a Fine Art in Italy*. New York: House of Italian Handicraft, 1947. (unnumbered pages)

**Figure 3.8:** Fausto Melotti, *Uomo Coerenza*, 1936 (plaster, 12 pieces, 225x55x31cm)



Image Source: Celant, Germano. *Melotti. Catalogo generale. Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. Milano: Electa, 1994. 36.

**Figure 3.9:** Fausto Melotti, *Coerenza Uomo* 1935-36, photo signed “Peressutti” dated “1936” on reverse



Source: MaRT, *Archivio del '900*, Archivio di Carlo Belli, Reg. n. 44, Cart. n. 201, V3

**Figure 3.10:** Olivetti, *Studio* portable typewriter and electronic calculator, 1950



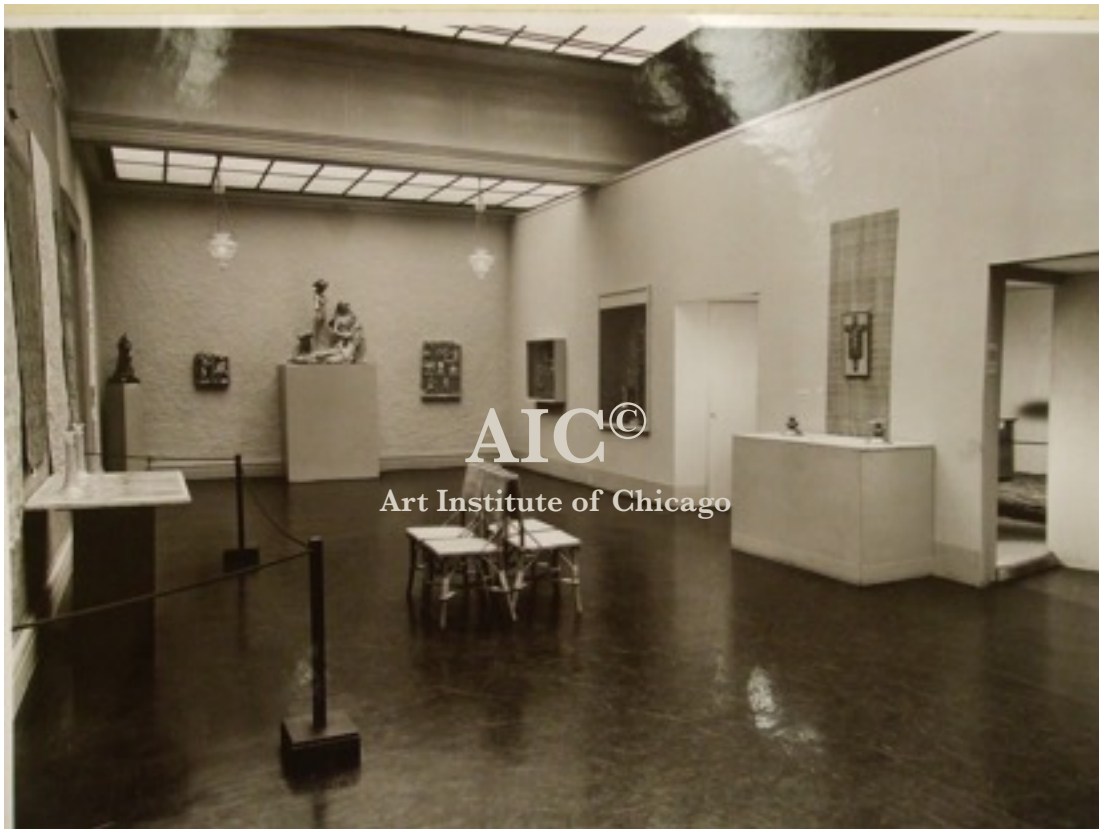
Source: *Italy at work: her renaissance in design today*, Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiano, 1950 (unnumbered plate)

**Figure 3.11:** Riccardo Navara Prodotti d'Arte, *Group of toys*, 1950, polychrome felt



Source: *Italy at work: her renaissance in design today*, Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiano, 1950 (unnumbered plate)

**Figure 3.12:** Room G58, *Italy at work: her renaissance in design today*, 1950 at the Art Institute of Chicago, installation view



Source: *AIC Historical Photographs*, Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 5351 FF2A & 5353 FF4c



**Figure 3.13:** *Italy at work: her renaissance in design today*, 1950, at the Brooklyn Museum, installation view



Source: Brooklyn Museum photograph, 1950. [http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/exhibitions/859/Italy\\_at\\_Work\\_Her\\_Renaissance\\_in\\_Design\\_Today](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/exhibitions/859/Italy_at_Work_Her_Renaissance_in_Design_Today)

**Figure 3.14:** Luigi Bevilacqua, *Fabrics for ecclesiastical vestments*, 1950 (cut velvet and brocade)



Source: *Italy at work: her renaissance in design today*, Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigano, 1950 (unnumbered plate)

**Figure 3.15:** Emilio Paoli, *Goat and donkey*, 1950 (straw toys)



Source: *Italy at work: her renaissance in design today*, Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigano, 1950 (unnumbered plate)

**Figure 3.16:** Innocenti, *Lambretta*, ca1950, model LD



Source: *Italy at work: her renaissance in design today*, Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigano, 1950 (unnumbered plate)

**Figure 3.17:** Photo of Enrico Bernardi (extreme right) showing his cabinets to the members of the selection committee (left to right: Walter Dorwin Teague, Charles Nagel, Meyric R. Rogers, and Ramy Alexander), ca. 1949



Source: *Italy at work: her renaissance in design today*, Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigano, 1950. 8.

**Figure 3.18:** Fausto Melotti, *Coopa (Cup)*, ca. 1948 (polychrome glazed ceramic, 17x16cm)



Source: *Fausto Melotti. L'opera in ceramica*, edited by Antonella Commellato and Marta Melotti, Milan: Skira, 2003. 303.

**Figure 3.19:** Fausto Melotti, *Cartoccio (Cornet)*, ca. 1930 (glazed ceramic, 25.5 x 38 x 35cm)



Source: *Fausto Melotti. L'opera in ceramica*, edited by Antonella Commellato and Marta Melotti, Milan: Skira, 2003. 318.

**Figure 3.20:** Fausto Melotti, *Cartoccio (Cornet)*, ca. 1930 (polychrome ceramic, 30 x 25cm)



Source: *Fausto Melotti. L'opera in ceramica*, edited by Antonella Commellato and Marta Melotti, Milan: Skira, 2003. 318.



**Figure 3.21:** Fausto Melotti, *Cornice (Frame)*, ca. 1950 (polychrome glazed ceramic, 71 x 55 x 8cm)



Source: *Fausto Melotti. L'opera in ceramica*, edited by Antonella Commellato and Marta Melotti, Milan: Skira, 2003. 410.

**Figure 3.22:** Lucio Fontana, *Vase (one of pair)* ca. 1950 (polychrome faience with luster)



Source: *Italy at work: her renaissance in design today*, Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiano, 1950 (unnumbered plate)

**Figure 3.23:** Fausto Melotti, *Annunciation*, 1948-49 (glazed ceramic, 57.5 x 26 x 14 cm)



Source: *Italy at work: her renaissance in design today*, Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigano, 1950 (unnumbered plate)

**Figure 3.24:** Lucio Fontana, *Transfiguration*, ca. 1950



Source: *Italy at work: her renaissance in design today*, Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigano, 1950 (unnumbered plate)

**Figure 3.25:** Victor Cerrato, *Four Sardinian Women*, ca. 1950 (candle holders, polychrome faience)



Source: *Italy at work: her renaissance in design today*, Rome: The Compagnia Nazionale Artigiano, 1950 (unnumbered plate)

**Figure 3.26:** *A&S Advertisement in the New York Times*. Dec. 1, 1950



Source: "Display Ad 55 - Abraham & Straus." *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1950, 13.

**Figure 4.1:** Marino Marini, *Angelo della città*, 1948 (cast 1950? Bronze, 167.5x106cm)



Source: "Marino Marini" *Guggenheim Museum*, <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/2802> [Accessed May 24, 2015]

**Figure 4.2:** Cynthia Ford, *Ray Stark atop his Angel of the Citadel by Marino Marini*, 1981 (1950 cast of Marini's *Angelo della Città*)



Source: "Brice and Stark," William Brice Gallery, <http://williambricegallery.com/photo-album/brice-and-stark/#!prettyPhoto> [Accessed May 4, 2014]

**Figure 4.3:** Marino Marini, *Il Cavaliere*, 1948 (plaster)



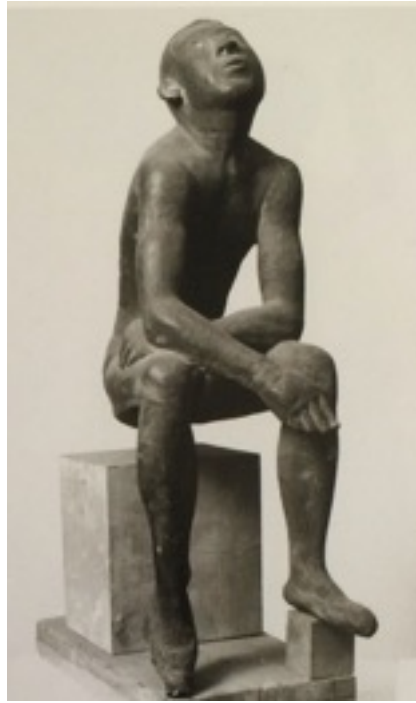
Source: Carrieri, Raffaele. *Avant-Garde Painting and Sculpture in Italy (1890-1955)*. Milan: Edizioni della Conchiglia, 1955. 182. Plate 220.

**Figure 4.4:** Marino Marini, *Dancer*, 1949 (plaster, 177.5x57x40.5: cast in bronze three times, including one for James Thrall Soby)



Source: Marino Marini. *Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 226, plate 321a

**Figure 4.5:** Marino Marini, *Puglie*, 1935 (bronze, 2 casts, Museo Marino Marini cast size, 63.6x20.5x33cm)



Source: Marino Marini. *Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 75. plate 103.

**Figure 4.6:** Marino Marini, *Young Girl*, 1943 (bronze, six casts, 137.5x4.5x36cm)



Source: *Marino Marini. Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 139. Plate 193b.

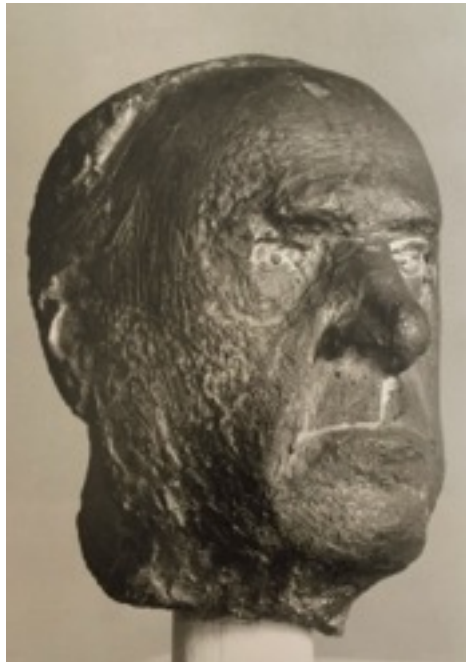


**Figure 4.7:** Marino Marini, *Ritratto di Lamberto Vitali*, 1937-45 (Bronze, three casts, 2: 39.1x15.8x24cm)



Source: Marino Marini. *Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 88. plate 125a

**Figure 4.8:** Marino Marini, *Ritratto di Carlo Carrà*, 1946 (bronze, two casts, Museo Pevoltella cast size: 23x12x16cm: there was also one plaster and one lead version)



Source: Marino Marini. *Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 208. plate 296b

**Figure 4.9:** Marino Marini's 1947 *Cavaliere* illustrated in the *Twentieth-Century Italian Art* catalogue



Source: Soby, James Thrall, and Alfred H. Barr Jr. *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1949. Plate 120.

**Figure 4.10:** Arturo Martini, *Fisherman's Wife*, 1931 (terracotta)



Source: Source: Soby, James Thrall, and Alfred H. Barr Jr. *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1949. Plate 114.



**Figure 4.11:** Arturo Martini, *Daedalus and Icarus*, 1934-35 (bronze, 24in high)



Source: Soby, James Thrall, and Alfred H. Barr Jr. *Twentieth-Century Italian Art*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1949. Plate 116.

**Figure 4.12:** Giacomo Manzù, *Cardinale*, 1948 (bronze, h13.75in)



Source: Rewald, John. *Giacomo Manzù*. Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1966. Plate 46

**Figure 4.13:** Giacomo Manzù, *Passo di Danza*, 1963 (bronze, 11 ft tall, installed outside One Woodward Place, Detroit, MI)



Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:One\\_Woodward\\_Building\\_lobby\\_sculpture\\_Detroit.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:One_Woodward_Building_lobby_sculpture_Detroit.jpg) [Accessed Feb. 3, 2014]

**Figure 4.14:** Installation view of *Twentieth Century Italian Art* art MoMA, 1949



Source: *James Thrall Soby Papers*, Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY. 1.135

**Figure 4.15:** Installation view of Marini's 1947 *Cavaliere* in the MoMA exhibition, *Twentieth Century Italian Art* [Caption below: Dei Cavalli con cavaliere, sculture di Marino Marini, qui la visitatrice osserva attenta un gruppo che non la stupisce. È il meno monumentale, il più polemico.]



Source: Carrieri, Raffaele. "200 mila Americani per l'arte italiana contemporanea." *Il Tempo*, Sept. 17-24, 1949, 18.

**Figure 4.16:** Marino Marini, *Cavaliere*, 1947 reproduced for Sam Hunter's 1948 review for the *New York Times*



Source: "BY A CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN" *New York Times* (1923-Current file); Oct 3, 1948; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index. X13.

**Figure 4.17:** Cover of *Marino Marini*, February 14 - March 11, 1950, edited by Buchholz Gallery, New York: Curt Valentin, 1950.



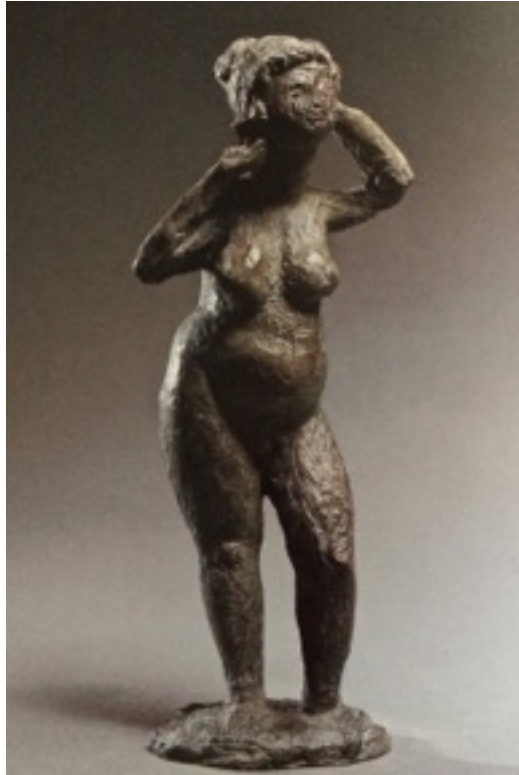
Source: *Marino Marini*, February 14 - March 11, 1950, edited by Buchholz Gallery, New York: Curt Valentin, 1950.

**Figure 4.18:** Marino Marini, *Small Pomona*, 1943 illustrated in the Buchholz Gallery catalogue, 1950



Source: Soby, James Thrall. "Marino Marini." In *Marino Marini*, February 14 - March 11, 1950, edited by Buchholz Gallery, New York: Curt Valentin, 1950. Figure 4

**Figure 4.19:** Marino Marini, *Small Pomona*, 1943 (Bronze, eight casts, 43.5x 19x 15.5cm)



Source: Marino Marini. *Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Fondazione Marino Marini. First ed. Milan: Skira, 1998. 142. Plate 197

**Figure 4.20:** Marino Marini, *Portrait of Nelly [Soby]*, 1948 (bronze, h. 30cm)



Source: Marino Marini. *Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 222. plate 317

**Figure 4.21:** Card and Photo Sent From Mrs. Charles Grace to Curt Valentin 1952



Source: Grace, Mrs. Charles. Note to Curt Valentin with Photo, 1952, in *Archivio Marino Marini*, ID210, Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia.

**Figure 4.22:** Marino Marini, *Juggler*, 1944 (Polychrome bronze, three casts, Museo Marino Marini cast size: 88.4x37.8x67.7cm)



Source: Marino Marini. *Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 175. Plate 247



**Figure 4.23:** Marino Marini, *Small Miracolo*, 1951 (Bronze, seven casts, 54.2x67.8x33cm)



Source: Marino Marini. *Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 251. Plate 355.

**Figure 4.24:** Marino Marini, *Miracolo*, 1953-54 (Bronze, five casts)



Source: Marino Marini. *Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 273. Plate 351.

**Figure 4.25:** Marino Marini, *Guerriero*, 1959-69 (bronze, four casts, 135x224x123cm)



Source: Marino Marini. *Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 299. Plate 430b

**Figure 4.26:** Marino Marini, *Small Composition*, 1956 (Bronze, 13.6x11.5x11 cm)



Source: Marino Marini. *Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 292. Plate 423



**Figure 4.27:** Marino Marini, *Composition*, 1956 (bronze, eight casts, Fondazione cast size: 42.5x30.5x21.4cm)



Source: Marino Marini. *Catalogue Raisonné of the Sculptures*. Edited by Marina Beretta. First ed, Fondazione Marino Marini. Milan: Skira, 1998. 291. Plate 420

**Figure 4.28:** David Smith, *Australia*, 1951 (painted steel on cinder block base, 202x274x41 cm)



[“David Smith (American, 1906-1965),” [http://www.moma.org/collection/browse\\_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A5480&page\\_number=6&template\\_id=1&sort\\_order=1](http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A5480&page_number=6&template_id=1&sort_order=1) [ accessed 9 Oct. 2013]]

**Figure 4.29:** Richard Serra, *Sign Board Prop*, 1969 (antimony lead, 39x79x30in)



Source: ARTstor [online]. New York: New York. [Accessed 27 May 2015]. (<http://www.artstor.org>).

**Figure 5.1:** Fausto Melotti, *L'evoluzione della forma nell'artigianato*, 1961 (Project for the Italia '61 exposition, 800 bas reliefs in ceramic, 50x70cm each)



Source: *Fausto Melotti: L'opera in ceramica*. Edited by Antonella Commellato and Marta Melotti. Milan: Skira, 2003. 417.

**Figure 5.2:** Lucio Fontana, *Fonti di Energia*, 1961 (Project for the Italia '61 exposition, neon, dimensions variable)



Source: "Le ambientazioni di Lucio Fontana" *Collezione da Tiffany*, <http://www.collezionedatiffany.com/ambientazioni-lucio-fontana/> [Accessed 28 May 2015]

**Figure 5.3:** Model posing in front of Melotti's *L'evoluzione della forma nell'artigianato*, 1961 at the *Italia '61* exposition in Turin, published in *Life*



Source: Kauffman, Mark. "Dramatic Decade of Italian Style." *Life (International)*, Nov. 20, 1961. 55.

**Figure 5.4:** The 'Fashion Style Customs' exhibition in the Palazzo a Vela at *Italia '61*, Marino Marini's *Cavaliere* at center.



Source: Rosso, Michela. "The city and nation on show. The centenary exhibitions." In *Italia '61: The Nation on Show*, Translated by Valentina Relton. Turin: Umberto Allemandi, 2006. 67.

**Figure 5.5:** Fausto Melotti, *I Sette Savi*, 1960 (installation view at the Liceo Carducci in Milan, stone, 220x55x31cm, seven pieces, destroyed?)



Source: Celant, Germano. Melotti. *Catalogo generale. Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. vol. 1, Milano: Electa, 1994.121. Figure 1960.13.

**Figure 5.6:** Fausto Melotti, *I Sette Savi*, 1960 after their valdalization at the Liceo Carducci in Milan (Photo: Licitra)



Source: "I Sette Savi a Milano." *Domus*, May 1963, 51.

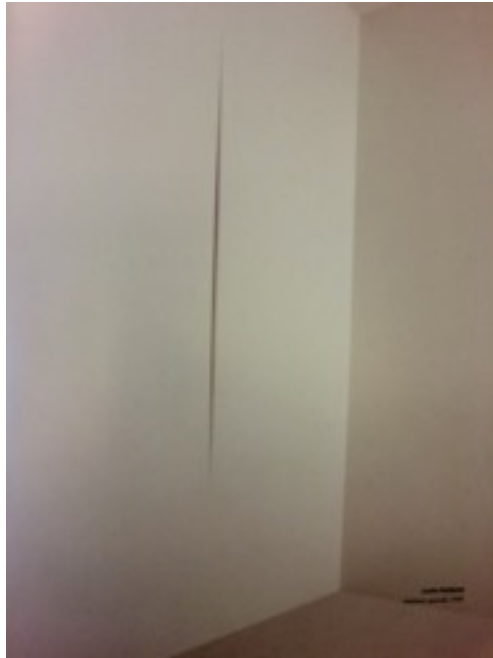
**Figure 5.7:** Fausto Melotti, *La pioggia*, 1966 (1970) (Gold, three editions and one model, 61x30x20cm, signed by the sculptor)



Source: Celant, Germano. *Melotti. Catalogo generale. Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. vol. 1, Milano: Electa, 1994. 181. Figure 1966.17.



**Figure 5.8:** Lucio Fontana, *Ambiente spacial*, 1968 (2008) (dimensions variable)



Source: *Italics: Italian Art Between Tradition and Revolution 1968–2008*. Edited by Francesco Bonami. Milan: Electa, 2008. 205.

**Figure 5.9:** Fausto Melotti, *Tema e Variazioni II*, 1981 (stainless steel, installed at the Fattoria Celle, Collezione Gori)



Source: Photo by the Author at the Collezione Gori, 2011

**Figure 5.10:** Marino Marini's 1969-70 *Miracolo: L'idea di un'Immagine* at the Deutscher Bundestag Berlin, Photo by Ursula Gerstenberger (undated)



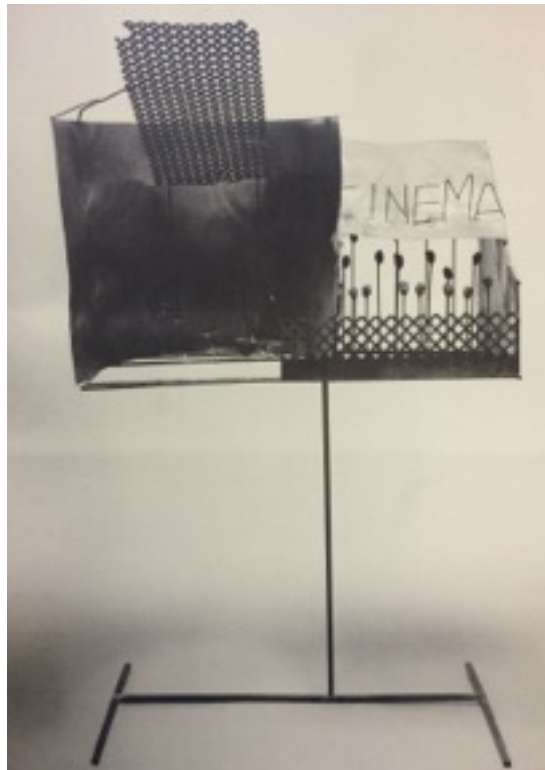
Source: Schuster, Peter-Klaus. "Zeichen Des Wunders - Marinis Miracolo am Reichstag/Symbol of the Miracle: Marini's Miracolo at the Reichstag." In *Marino Marini Miracolo*, Translated by Logan Kennedy and Leonhard Unglaub. Edited by Cristina Inês Steingraber. Ostfildern: Hetje Cantz Verlag, 2006. 73. Figure 32.

**Figure 5.11:** Marino Marini, *Miracolo: L'idea di un'Immagine*, 1969-70 (bronze, 450x270x180cm)



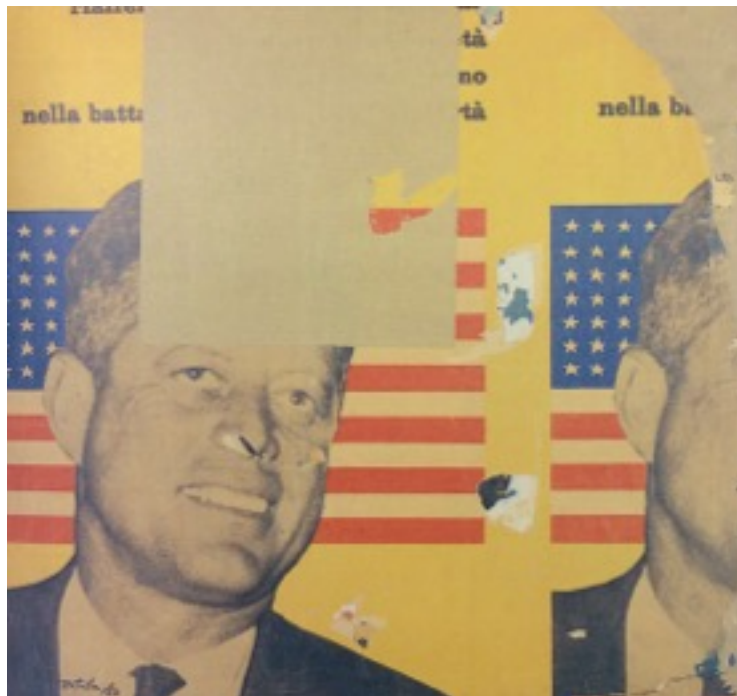
Schuster, Peter-Klaus. "Zeichen Des Wunders - Marinis Miracolo am Reichstag/Symbol of the Miracle: Marini's Miracolo at the Reichstag." In *Marino Marini Miracolo*, Translated by Logan Kennedy and Leonhard Unglaub. Edited by Cristina Inês Steingraber. Ostfildern: Hetje Cantz Verlag, 2006. 66. Figures 26-8.

**Figure 5.12:** Fausto Melotti, *Il cinema*, 1965 (brass, 93x59x37cm)



Source: Celant, Germano. *Melotti. Catalogo generale. Sculture 1929-1972*. 2 vols. vol. 1, Milano: Electa, 1994. 163. Figure 1965.3.

**Figure 5.13:** Mimmo Rotella, *Viva America*, 1963 (dècollage, 85x89cm)



Source: Crow, Thomas. *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996. 53.



**Figure 5.14:** Luciano Fabro, *L'Italia d'oro*, 1971 (Bronze and fold leaf, 92 x 45 cm)



**Figure 5.15:** Walt Disney (center) at the entrance to the Circarama at *Italia '61*



Source: Pace, Sergio. "The never-ending parable. The myths, decline and possible revival of Turin's Italia '61." In *Italia '61: The Nation on Show*, Translated by Valentina Relton. Turin: Umberto Allemandi, 2006. 12.

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