

Pietro Consagra

(Mazara del Vallo, Trapani, 1920 – Milan, 2005)

“When I became aware of the responsibility, of the significance assumed by every gesture the artist makes, I felt this need: to remove sculpture from the ideal center. At the same time I realized that this shift gave a dramatic character to the sculpture.” (Lonzi, C. “Intervista a Pietro Consagra,” in *Consagra*, exhibition catalogue. Milan: Galleria dell’Ariete, 1967). With these words, Pietro Consagra describes one of the fundamental principles that guided his research and led him to develop the *Colloqui (Conversations)* series between 1952 and 1962. The first fully autonomous expression in the context of the artist’s career, this series focuses on an operation of subtraction, through which Consagra removes sculpture from the traditional category of the monument and from the association with the idea of power, consigning it, instead, to a human dimension, existential in nature. *Colloquio (Conversation)*, 1957, is part of this series. Structured through the opposition of two principal elements, constructed in superimposed planes, the work is centered on a principle of frontality, which favors its two-dimensional development. These formal choices express the dialogical condition sought by the artist, an innovative relationship with the viewer, which he puts into action. In an openly democratic attitude, Consagra liberates the viewer from the demand to move around the sculpture as if it were an ideal center, instead placing work and user on a nearly equal plane.

For Consagra, political and social engagement, as well as artistic activity always proceeded hand in hand. Upon his arrival in Rome in 1944, Consagra was one of the young artists — along with Accardi, Attardi, Dorazio, Guerrini, Perilli, Sanfilippo, and Turcato — who signed the manifesto of the group Forma, in open criticism of Novecento, a movement whose compromises regarding the Fascist regime they denounced. He then traveled with some members of the group to Paris, a journey that allowed him direct contact with the international avant-garde, including seeing examples of Constructivism. Consagra also put his reflections into writing. In 1952 he worked on the programmatic text *Necessità della scultura (Necessity of Sculpture)* and he subsequently collected his ideas about architecture in the volume *La città frontale (The Frontal City)*, published in 1969. (MB)