

Giuseppe Spagnulo

(Grottaglie, Taranto, 1936)

Giuseppe Spagnulo began working in the early 1960s, using terracotta to create dialogues between geometric and corporeal forms, as if to anchor the elusiveness of the individual to volumetric laws. Between 1965 and 1966 he changed language and material, moving from terracotta to wood and from figuratively inspired motifs to pure abstraction.

With wood, Spagnulo has said he fully understood the problem of space, and this approach to sculpture is one that he has maintained since.

“The form, in its immobility has no statutory possibility,” Spagnulo has written, “but it violates the space and enables any structural complication, or itself is violated and removed of idealization. I don’t believe in one form being more perfect than another, but only in the quantity of space that a form manages to activate.” (“La forma non nella sua immobilità,” in Caramel, L., *10 scultori italiani d’oggi*. Lissone: Premio Lissone, 1967).

During the subsequent two-year period he tackled a new material and created large iron pieces. In iron he saw the possibility of external, public space, with large-scale work capable of being charged with energy and social significance, in short, political.

Archeologia (Archeology), 1978, is a work where both formal and social spatial values merge harmoniously: the formal, given by the need to activate the surrounding space, and the social, where the action, the force, the effort necessary for the creation of the work are mindful of the political significances that those actions and those words contain. The year he created *Archeology*, Spagnulo wrote: “the meaning of these works is not a vitalist gesture, but a cold determination to break the symbols of social perfection.” (“Grottaglie è un paese...” in Fagone, V., *Artisti in Lombardia degli Anni 60*, 1978) Those symbols of social perfection correspond to the precise geometries of minimalist art, which Spagnulo knowingly appropriates to then disrupt, shatter, and press beneath the weight of the work. The arrangement on a grid and the cube from which *Archeology* originates coincide perfectly with these poetics. Even the mathematical progression of the force that is impressed is close to the quantitative rules of an international art style that developed in a territory between Minimalism and Conceptual art. But the “violating” nature of the pressure and the form of the last cube, depressed, almost vanquished by too much pressure, are the opposite of that research. (EV)