

Icaro (Paolo Chissotti)

(Turin, 1936)

In the mid-1960s, Icaro began creating essential shapes in metal, expressions of forces and thrusts, torsions and rotations, almost as if to try out – through an idea of organic, corporeal movement – all possible articulations and disarticulations of sculptural form. To do this he shattered the rigidity typical of this discipline, breaking contemporary, minimalist segments, only to then connect them with chains, as if they were links created by an idea that destroys but does not forget the image of the whole.

Icaro's works in the collection all date from the 1980s and are distinguished by the use of plaster. The works from this period, perhaps the most significant in his career, were first presented in an exhibition at the PAC in Milan, in 1982. This work, characterised by a hybrid union of rigid segments and flexible joints, was followed by sculptures in plaster, a material that is both rigid and fluid. As Fabrizio D'Amico insightfully wrote in 1988: "Icaro practises his craft of sculpture by shaping plaster – and plaster has been, almost exclusively, his material for over ten years. Thus what a strange sculptor Icaro is, wanting to sculpt water, and capture powder in a shape; will he ever be able to seek, by subtracting from a block, a torso, an entirety, a figure that was hidden therein and is brought to light, taking shape according to the idea that reveals it?" ("Paolo Icaro," in *Periplo della Scultura italiana contemporanea*, exhibition catalogue, Biennale Internazionale di Scultura, Matera).

By choosing plaster, Icaro also abandons the essentiality of geometric solids, to discover something different, no longer on the basis of form but on that original basis of the sculptural gesture. Memory of the ideal form inspires a search for the body formed by the first gesture of art in history. In this sense, the work *Scolpire* (1982), a thin block of plaster on which he worked with a chisel, is emblematic. The form in the process of arising and the material that is extracted are gathered together in a single work. Splinters on the floor are residues of the creative gesture but, at the same time, images of the powder that makes up the work. *Davanzale per un colore (Davanzale per un turchese)*, also from 1982, offers the fragility of its constituent material to support the poetry of a colour. Two slight supports, in the shape of swallows' nests, hold up a plaster ledge against the wall. On the wall right above the ledge, Icaro traced a line of transparent turquoise: a hint of sky, as light as forms and colours perceived in flight might appear.

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On the occasion of the retrospective show that the GAM in Turin dedicated to Icaro in 2019, a new set of works became part of the collection, representative of the period spent by the artist in New York between 1966 and 1968. After several years of intense experimentation with various different techniques and materials, it was his stay in America that marked the start of an unprecedented relationship with space and the passage from sculpture as an object to sculpture as a space of relation. From the windows of his studio on the sixth floor of

an industrial building in SoHo, Icaro observed the cables, grids and aerials on the roofs of the buildings, the primary structures that they made up and the reflection of lights between them. And so he decided to record his impressions in his *Appunti per forme di spazio*: delicate wooden rectangular structures, the internal surface of which is crisscrossed with iron wire. His exploration of the environmental dimension is the natural consequence of this research, which would lead him to blur the border between sculpture and architecture in order to create accessible spaces, designed in relation to the measurements of his body. The linear nature of metal cables returns in *Viaggio senza data* (2019). The cluster of aluminium, with its shadow cast onto the front wall, spreads throughout the environment, showing images of the artist at work on his sculpture, in a blending of temporal levels and the doubling of the space of the work.

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