

Gilberto Zorio

(Andorno Micca, Biella, 1944)

Gilberto Zorio investigates the idea of movement as a symbolic creative force, in ways that open up new possibilities for the language of sculpture. One of the protagonists of Arte Povera, Zorio chooses materials and objects that pertain to human experience, endowing them with symbolic values. Crucibles and alembics are used as elements of alchemical memory, while canoes and javelins are present as vectors that have traversed history, characterizing numerous cultures. In his work the artist introduces conditions for triggering physical transformations, sometimes obtained from chemical reactions. *Tenda (Tent)*, 1967, is a structure of metal tubes arranged to support and suggest a shelter made of green fabric. The artist pours seawater on the top of the structure, and the water then evaporates, leaving traces of salt crystals. The work as a whole becomes a natural landscape positioned at eye level, in keeping with the anthropocentric dimension that Zorio often celebrates in his works; even the metal tubes on which the fabric rests are conceived according to a human dimension, and their function is comparable to that of the skeleton that supports the body.

The encounter between a heavy conductor in asbestos cement and three partially inflated inner tubes makes up *Colonna (Column)*, 1967. The opposing values of the two materials – rigid and soft, heavy and light – create a new sculptural presence that declares its autonomy from the rules of classicism. Also contradicting a possible association with the idea of a supporting element, Zorio's *Colonna* is slightly unstable.

Interested in an attempt to raise sculpture to occupy the air, the artist created *Macchia III (Stain III)*, 1968, a ductile form obtained from liquid rubber poured onto intertwined ropes, which are then used as tensors to suspend the work in space.

Capable of continuous renewal, the iconography of a five-pointed star is a recurring element in Zorio's art, as in *Stella di cristallo con giavellotti (Crystal Star with Javelins)*, 1977. In *Stella di bronzo con acidi e pergamena (Bronze Star with Acids and Parchment Scrolls)*, 1978, the star becomes the site of a chemical reaction. Placed in contact with acids, the metal bars are gradually covered with crystals, which tend to climb upward toward the parchment, in a process that turns the work into living matter. (MB)