

Leoncillo

(Leoncillo Leonardi)

(Spoleto, 1915 — Rome, 1968)

The sculptures acquired by CRT were all created following the period of 1956-1957, which marked a profound crisis in Leoncillo's history as an artist. After his aesthetic and ideological commitment to Post-Cubism, a movement that continued to define much of his generation, Leoncillo felt the need to once again, step by step, focus on what his activity truly required, on the authenticity of a form that refused to manifest itself according to a program. The image that the artist entrusts to the initial pages of his *Piccolo diario* (1957-58) is unforgettable, where he describes a sleepless night when at every moment he felt a growing need to go into the studio and begin working, without knowing what the outcome or the subject of his sculpture would be. That impulse only recognized the impelling need to work. In that passage Leoncillo compares himself to an old spider, who he imagines intent on weaving its own canvas with what comes to him from within, expressing a force that is both existential and moral: "Drawing from within myself this saliva of mine, made of my present body, consuming myself in this certain act, as certain as the elementary acts of life." And then in 1960 he writes: "Our being producers of a new nature acquires its own reason and coherence. Because, and I always return to the same point, 'composing' is imitating an ideal world, and 'making,' instead, is expressing existence."

Like other Italian artists during the same period, he wanted to express the temporal dimension in the body of the work, confirming that it is in the doing, and in the time required to do so, that the very reason for art resides, just as it is in the growth of a tree that its form is fulfilled. Just as a dig can reveal the stratification of a terrain, the vertical cuts that Leoncillo makes on his ceramics during this period expose the viscera of their conformation.

Color itself can no longer be that of an enamel imposed on the sculpture's surface, but must be that of the material itself, a color that forms and modifies over time, while the absolute, shrill color of enamels has always existed, like an idea in the Platonic universe. "Once the time of a work was what was required materially to make it — he wrote, again in 1960 — but it did not have to reveal it. One day or ten years. It was located outside us and time was only 'a means' for making it. Now time is inside the work and one can read it like an old wall or a tree trunk." (EV)