

# Roberto Lanaro

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For some time now, any real striving within the arts has been focused on pushing beyond the limits of a discipline as such, breaking free of the established canons and conventions of technique. Previously, all disciplines were conceived of in a particularist fashion, but now - in the crafts as well as in science and the arts - the aim seems to be the discovery of an integrated approach, bringing together the experience and knowledge embodied in a variety of fields to form the basis of a new language of expression.

So, for example, a sculptor is expected to approach his work in a way that embraces not only issues of urban adornment and urban-planning, but also reveals the knowledge and experience necessary to resolve the technical and technological problems posed by the materials he uses and the forms he creates.

Lanaro's sculpture is immediately physical in impact; it reflects the craft experience of a smith working with hammer and anvil to model form, to achieve the highest levels of expressive intensity. In effect, the first "explanation" of the technique he uses is to be found in his passion for solid iron, within which the oxy-hydrogen torch cuts like a scalpel. As he himself has said: "the choice of iron as a material arises from an "ancient" inner necessity, as I have lived in contact with iron in the workshop ever since I was a child. For me, it embodies the power and rigidity of structure... almost a sort of categorical framework. However, it is also true

that one can attack the metal, working it with feeling and grace. Once it has been heated, it becomes soft and malleable, one can dominate it and thus obtain animated plastic forms imbued with great elasticity." However, there are features of his work that place Lanaro well beyond the field of a craftsmen working material: his interest in proportions, in the rhythms between successive components; his attention to "natural" relations; his constant awareness of the surrounding environment and setting of each work. His is an exploration of plastic possibilities; his work strives to activate space itself, using art to re-establish the balance between the natural environment and that artificial environment which has been produced by technology. It is truly surprising how the aesthetics which inspires these sculptures in solid iron results in them having an almost unlimited ability to "fit in", to become part of their setting; indeed, any reading of such work must be based on the relation between object/setting and not upon the mere contemplation of the object in isolation. Lanaro's is sculpture engaged in a dynamic exploration of the relation between object and space. And this implicit "intermediation" means that the work expresses a sort of suspended harmony between invention and modulation, between feeling and rationality. Eschewing a purely mechanical counterpoint between solid and empty space, between vertical and horizontal, the geometric components are organised in open

rhythms; there is a conjunction of speculative ideas and heartfelt improvisation, which answers perfectly to the objective needs of spontaneous, physical equilibrium that emerge - and are then satisfied - during the creation of the work itself. Hence, the gesture of creation is always echoed in the final form; the sculptures stand as signs and emblematic representations of the relationship that exists between man and technology; they are examples of a very contemporary exploration of communication stripped to its bare essentials - that is, a communication that is total and complete in itself, without needing any sort of qualifying adjectives. Having thrown off over-academic approaches, Lanaro's sculpture has grown to critical maturity within the field of the primal, or - if one prefers - the elemental; structure is its own unequivocal sign, requiring no complements or linguistic additions. Here, sculpture is reduced to basics, becoming once more a relation between man-made sign and space, between objective expression and idea, between material and form. The result is a rediscovery of material itself, which is intrinsic to Lanaro's own experience as an artist. It is this discovery which is to be credited with the extraordinary charge of energy within these sculptures - tensed energy which is held in suspension by that point of equilibrium which the converging lines of Lanaro's compositions always manage to establish. At the same time, the rediscovery of material also underlies the bold

dynamic effects achieved by increasing articulations within the sculpture, by accentuating torsion and playing upon the alternation between structure and open space. This is an art whose end results are rampant images which, in total freedom, appear to play with space, to engage in open dialogue with Nature.

(Padua, 1979)