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**“Sacra Natura”: the Representation of Mediterranean Nature  
in Italian Contemporary Sacred Art  
Sculptures of Pericle Fazzini (1913-1987)**

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The sculptures of Pericle Fazzini offer a rich repertoire of images inspired by nature. These creations are profoundly connected to the Italian sacred art context of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, characterized by an oscillation between religious and profane forms. This aesthetic and moral dynamics in art might represent a reaction to a seemingly irremediable fracture between the Church and contemporary artists, following the historical perspectives opened by the Lateran Treaty and the rise of the avant-garde movements on the Italian artistic scene. The work of the sculptor Pericle Fazzini is an example of artistic and spiritual interrogations arising from this cleavage: the artist seeks to reconcile art and sacred models through the celebration of nature. Besides his numerous works that directly reference religious themes, Fazzini honors the Mediterranean fauna and flora in all its forms, perceiving nature as the place of God. Although Roman by adoption, the artist never ceases in his career to pay homage to his native land, the Marche, through subjects that become archetypes of an ideal rural and maritime civilization suspended in time: peasant women, fishermen, fauns and “Mediterranean idols”. In the field of animal sculpture, Fazzini, in accordance with his Franciscan sensibility, elevates the animal to the rank of the privileged vehicle of the divine.

**Keywords:** Pericle Fazzini, sculpture, 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian art, nature, sacred, Vatican, Resurrection, the Marche, Roman School

**Pericle Fazzini, the Landscape of the Marche, the Myth**

The life and work of Pericle Fazzini is an emblematic example of the transformations of what is commonly referred to as “sacred art” in Italy, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born in 1913 in the village of Grottammare, in the Marche region, the

artist remains deeply attached to this land during his long and intense career. The Marche's landscape, located in central Italy, bordering the Adriatic Sea, offered him the opportunity to observe a variegated nature, composed by hills overlooking the beach, where Fazzini collects shells, stones rounded by water, debris and pieces of wood, carried by the waves. During his childhood and adolescence, the artist could study the Mediterranean vegetation, embellished by the spread of olive and orange trees, which became over time the symbol of his hometown. From these elements Fazzini draws inspiration for his art, noting the repertoire of shapes, colors and atmospheres that he discovers during long walks along the coast. "I made sculpture with the Adriatic Sea on my shoulders" (Rivosecchi, 1996, 13) the artist notes, referring to his constant emotional relationship with his native land and its landscapes.

Despite leaving Grottammare for Rome at a young age, in 1929, the artist constantly returned to his native village: a small town located in the North of the Tesino River, formerly populated, at the beginning of the century, by fishermen and farmers.<sup>1</sup> Another element that deeply marked the territorial identity of this place was the rural community, which organized many activities in contact with the sea and the fields and, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, gradually faced the mass tourism on the coast (Rivosecchi et al., 1994). From the daily experience of the maritime nature arose one of the most representative sculptures of Fazzini's art, realized between 1940 and 1946, *The boy with seagulls* (fig. 1). The artist described the genesis of the work in an interview with Franco Simongini in 1977: "One day I was walking along the sea and there were seagulls, flying close by, and I was picking up stones, shells along the beach, which I drew, and that's how I got the idea of the boy walking and picking up something on the sand and the seagulls flying around him, over his head" (Fazzini in Rivosecchi, 1996, 7, 82). *The boy with seagulls* might represent as well an ideal alter-ego of the artist, as it emblematically brings together the most intimate elements of Fazzini's sculpture, reaching the dimension of the *myth*, while drawing its inspiration from everyday reality (Serra in Masi, 2021, 37).

As Mariano Apa points out, Fazzini's work is also culturally and geographically embedded in a territory deeply marked by eminent artists from the past, such as Carlo and Vittore Crivelli, Gentile da Fabriano and the Old Masters of the

International Gothic style and Renaissance, such as Lorenzo and Jacopo Salimbeni. But it also embodies the great tradition of Raphael in Urbino, and of the modern and contemporary artists Giacomo Leopardi and Osvaldo Licini. Apa adds that, in this rich and complex cultural panorama, Fazzini's "naturalism" tempered the influences of late Gothic and courtly tradition: at the same time his inspiration remains deeply rooted – through his references, iconography, motifs and intentions – in the cultural and artistic heritage of his homeland (Apa, Rivosecchi, Falconi, 2005, 27). At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this homeland also represented the space that still hosted an ideal civilization from which Fazzini draws his figures in wood, seeking to capture its primordial essence, and infusing it into statues that incarnate the ideal of the "Mediterranean idol". For instance, inspired by a peasant woman walking the streets of Grottammare, the artist composed the *Figure walking* (fig. 2). The genesis of this wooden work, sculpted in 1933, is described as follows: "I got the idea in Grottammare when I saw a peasant woman walking up a street path with a jug on her head, walking almost on her tiptoes. Then I was interested in rediscovering the spirit of the great archaic sculpture, the creation of a *Mediterranean idol*".

While exploiting humble subjects, the fundamental question for Fazzini remained the quest for memory and the spiritual essence of nature. In this regard, the sculptor stated in 1933: "By exalting the strange memories of a woman who was carrying an amphora on her head, I want her to become a God. So now my sculpture is based on the humblest subjects of life, which I want to endlessly exalt" (Pericle Fazzini Historical Archives). These concerns are shared by other artists in this period, outside the Roman School, and from other regions of Italy. We can compare Fazzini's *Figure walking*, for example, to Marino Marini's *Ersilia* (1931-1949): in this work we find the same solid and archaic character of Fazzini's sculpture. Its forms describe a comfortable cultural environment, profoundly linked to nature and its changing character, but devoid of the "strictly human classical 'stillness'" cherished by Marini (De Feo in Teshigawara, 1990, 30). This theme gave Fazzini the possibility of glimpsing, through the popular and peasant dimension, a naturalist utopia, referring to the mythical origins of humanity, and to men in constant dialogue with the nature that surrounds them, in which the artist finds the presence of God.



1 Pericle Fazzini, *The boy with seagulls*, polychrome wood, 1940-1944



2 Pericle Fazzini, *Figure walking*, wood, 1933

### **“Shaped by Nature”: The Sources of Fazzini’s Synthetic Vision**

We can observe that the theme of nature is not only one of the artist’s favorite subjects, but it also embodies a source of inspiration for his work from a formal and stylistic point of view. The plastic rhythm of the hills in the Marche, the sea, the landscapes shaped by the wind, penetrate, according to the artist, into his works, conferring them an ascending character and harmonizing his compositions: “Harmony is like the sense of hills in the endless valley when the sun has recently set and for a moment everything is sharper and more restful. Harmony is also the wind when it violently or gently shaves the sea and sand and shapes them functionally and consequently harmoniously through infinite, smaller, larger and tinier commas. Even a pile of stones has its own harmonic sense” (Rivosecchi, 1996, 14).

Fazzini seems to glimpse, throughout the purification of the organic forms by way of the effect of the water, wind and time, the intervention of the divine genius: for the sculptor the notion of divinity is indissolubly linked to Nature. The presence of the *sacred* in his art is, for this reason, a fundamental issue, as well as the relation between humans and nature. Fortunato Bellonzi points out in this regard: “the organicity of nature, conceived as part of man’s inseparable relationship with that nature, governs all of the sculptor’s art: even when he invents simplified forms seemingly unrelated to sensitive experience; and you would argue that then his language tends toward the rejection of the naturalness and of the history that is characteristic of certain aesthetic positions of our time” (Bellonzi, 1987, 6).

Therefore, beyond the artistic and historical vicissitudes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the tight succession of avant-garde movements, Fazzini oriented his art towards a more synthetic vision of the subject, thanks to the direct and attentive observation of nature, and the natural processes of decomposition of organic forms (Appella, 2005, XVI). For this reason, we propose to study the tendencies towards abstraction in Fazzini’s work in the light of these reflections.

As observed in the catalog of the exhibition *Fazzini e Grottammare*, in his personal annotations, written in 1951, Fazzini celebrated the cyclical character of artistic matter and, at the same time, the demolishing and renewing power of Nature: “Perhaps we will find again in sculpture the stones left in the riverbeds of riv-

ers that dried up in ancient times. In those stones there are extraordinary shapes surviving from the battles with water" (Rivosecchi, 1996, 8). Following these inspirations, Fazzini's synthetic *vision* reached its peak in the 1970s, with the realization of numerous pastels as well as the series of three wooden *Waves* (fig. 3). After the Second World War the debate between figuration and abstraction became particularly heated in Italy, as well as in the rest of the Western art. Fazzini reaffirmed in this context his creative individuality: the simplification of forms in the *Waves* was combined to the twirling dynamic of the wood, echoing the Baroque sculptural plastique and its ascensional aspiration to God.

The theme of a transcendent nature had flowed in the artist's works since 1947, when Fazzini conceives the *Sybil* (fig. 4): a sylvan and oracular image of a priestess, casted into bronze, living between the profane and the sacred world, carrying with her the prophecies on human destiny. This time, the artist realized a sharp, geometric and androgynous sculpture with simplified features, gathered in meditation. On this particular occasion Fazzini also revealed his interest in the new artistic visions that were circulating in Italy and Europe during the post-World War II, such as Neo-Cubism, joining episodically the "Fronte Nuovo delle Arti" group.<sup>2</sup>

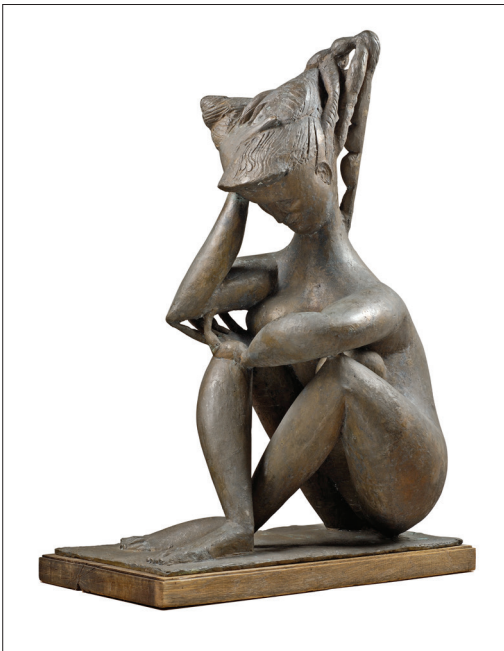
We might observe that, when Fazzini spoke about his works before 1935, he considered the theme of nature's intervention into artistic creation as a metaphor of the sculptor's labor, conceiving it as: "[...] the laborious evolution of this world of mine: as if I have placed in the river some piece of sharp-edged stone, which, when arrived at the river mouth, has been made round by the water. And coming back to the comparison with the river, making of a splinter a smooth pebble, in the same way I would like to be able to give harmony to the matter I sculpt. And, as the water flow gives the splinter always purer and purer natural values, so my idea may make the stone become human" (Teshigawara, 1990, 200).

### **The Context of the Roman School: Fazzini's Sacred Animals and the "Mediterranean Idol"**

After leaving Grottammare for Rome, where he settled permanently in 1930, Fazzini quickly became part of the capital's intellectual and artistic scene. Here, at first with poet Mario Rivosecchi, he discovered the Roman Baroque, ad-



3 Pericle Fazzini, *Wave*, wood, 1968



4 Pericle Fazzini, *Sybil*, bronze (casted in 1956), 1947

mired the ancient monuments and became imbued with city's lively cultural life (Masi, 2001, 69-70). Art historians have often associated Fazzini's work with the dynamics of what was called by Waldemar-George the "Roman School" (the critic defined it more precisely "*Jeune École de Rome*" in the catalog of the first exhibition of the group, organized in 1933 at the Galerie Bonjean in Paris). This group of artists was born in the wake of the "Via Cavour School", originally identified by Roberto Longhi as the Mafai-Raphaël-Scipione trio of painters, who shared a rather expressionistic approach to subjects. Between the 1920s and 1940s, the Fazzini's life is often connected with some of these artists, who were intent to react to the conventionalism of the Novecento movement, such as Alberto Ziveri, Emanuele Cavalli, Giuseppe Capogrossi, Corrado Cagli.

However, it is necessary to emphasize the heterogeneous and disparate character of this group, which gathers different sensibilities and approaches to figurative culture. Therefore, at the same time, this "School" was indissolubly linked to the Roman territory and its elements (Masi and Barbato, 2007, 183). Like other artists in this period, Fazzini always cultivated a marked independence from the Roman group and developed a personal creative language, not only attached, from the point of view of his subjects, to the landscape of the capital, but always inextricably turned to the Marche lands and the nature of his childhood. What may distinguish Fazzini's art is the particular focus on a conception of the sacred that surpasses the canons of the religious, or a vision tied to a purely traditional biblical narrative. The numerous texts, interviews and annotations written by the artist during his career represent Fazzini's art and life as imbued with a sincere Christian religiosity: the traces of the divinity can be found, for the sculptor, in the contemplation of the majesty of the Creation and creatures. Fazzini pays homage to it through his works, sometimes in a universalist vision of nature, other times through the study of isolated subjects.

This is the case, for example, of his animal sculpture. The animal theme is, in fact, one of Fazzini's favorite subjects: the artist aimed to elevate the beast to the rank of protagonist of his works, as he does in the series of *Cats* (*Cat with a long tail*, 1947), or with the *Doves* (1971), destined to be placed above the tomb of Raphael in the Pantheon in Rome. In other circumstances, the animal is integrated



into more complex compositions, contributing to the narrative and formal construction of the work (*The fields*, 1955).

Among the forms of the fauna, Fazzini focused on the horse: an ancient subject that was very successful in the sculpture of his companions, such as Marino Marini. In Marini's famous series about *Horse and knight*, the human figure becomes a symbol of reason and intellect, while the horse, on the other hand, embodies the vital energy of nature. From his first sculptures, imbued with classical reminiscences and naturalism, Marini proceeds, after the war, to an anti-classical and primordial idea inspired by Etruscan statuary, and to an expressionist vision of his works. These images offer an interpretation of the trauma of war, as well as a new point of view upon art and humanity, marked by tragedy.

In the same war and post-war context, Fazzini exalts the dynamism of the animal, especially in his *bronzetti*: this term describes the numerous little sculptures he created, particularly during his military service in Zara, after 1941, where he realized little figures of acrobats, horses, dancers, with the ancient *lost wax* technique (Appella, 2006, 7-8).

Fazzini's inspirations went beyond the Italian example: he turned to French art and seized the repertoire of the moderns, like Rodin, Bourdelle and Maillol. The sculptor thus broke away from the national tradition, not only in terms of form and style, but also by attributing a new conceptual status to his work. Again, this is particularly visible in his small-scale production. In the *bronzetti* Fazzini does not chisel the form, leaving the subject at the mercy of movement and achieving effects of "heroic monumentality" on a small surface. Rodolfo Pallucchini emphasized this concept in 1965: "Fazzini, however, breaks away from the classical Italian tradition of the *bronzetto* -a sculpture finished in every detail, yet in minimal dimensions; relating rather to the modern use favored in France by Daumier and developed above all by '*peintres-sculpteurs*' such as Renoir and Matisse, for whom the *bronzetto* is the living core of a plastic idea, the fulcrum of a stylistic synthesis" (Pallucchini, 1965). At the same time, the desiccated matter of Fazzini's horses places these figures into a contemporary dimension, evoking Giacometti's animals.

Fazzini identifies in the animal, whether domestic or wild, the reflection of the divinity that permeates Nature. We should add that Fazzini's oscillations in the

formal field of sculpture, sometimes calling on Baroque plasticity, sometimes researching the contemporary synthesis of shapes, translate the struggle between immanence and transcendence of matter, and an awareness of the historical and artistic vagaries of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bruno Mohr underlines the duality of the Fazzinian spirit, thus divided between: [...] two elements -feeling and reason, romantic aspiration and classical will [...]. I would rather say that they summarily represent two aspects, two ways of proceeding, which alternate, sometimes with one or the other prevailing. His aesthetic itinerary is much to be sought in the intimate and constant drama of these two opposite and natural tendencies – measure and momentum – never completely separated in that imaginative and severe temperament. It is clear that one cannot aesthetically establish a qualitative discrimination between these two terms, the end being always the same: the overcoming of empirical reality" (Mohr, 1969, 9-10).

In light of these considerations, we can finally build a comparison between Fazzini's archaic and sacred representation of nature and the totemic sculpture of Mirko Basaldella, within the framework of the animal creation that emerged from the artistic groups close to the Roman School. Following the plastic of Basaldella's sculpture of the 1930s – although oriented towards the human figure and linked to biblical subjects – in the post-war period Basaldella created artworks charged with cultural stratifications and references to Aztec, Phoenician, Assyrian and Mesopotamian cultures, as well as works that drew on Jewish iconography. During the 1950s, the artist systematized the use of materials as copper and brass, creating works such as the series on the theme of the *Lions of Damascus*.

### **Between Holy and Profane Forms: A Renewed Aesthetic in Sacred Art**

Fazzini's animal representations give us several clues for the study of his work and his conception of the *sacred*, as well as about the changing perception of the sacred in the art of post-war Italy. We could, for example, identify Fazzini's animals – using the words of Mircea Eliade and following the phenomenological tradition – as "hierophanies": in the formal simplification of the cats, a primitivist spirit sometimes resonates, echoing a premodern and archaic natural state of creation and humanity. Through his animals, Fazzini seems to suggest that the great-

ness of God is reflected in the humility of each creature, culminating in the Incarnation and the Resurrection of the Christ: a philosophy close to the Franciscan Christian vision, according to which the Creation represents a way to God, passing through an itinerary of the senses, rather than of the intellect. This conception is expressed in the verses of St Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures*.

This alliance is made explicit in the bas-relief by Fazzini named *Exit from the Ark* (fig. 5), inspired by the sculpture of Rodin and Michelangelo. The artist immortalized the biblical episode of Noah's Ark into bronze. The man with raised arms emerging from the Ark and receiving salvation, prefigures the position of the Christ in the Passion: "I designed a well measured bas-relief with a *chiaroscuro* effect, while maintaining a mystical air, so that the expression was given by the linear and harmonious form of the volumes. The man covered by the drapery and raising his arms to the sky gives a sense of infinity, while the camel moving in the background gives depth and space to the whole bas-relief" (Fazzini in Lucchese, 1952, 67-68). The *Exit from the Ark* represents the artist's meditation on a religious subject belonging to the Christian iconographic heritage, transposed into tormented volumes, which ensure the dramatic tension of the sculpture. Thus, critics and historians were quick to recognize a mystical character in Fazzini's production, describing it as a piece of "sacred art". In Giuseppe Ungaretti's preface to the



5 Pericle Fazzini, *Exit from the Ark*, bronze, 1932 (casted in 1976 ca.)

catalogue of the first retrospective on Fazzini's work in 1951, we find the following words about his sculpture: "[...] Now I know well why I uttered such a terrible word as the adjective "sacred," now I know what meaning Fazzini's work intended to have, from the *Exit from the Ark* that was its beginning: it is a song of creatures, grateful and glad for the gift that propagates them and makes their spirit fruitful of generous undertakings. It is the canticle of a spring nature, almost Edenic, grateful and glad for the beauty of its sinewy limbs, and if, sometimes, the summer hell upsets it, now I know why its voice at that moment, becomes atrocious and bewildered" (Ungaretti in Lucchese, 1951).

So, we can observe that this elementariness of Fazzinian images might adhere to the Franciscan moral and spiritual dynamic, throughout the artist's tendency to constrain form in the strict environment of the visible. Fazzini's fascination with the philosophy and figure of St Francis is evident in his attachment to the Franciscan *milieu* of Assisi: the artist created a tribute to St Francis in *St Francis caressing the wolf*, a sculpture in wood realized in 1939. The resonance with Arturo Martini's archaism is combined, in this work, as Chiara Barbato points out, with an intimate "Christian classicism", whose formal purity is "totally devoid of sensuality" (Barbato, 2012, 17).

It also appears that, through the Franciscan paradigm, the artist was able to express his meditations on the dualism between spirit and matter, which occupied his thoughts when he was creating the *Monument to St Francis*. This monument was never realized, but the Fazzini Foundation still preserves the preparatory drawings and the study in silver (fig. 6), conceived in 1982. It represents a medalion where the features of the Saint appear between the voids of the matter: "The Saint who conversed with brother wind, sister water, with birds, would have a more meaningful memory in this image of him made of air, of clouds, of wings, thought by Pericle" (Buy in Teshigawara, 1990, 19). The artist says about this sculpture: "The idea was immediately clear to me because it is my own desire: to renounce the body. This saint has renounced everything, he has forgotten his body, the needs of the body, his body has become air, he is part of Creation but not of flesh, not with the limitations of the flesh. A goal for me [...] to give stone, bronze the insubstantiality of matter, to raise in purity my statues to God" (Masi, 1992, 148).



6 Pericle Fazzini, *Study for "Monument to St. Francis"*, bronze, 1981

### **The Resurrection of Christ and Nature**

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church inaugurated a lively debate on the need for a rapprochement between religious institutions and artists. The possibility of renewing this dialogue presented itself as an urgency for the Church in regard to the artistic scene of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly marked by the incursion of the avant-garde movements and the affirmation of post-modern thinking in a world moving toward secularization. In this context, the commissioning of the Audience Hall in Vatican, entrusted in 1963 by Pope Paul VI to architect Pier Luigi Nervi (Cossa, 2010), is emblematic of the cultural-historical changes highlighted during the meeting with artists in the Sistine Chapel in 1964, and by the *Message to artists* of December 8, 1965, in which the pontiff urged creators toward reconciliation with the Church: "[...] do not let such a fruitful alliance to be broken!"<sup>3</sup> Inside Nervi's Hall is placed Pericle Fazzini's monumental sculpture, the *Resurrection* (fig. 7), which recalls the religious theme of the renewing of Christ and the Catholic Church. It is a twenty-meter long by seven-meter high sculpture located behind the papal chair, facing the assembly of people who gather in the Sala Nervi during Papal audiences (Pezzella, 2012). The space of the hall and Fazzini's *Resurrection* are, in this regard, connected to a larger pastoral program, engaging the masses of the Christian and secular community through aesthetic experience.

Fazzini displayed his penchant for monumental sculpture in the 1960s. It was during this period that the artist was commissioned by Pope Paul VI to create a majestic work for the Vatican Audience Hall, which the architect Nervi had just designed. The sculpture, in bronze and brass, is created between 1970 and 1975, and inaugurated in 1977. The profoundly human dimension of the *Resurrection* is thus linked to the artist's reflections on war: against an exploded vegetal backdrop, recalling the olive trees of the Marche landscape but also those of the Garden of Gethsemane, stands a monumental Christ. The latter rises out of the crater left by the explosion of a nuclear bomb, as Fazzini states himself, in memory of the recent tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which painfully affected post-war humanity.

At the same time, Fazzini elaborated a reflection on the relationship between abstraction and figuration in postwar art, reaffirming, through the monumental figure of the Savior, the importance of the human figure in 20<sup>th</sup> century



7 Pericle Fazzini, *Resurrection*, bronze and brass, 1970-1975

sculpture. By the circumstances of its realization, its plastic composition and its message, the sculpture embodies not only a meditation on the place of nature and the sacred in contemporary art, but also the culmination of a long creative and human journey, as well as the true spiritual and artistic testament of Fazzini. This project, as its author confirmed, was led by the desire to celebrate the divine through matter: "I realized the resurrection which already lived in me".

### **Conclusion: "The Sculptor of the Wind"**

The poet Ungaretti created the evocative expression "sculptor of the wind" to describe Fazzini, his art and its relation with the idea of nature. This concept is all the more significant when we observe the plastic dynamics of the wind deployed by the sculptor in his works that reach an increasingly strong symbolic dimension, supporting the sacred identity of Fazzini's creations.

In the Bible, several atmospheric events announced the death of Christ. The Gospel of Matthew reports that a violent wind blew during the tragic moment of the Crucifixion: "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent" (Matthew 27:51). It appears that wind represents an emblematic element which, as we observed, may explain Fazzini's relationship with the concept of nature and the sacred. The wind is omnipresent in Fazzini's art: it encourages the upward movement of Christ's body in the *Resurrection* and animates some figures in his *Deposition* (1946), accentuating plastic tensions, favoring the elevation of the forms towards the sky. Such sculptural dynamics also correspond to Fazzini's spiritual aspirations, as well as his constant preoccupation with evoking the invisible divine nature of Creation.

At the same time, some of his works are characterized by "profane" themes – such as *Dancer* (1956-1960) and *Woman in the Wind* –, where the presence of wind becomes more explicit: the subject of the nude and the human body thus appears to be placed in the background, offering the artist the possibility of depicting anatomical deformations under the impulse of the air.

The study of Fazzini's creations discloses that the artist attributes multiple connotations to the notion of "nature": it represents the invisible link with the land of the Marche and the dynamizing element of his sculptures, the driving force behind his creativity as an artist, or the symbol of contact between man and God. The wind shapes matter and at the same time embodies the mythical identity of the Adriatic landscape, participating in the phenomenological manifestations of the divine on Earth. It is therefore important to emphasize that in Fazzini's work all subjects are animated by the same impulses: animals, human figures, as well as religious themes.

One of the most particularly relevant aspect of Fazzini's production corresponds to an aesthetic fluctuation – between figuration and abstraction – that incarnates the moral, artistic and spiritual imperatives of a century that is on the way to secularization, and attempts through the naturalistic theme to reconnect art and the *sacred*.



## Endnotes

- 1 The present-day city center is the result of intensive urban development that began in the 1960s, but the medieval village still overlooks the river Tesino, the surrounding countryside and the beach. The Grottammare's urbanism is based on the ancient Roman town, but the presence of fortified walls from the 16<sup>th</sup> century also refer to the times when the town was the object of disputes from the surrounding communities, and of violent attacks by hordes of pirates.
- 2 In 1947 Fazzini participated to the first exhibition of the group at the Galleria della Spiga in Milan, with Leoncillo, Franchina, Vedova, Corpora and Guttuso.
- 3 Pope Paul VI, *Message to artists*, Piazza San Pietro, Vatican City, 8.12.1965.

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### Illustrations

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- Fig. 2 Pericle Fazzini, *Figure walking*, wood, 191x67x74 cm, 1933, Collection Fazzini, Rome, © Massimo Napoli, Fondazione Pericle Fazzini.
- Fig. 3 Pericle Fazzini, *Wave*, wood, 114x23.5x23 cm, 1968, Collection Fazzini, Rome, © Massimo Napoli, Fondazione Pericle Fazzini.
- Fig. 4 Pericle Fazzini, *Sybil*, bronze (casted in 1956), 97x44x68 cm, 1947, Hannelore B. et Rudolph B. Schulhof Collection, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, © Massimo Napoli, Fondazione Pericle Fazzini.
- Fig. 5 Pericle Fazzini, *Exit from the Ark*, bronze, 120x240x8 cm, 1932 (casted in 1976 ca.), Collection Fazzini, Rome, © Massimo Napoli, Fondazione Pericle Fazzini.
- Fig. 6 Pericle Fazzini, *Study for "Monument to St. Francis"*, bronze, 21 cm, 1981, Collection Fazzini, Rome, © Massimo Napoli, Fondazione Pericle Fazzini.
- Fig. 7 Pericle Fazzini, *Resurrection*, bronze and brass, 700x2000x300 cm, 1970-1975, Paul VI Audience Hall, Vatican City, © Fondazione Pericle Fazzini.