

FAUSTO MELOTTI

(Rovereto, 1901 – Milán, 1986)

Art does not represent, but transfigures reality into symbols. Art is a journey. The loneliness and restlessness of memories. Even closed in a program, pushed in a rigid counterpoint, composed in a straitjacket, art comes out in an ineffable dance.

Fausto Melotti was born in Rovereto in 1901 and spent his childhood in Florence. In 1918 he enrolled at the University of Pisa to study Physics and Mathematics and in 1924 he graduated in Electronic Engineering from the University of Milan. In this period Melotti often visited his hometown, whose cultural atmosphere was in full swing; Melotti was frequently in touch with the theorist Carlo Belli, the architect Pollini and the futuristic artist Depero. At the same time he continued his piano studies, becoming an accomplished pianist.



Fausto Melotti, 1985 © A. Amendola

In 1928 he enrolled at the Brera Academy in Milan and met Lucio Fontana, with whom he developed a close friendship. Shortly afterwards, he decided to dedicate himself fully to sculpture, and began to work with monochromatic reliefs. In 1937 he interrupted his sculpting activity to devote himself for a few years to ceramics. In the 1940s he lived for some years in Rome, where he took part in the project of the Figini e Pollini architectural studio for the Palazzo delle Forte Armani. His strong bond with architecture was maintained throughout his life.

After a period of almost total isolation in which he experimented with painting, during the sixties Melotti began to develop a new language in sculpture and space. Gradually, he began to collaborate with representatives of modern Italian architecture such as Baldessari, Luigi Figini and Gino Ponti. Melotti established a strong personal and professional relationship with the architect, designer and artist Gio Ponti. Ponti, who created the magazine Domus in 1928, and managed almost permanently until his death, made a profound contribution and gave a new impetus to the renewal of Italian production in the architecture and design sector.

Together with Ponti, Fausto Melotti developed some of the most important projects of the history of modern architecture, such as *Villa Planchart*, in Caracas, in 1956, *Villa Nemazee*, in Teheran, in 1960, the *Hotel Il Parco dei Principi*, in Sorrento, in 1960, or the headquarters of the Italian airline Alitalia in New York.

He entered the Milione Gallery in Milan in 1934, and held his first individual exhibition there, a year later. In the same year he exhibits in Turin. As part of the exhibition project, Melotti and the other participating sculptors write the *Manifesto Per l'Arte Astratta*. Although he did not

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exhibit much in the 1940s - in the 1950s he resumed his activity - Domus published several articles on his ceramics and in the 1960s he wrote regularly in this magazine. In 1948 he took part in the first post-war Venice Biennale, and again in 1950, 1952, 1966 and 1972. Melotti researched with a wide variety of materials, including wood, wire, plaster and ceramics, and is known for his enigmatic and convincing sculptures, whose symbolic forms express what have been described as inner realms of human experience.

As the post-war period progressed, Melotti gradually reintroduced metallic elements into his sculpture, creating works composed of delicate threads and fine sheets of brass, iron and gold. Fragile and delicate at the same time, robust and dynamic, these works, unique within post-war sculpture, allowed Melotti to incorporate his love for music and storytelling and his interest in mathematics and geometry, which he continued to explore throughout his career.

Melotti received numerous awards and recognitions throughout his life, including the Gold Medal at the Munich International Exhibition, the Rembrandt Prize from the Goethe Foundation, Basel and the National Academy of St. Lucy in Rome named him an academic in 1982. Numerous retrospective exhibitions of his work have been held, including at the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna in Turin in 1972, at the Palazzo Reale in Milan in 1979 and at the Forte de Belvedere in Florence in 1981.

Fausto Melotti died in 1986, in Milan. The day after his death the Venice Biennale opens a major solo exhibition of his work and the biennale awards him the Leone d'Oro posthumously.



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