



Fabio Ferrari, “Making Sense of Pure Sensation,” (essay, Ferrari Studios, Verona, Italy, April, 2003).

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It seems to me that the admirers of Ferrari’s artwork can be divided into two kinds: those who ask and those who don’t. For many, the meaning of Ferrari’s sculptures is initially a mystery and so, instinctively, they look at the title for clues. There they find words like “unity,” “harmony,” “birth,” “flight”: abstractions that often lead to further confusion. But the problem is not with the abstraction of the title, nor with the abstraction of the artwork itself. If anything, the fault lies with our education; with our impulse to “make sense” of everything we feel, touch, experience, love. Only by “making sense” of a work of art does it acquire any objective value. After all, if I purchase a sculpture and display it in my living room, I have to be prepared for the questions my guests may ask: “What is the *title*? What does it *mean*?”

But usually the people who appreciate Ferrari’s sculptures are people who do not ask these kinds of questions. I know this because I have observed these people since I was a child and it seems to me that they grasp the significance of Ferrari’s work without ever trying to translate their feelings into words. Because words, I believe, are ultimately incompatible with the deepest meaning of Ferrari’s sculpture; sculpture which is gesture, pure and refined, almost never descriptive or narrative.

And this fact helps to understand the abstraction of Ferrari’s titles. Try, if you will, to explain “light,” “movement” or “symmetry.” A precise explanation is possible, of course, but in “making sense” of these concepts their poetry becomes undone, the simplicity of their message is tainted. And so I think that the best approach to Ferrari’s work ought to be like that of reading a haiku poem; where sensation is stripped of the rational and celebrates the elemental, where form ideally leads to meditation, not to analysis and not to explanation. The titles of Ferrari’s sculptures, like the sculptures themselves, are paths to wander; not specific destinations to reach.

To walk among Ferrari’s sculptures is to discover a landscape quivering with form and shadow, where tension alternates with repose, where the supple contours of the feminine are complemented by the “determined” lines of the masculine. Some people will pass through such haunted landscapes and feel nothing. While others will pause and feel—through intuition rather than intellect—the mystery alluded to, the miracle of a moment monumentalized in art. Ferrari’s sculptures are invitations to feel life with serenity and balance and, above all, to let go of words that violate the sanctity of our simplest sensations. Ferrari’s work is a tribute to the essence of those memories that reconnect us to our humanity and that we cherish for a lifetime, without ever really knowing why.

A memory I have of Ferrari tells me everything I need to know about his artwork.

The image is that of the sculptor in the very early hours of the morning at a round marble table, with a warm pot of tea, looking through a window overlooking a vast frozen lake. This is the morning his days are made of. This is the perfect stillness from which he draws his inspiration. This is the secret symmetry that, again and again, will give shape to Ferrari’s imagination and soften his bronzes and his steel with the whispering quality of soft watercolor brushstrokes: a wordless act of love, of and to the universe.

A sculptural form of prayer. No questions asked.