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Virginio Ferrari’s recent work is highly expressive with a minimum of means. His austere, but intensely alive compositions express a search for an essence, reminiscent of Brancusi’s images or architectural statements by Mies van der Rohe or Aldo Rossi. Chicago was the home of three masters of modern architecture: Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe, and their standard of excellence is a guide and a challenge to every architect and sculptor living in the city.

Ferrari’s suburb work has achieved an excellence of quality that seems to be part of the city’s cultural heritage and tradition in architecture and sculpture, and at the same time it transcends the tradition to touch on archetypal forms of spiritual nature. It is important to mention that it was the city’s outstanding architecture — not its substantially less prolific architecture — that brought Ferrari from Verona to Chicago in 1966. It is appropriate to discuss Ferrari’s work in this context, because his sculpture is very architectural, and his exhibits at the Sears Tower, Mies’ One Illinois Center, and sculpture installation at Mies’ 910 N. Lake Shore Drive Apartment Building lobby, he has shown a real affinity to the architecture itself; his sculpture speaks the same language. To fully appreciate and understand Ferrari’s brilliant sculptural work, it is necessary to observe its close relationship to an interaction with the city’s widely recognized architecture, and how Ferrari has broken new ground within this framework in his own artistic endeavors.

Of his recent major commissions of large permanent sculptures for cities and parks, his most outstanding works of art must be mentioned: *Ecstasy* in bronze, 1977, piercing against the sky in Ravinia Park (26 feet high) mid-summer concert area, where it is enjoyed by thousands of people from metropolitan Chicago. Its soaring, vertical movement—intensified by a hairline split between individuals as well as our progressive contemporary creative art and culture.

*Earth Form* in bronze, 1978, placed in the lobby of Mies van der Rohe’s 910 N. Lake Shore Drive Apartment Building, where it is the element that brings movement and poetic vision into an elegant but static space. A beautiful dialogue is taking place between Mies’ architecture and Ferrari’s sculpture. The sculpture piece has a weightlessness, as if it had captured the wind blowing in a silk curtain or the flow in a wave.

*Prism Into Two Elements*, in bronze, 1980, eight by eight by seven feet, installed in front of Northwestern University’s Fine and Performing Arts Building (by architects Loebel, Scholssman & Dart); a powerful, dynamic composition that, as a mass, works well in its open spacious setting. It has a slight reference to Noguchi’s red cube outside the Marine Midland Building in New York, but Ferrari’s is a most provocative and accomplished piece. The reflections are awesome and intensely brilliant when the sculpture is flooded by sunlight.

*Cylinder in a Prism*, in bronze, 1980, twenty-six feet high, was installed in the lobby of the new Vanderbilt Hospital, in Nashville, Tennessee. Ferrari and Ernest Trova, both nationally known artists, were in competition for this commission, but Ferrari's proposal was chosen. His vertical piece is designed specifically for the space, absorbing an existing structural column into the sculpture. Credit for proposing Ferrari to the Medical Center Art Committee must go to Wayne Fishback, partner of Schmidt, Garden and Erikson, the architectural firm that designed the new Vanderbilt Hospital. Ferrari's sculpture is a masterpiece, both as it relates to its specific setting and as it makes a daring and clear artistic statement.

*Being Born*, in stainless steel, 1981–1982, nineteen by eighteen feet, to be erected on the State Street Mall, in a pool, at Washington Street in front of Marshall Field's prominent, handsome building. The work was commissioned by the Tool and Die Institute in Park Ridge and will be dedicated in the fall 1982. The piece will be a tribute to the tool and die industry as well as a tribute to the City of Chicago. In November, 1981, Mayor Jane Byrne presented a model of the sculpture at a press conference in City Hall. It is a great honor for Virginio Ferrari to have such a major sculpture in the center of the city, on the prominent State Street (in addition to Michigan Avenue, the most important boulevard in Chicago) in company with, and on an equal level with, the large sculptures by Oldenburg, Calder, Picasso and Mirò. Ferrari said: "The sculpture consists of two circular shapes, one inside the other. The circular element symbolizes the precision and the skill of this industry. The two stainless steel elements fit exactly into each other, symbolizing the process of die making." But it also has a further and deeper intellectual and emotional content, symbolizing the artistic, creative birth. The inner circle; the idea, is trying to get out through the bullet-split outer circle.

Ferrari implies that the imagery of the past can be made contemporary by returning to the reductionist geometry which dominated part of the classical tradition. His system or reductionism/distortionism represents the essence without distraction of details. Suspension and ambiguity are integral parts of many of his compositions; on closer inspection they reveal new surprising sides and impressions. At the core is his mature handling of geometry. He has adopted techniques that represent the poetic intensions of the sculpture itself. He has acquired a great richness of vocabulary. He builds density and controls value. As Ferrari observes about his bronzes pieces *Square Pyramid*, *Unequal Sector with Cylinder*, *Square Prism*, *Concave Convex*, and *Balance*: "Each sculpture contrasts in its use of space. Vertical contrasts with horizontal; parts thrust up from the ground or come down from the air. They fill the space without extravagance or effort but nevertheless dramatically. The pieces are stopped, restrained in a strange moment of emotion, a moment of dramatic irony." The tension of contrasting forms that may never meet, or do meet in a leaning, descending, rising, thrusting or balancing action or movement, is exuberant and exciting, and also compelling in the intellectual strength of the work.