



Reprinted from Raphael Fodde, introduction to *Eugenio Montale — Motets with Eleven Etchings by Virginio Ferrari* (Woodmere, NY: Raphael Fodde Editions, 1994). Published in conjunction with the exhibition “One Poet — One Artist: Virginio Ferrari’s Homage to Eugenio Montale” at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura—Chicago.

Raphael Fodde—Editor/Publisher and Artist.

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Virginio Ferrari’s sculptures are both magnificent and astonishing. His work has developed with a remarkable logical clarity and a wealth of invention. The sculptures are distinguished by massive force and dynamic tension. This dynamism springs from the energy of the artist’s conceptual program as it developed during the last 25 years.

His modesty has freed him from some of the assumptions of the European tradition and opened him to the simplicity and immediacy of American art. The symmetrical floors in 2 & 9 of his *Tempietti*, with straight lines that meet in space, recall the *Anonimi* of Mantegna’s small temple of flagellation, full of emotions and dreams that inform the human intellect. It is a temple that has turned into a presence that makes visible the cardinal virtue of art. It is the creation of pure space within the space of nature, sculptures that are perfectly attuned to nature, orderly but at the same time shocking, clear and intelligent but always attuned to a spiritual reality of our century, which has characteristics of eternity.

His sculptures, like Mondrian paintings, are stripped to the barest essentials.

Sacred space = territory of metamorphosis.

Cosmic energy made of stone, stone and steel made into a living body, the perforation of the rock in search of water, is that search for spiritual water from which emerge those sculptures, where nothing is voluptuous or sensual, but all converge into the creation of the temple-metamorphosis so as to open in us the doors that lead to the other side of reality.

Ferrari, having worked in his father’s stonecutting shop, came to understand the power of stone. He rejected the marketplace and developed an uncompromising faith in his vision. His concern for aesthetics led him to this commitment to his spiritual ideas as a sculptor. Light, shade, forms, touch, shapes that are not in space: these become space, and space in turn becomes the expression of energy and beauty. Like sculpture, poetry is made of rhythmic verses, sounds, words, all playing on the scale of our inner sentiments, clusters of meaning that suddenly become touchable sculpture. Poetry like sculpture is, thus, open to those solitary meditations.

Is he, like many others, influenced by Brancusi, Noguchi? I would like to think more of confluence of realities that slowly forms a main concern and a dynamic catalyst of capable sculpture. As Martin Heidegger, in his almost unknown pamphlet about art and space, asks: “Is this a possession of space? A sort of dominion of space? Sculpture is in direct confrontation with artistic space.”