

FLORENCE - RELAIS SANTA CROCE

22 February - 18 April 2017

A GREAT WORK BY
MAURO STACCIOLI

the initiative continues
MASTERPIECES. Italian Art at Relais Santa Croce

Masterpieces is an ideal journey through the history of twentieth-century and contemporary Italian art, with top works exhibited by the crème de la crème of Tuscan art galleries affiliated to A.N.G.A.M.C.

From **22 February**, in the heart of Florence (via Ghibellina 87), jewel in the 100% Italian Baglioni Hotels Collection **Relais Santa Croce** is hosting the second appointment in this artistic initiative arising from the partnership with A.N.G.A.M.C. (Italian Association of Modern and Contemporary Art Galleries). Together with **Galleria Il Ponte** from **Florence**, the hotel will present the work by **Mauro Staccioli** (Volterra 1937) **Anello 1996**, a 150 cm-diameter ring made of corten steel.

Rings are without doubt one of the most emblematic shapes reproduced by the artist in his sculptures. Using it for the first time in 1991 in Andorra in the Pyrenees (*Andorra '91*), in an interview with Luca Massimo Barbero, Staccioli said: “[...] *At a certain point in my artistic career, I started to feel that barriers were an excessive form, practically preventing the world behind them from being seen or heard. I started to think that, in this phase of my work at least, the pleasure of seeing, touching and thinking must not be limited. [...] The intervention in Ordino d’Arcalis, in Andorra, came about to go past the image of the round shapes that still obstruct the landscape. The intervention was inspired by the watery, ferrous, vital beauty given off by this space [...]*”

The work on display, *Anello 1996*, is an integral part of this research and his investigation into the section of an isosceles triangle which defines a circular area at its centre. This Staccioli adjusts continually, playing on the relations between the band (height and thickness) and the space that the ring leaves free to the wandering gaze. *Roma 2011*, the large ring installed in the parterre in front of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome, somehow consecrates his striving to *cross through*, to create a *sculpture that can be crossed but also frames...*

Mauro Staccioli was born in 1937 in Volterra, where earned a degree at the Art School in 1954. In 1960 he moved to Sardinia - where he started teaching - and in 1963 he moved to Lodi and then to Milan. At the end of the 60s he embraced sculpture, focusing on the relationship between art and society, and developing his original idea of a sculpture that is intrinsically related with the place - both in its physical and social connotations - in which and for which it was created. In Staccioli's work, therefore, places acquire a central role, for without them sculpture would not even exist. In 1972 Staccioli realizes a series of “sculptures-interventions” in the city of Volterra and the resulting exhibition *Sculture in città* marked an artistic turning-point, making available to the urban space what had, until then, been confined to the closed spaces of galleries and museums. After a series of exhibitions organized in different Milan galleries and art spaces (Studio Sant'Andrea, Studio Marconi, Galleria Bocchi), he was invited to the Venice Biennials of 1976 and 1978, when he created his famous *Muro*, a 8 meter-high concrete wall obstructing the view of the entrance to the Italian Pavilion - a critical, provocative statement. Right from his debut, the artist had developed a language characterized by an essential geometry and by the use of simple materials such as concrete and iron, which implicitly alluded to the use that was made of them for urban architecture in those years. The 80s opened with a strong-impact intervention, a rip across the floor of the Studio Mercato del Sale in Milan, which encouraged visitors to meditate on what they were seeing and actively participate in it by crossing the work itself. After creating a major concrete installation in the park of Villa Gori in Celle di Santomato (PT) - which also marked the beginning of a fruitful dialogue between sculpture and the natural environment - Staccioli's work began to attract critical attention abroad.

His "constructed ideas" made their way into several collections in Germany (Städtische Galerie, Regensburg; Fridericianum Museum, Kassel), Britain (Hayward Gallery, London), Israel (Tel Hai College) and France (ELAC, Lyons). In those years, the artist's language lost the harshness and aggressiveness that were among his distinguishing features, and reflected the harshness and violence of the political climate. He came up with new sculptural forms, which led to new works that challenged the static balance, generating estrangement effects in the spectators - for instance, the form poised on the staircase of the Modern and Contemporary Art Gallery in Rome in 1981, or the large plinth suspended upon the staircase of the University Gallery of Amherst, Massachusetts, in 1984, which he created on the occasion of his first solo show in the United States. His confrontation with architecture and the urban environment continued to yield new solutions, such as the large overturned arches designed for the inside of the Rotonda della Besana in Milan (1987), or placed before the Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci in Prato (1988) following Amnon Barzel's invitation, and in the main square of the Seoul Olympic Park (1988), where he was invited by Pierre Restany. His exhibiting activity in the United States continued with a show at the Museum of Contemporary Art of San Diego, as well as with the series of installations he created for the park of the Djerassi Foundation in Woodside, California (1987-1991), which were followed, in the 90s, by new interventions and major exhibitions, among them the one held at the Shoshana Wayne Gallery in 1993. During these years the artist carried on with his experiments on new forms - this time rings that underlined aspects of the landscape, such as the ones installed in Ordino d'Arcalis, in the Principality of Andorra (1991) and in Munich, Bavaria (1996); or circles "pressed" into the spaces of the Mudima Foundation in Milan (1992), or again poised in an unstable balance in the Parco della Fara, Bergamo (1992); or spheres that appear, almost metaphysically, in the Orzieri plane in Sardinia (1995). The artist also established a deep and productive relationship with Belgium, where he realizes many interventions in public and private spaces, among them *Equilibrio sospeso* [*Suspended Balance*] at the Rond Point de l'Europe in Brussels (1998). In the same decade, Korea took to promoting different public interventions, among them his work for the Kwacheon Contemporary Art Museum (1990). Then, Staccioli's fertile research has yielded several installations, both in Italy and abroad: in La Jolla (San Diego 2003), where a steel beam crosses the building's façade, in Taiwan (2003), Puerto Rico (2004), Carrazeda de Ansiães (Portugal 2008), Voisins-le-Bretonneux (France 2008), Greve in Chianti (2009) and in the Parco della Cupa in Perugia (2009). In 2009 opened his largest exhibition, *Volterra - Places of Experiences*, consisted of three exhibitions and 19 environmental sculptures. In 2010, March 21, the imposing Pyramid 38th Parallel was inaugurated in the Sculpture Park of Fiumara d'Arte, in Motta D'Affermo (Messina), conceived by Antonio Presti. In 2011 in Catanzaro two major solo exhibitions titled *Imperfect Circle*, by Alberto Fiz, have been presented, his sculptures of the 70s in the MARCA museum, while his large-scale environmental sculptures were presented at the Archeological Park of Scolacium (Roccelletta di Borgia). In the same year, *Roma 2011*, a corten steel sculpture - ten meters high - was installed in the parterre in front of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome. In 2012 *Imperfect circle* is installed in the garden of Bocconi University in Milan and the galleries Niccoli in Parma and Il Ponte in Florence present *Mauro Staccioli - The years of concrete*, an exhibition concerning his concrete works of the 70s, the result of a philological reconstruction, carried out with the artist, of his initial work. In the last years we see the installation of some of his important environmental sculptures: he planned and installed *Seogwipo 2014* for Seogwipo on the island of Jeju in Korea, *Aruch 2014* in Florence and the large sculpture at Villa Pisani Bonetti, Bagnolo di Lonigo (2016). Staccioli is an associate member of the Belgian Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-arts and is a member of the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca. He lives and works in Milan and Volterra.

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Mauro Staccioli *Anello*, 1996

Firenze, Relais Santa Croce (via Ghibellina 87)

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