



# Franco Ciuti

Varianze e volute  
nei cerchi del discobolo

Testo di  
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*VARART*



## Variations and volutes in the circles of the discobolus

"The most important event of the XXth century was the defeat of matter," as the scientist George Glider wrote in 1989. "Everywhere the powers of mind are getting the upper hand over the raw force of things." This is particularly evident in visual arts.

Their conceptual evolution, so much searched for by modern avant-gardes within forms, now continues through the further evolutionary *de-materialization* of works, within this postmodern ghost, under the banner of energy. Today's work of art, that has come to an end as an object, can survive as a performing act or as a mode of being - independently of how much raw matter persists inside it.

Now it is more similar to a biological process rather than to a mechanic structure. Therefore, it will simulate the physics of life. It is more interested in representing a mode of existence for both the artist and the participating viewer, and tends less to propose itself as a way of knowledge. Hence, it will explore the real world rather than truth.

A still less experienced way of dematerializing a work of art in favour of its mental power - since art is alien to notions like defeat and supremacy for being taken up only by the vertigo of creation - consists in intensifying the interaction between the object of art and the viewer, as the sculptor Franco Ciuti does with a renewed effort of authenticity. For decades Ciuti's work mostly consists in blowing deep traces of humanity into the intimacy of matter and of the shapes he uses, in order that the force of shapes and matter flows again along the most intimate strings of that inseparable human part of works of art that is ourselves as viewers. A metaphor of this is the very beautiful sculpture *Plus Voluta* of 1998.

There is not only one way of de-materialization, i.e. the mediatic one of eliminating physical and real supports in favour of virtual electronic supports. In fact, this way, even though useful, only results in a transfer of energies, not in a creative act. Creation, instead, requires a community between participating human viewers and the materialness of the work of art - a work shaped upon the needs of human mind that perceives it not only visually - on the basis of an equitable sharing of aesthetic experience. Humanity travels, and work is its engine.

Ciuti's art represents an important bridge of unity over the separation of such tasks, thanks to the *variable geometry* of his sculptures which introject the sensitivity of human organic shapes, without letting them become anthropomorphic. This variance causes a further evolution of the language of his whole work. Certain pieces show a range of almost

Evolvendo, 1998

ottone cotto

32 x 48 x 22 cm

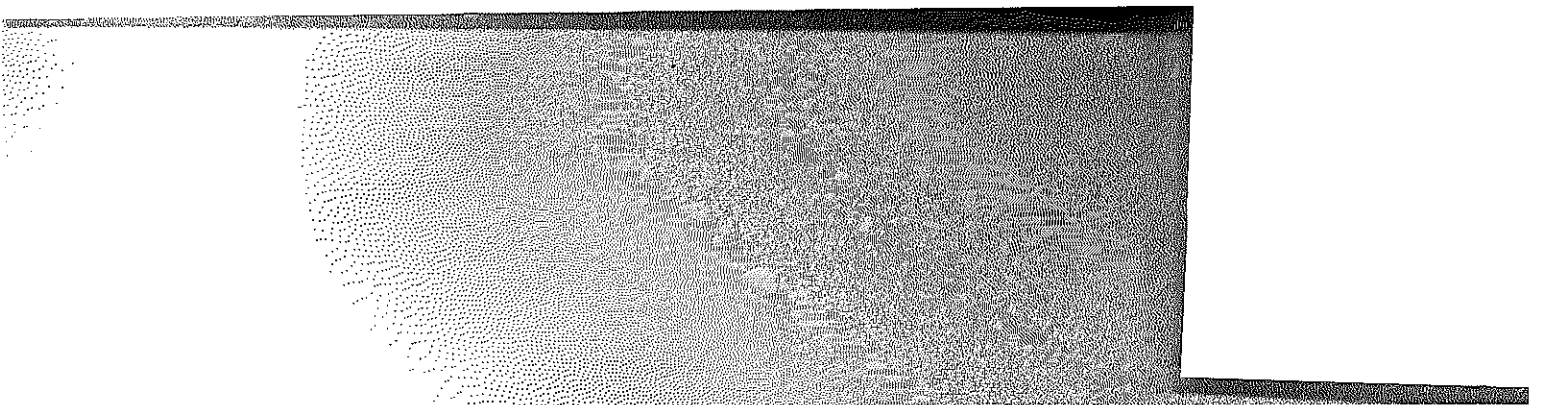
Baroque volutes, as *Double Portance*, so that they enrich the width of space with the time of flight.

This artist, by using different materials - yesterday clay or plaster, today plastic and metals - succeeds in placing objects, however much static and heavy they may be, into a performance zone unknown up to now - that of physics of matter subjected to bursting and perturbing actions - as well as into the virtual motions of the process which at the same time opens the multiple and contrasting aspects potentially involved.

Within the same shape, both performing and processing, his art makes every form turbulent. This can be seen in big works, as the big *Orthogonal* of 1998 which, instead of being limited to the crossing of two planes, seems to transform itself into an act of reciprocal possession, as if a circle be to devour another circle. The variance imposed by the slight of one of two planes makes the scene more evolved: this is no longer a simple geometry and not yet a bite like those of the electronic "pac-men". This is again an example of the process by which variance generates evolutionary passages.

Franco Ciuti ever since put into evidence the contradictory plurality of the chances form may take on within the material process of the work of art. Frequently in the terra-cottas of the early Seventies we already had met multiple stages of formalization within the same piece, a beginning of internal metamorphosis - an edge with a fold - in a kind of lucid and controlled catastrophe. Thus, a clever reigning *Terra-cotta* of 1973 had a squared parallelepipedon which suddenly changed into the Baroque folds of a stele twisted on itself. Here, the weight of the pillar placed on an arabesqued column showed an intense sense of the *gravitation* to which we are subjected as well as things, but which we very rarely perceive in sculptures. *Wings Variance* is a prototype of this.

The visibility of terrestrial gravitation was given to us by the "minimalist" monoliths of that period, dominated by American Minimal art, closed in its unbalanced geometries, forked between geometrical and organic shapes, realized by industrial machines and anyhow articulated with anthropomorphic volumes. In the same years Ciuti succeeded in turning the old handicraft technique of potters towards the same mental elaboration of those minimal geometric bodies, but by changing their intellectual and formal motivations. This Roman sculptor created a new kind of *turbulent structure* showing a principle disorder on the surfaces of order, the becoming of things between attraction and repulsion.



Alpha Varianza, 1998

ottone colto

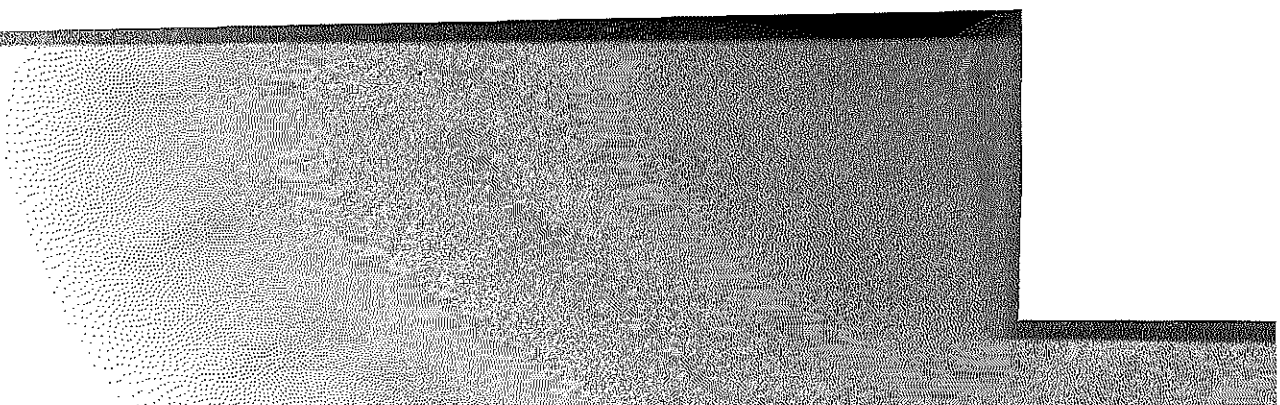
59 x 94 x 48,5 cm

Later he proposed volumes undergoing sudden changes, surfaces flaking like book pages or dilating between torn planes - almost as if they were metamorphic bodies, passages from caterpillar to butterfly - under the action of forces inside matter itself. It was not by chance that one of those sculptures of 1994 was entitled *Energy*. Thus, within the processing of art - and not only in Ciuti's advanced work - the dimension of *in between* - an intermediate split space between surface and volume, between two and three dimensions - was introduced, that Duchamp had already visited, but that had rarely been explored by the artists of the last decades, in spite of the diffusion of fractal geometry among specialists. After having observed the in between shapes in works like *Evolving*, I would say that Ciuti is a fractal artist.

Twenty years later his pluralism took on a continuous striped spectrum. A series of sculptures articulated on a square basis in the early Nineties was followed by a more recent cycle of works designed on a circle basis. In fact, these are "architectures" which are imponderable in spite of their weight, whose formal essence tends towards the state of lightness, if not of flight. They were invaded by a geometry which is rather free from the straight line and more curved towards interiority.

Ciuti, after having explored the square, now orchestrates the *volatility* of the circle. I am particularly attracted by the metallic light ring around the circle of his recent disks, i.e. the horizon of luminosity inside which these stay between black varnished surfaces within a dark mass into which light introjects the power of a wider articulation of planes that often cross each other, by projecting themselves in several directions at the same time. The technique itself of artifacts, the "baking" of brass, seems to withhold a *blow of colour-warmth* that makes them levitate, as can be seen in *Alpha Variance*.

Here we may better observe how the plastic dynamism of the most recent cycle of sculptures by Ciuti is expanding from the interior of their Olympic metal masses. They are not disks but rather vectorial planar bodies projecting themselves around in several directions through the intersection of several planes. Though they are immobile - or perhaps "in pause" - they imply apparent motions of rotation and revolution. Their baked brass bodies are so thin that their polished surfaces are made vibratile. In these "circles", which invite us to make them rotate like disks in a very slow and invisible way, it is easy to see the tension of a throw: the discus-throw. But the discobolus is absent.



He who is present is the viewer, of course. His vision is the very perceptive engine of this extraordinary aerial parade - both mental and optical - created by the sculptor. Ciuti, who has a very personal manner of dematerializing weights and the barriers of things, connects them through the projections of the imagination of him who, by watching the work of art, infuses it with energy.

Here there is an echo of that *internal motility* of solid bodies strengthened by the greatest Futurist sculptor, Boccioni, through the use of "force-lines" along the space-time *continuum* of involving shapes at the beginning of this century. At that time there was the question of creating a continuity between the art object and the outside world, form and matter, space and time. Unlike Boccioni's universe, here we enter the turbulent world of the discontinuous phenomena which link to one another as such.

Ciuti is capable of dominating the deeper nature of matter, and not only the visible one. He shows the simultaneous presence of several internal energetic states inside a shape within the probabilistic whole of their action. He thus succeeds in nearing the macroscopic objects of art and the microcosm of quantum mechanics. Looking at close range, one realizes that the mark Ciuti masters so well is part of the vitality of matter. It is a dark and deep vitality that vibrates only in the best works of art - in the sculptures which aim at perfection - provided they succeed in dematerializing space in time.

To conclude these short notes on the considerable present evolution of Ciuti's art, I can't but take once again a glance at the bright perimeters of his remarkable disks: at his light rings. Which energy moves the memory of Franco Ciuti's "circles"? It is certainly light. The double light emanating from man and art.

It is neither the archetype of disk nor the matter of brass that reminds us, here, the patinas of bronze, nor the dynamic shape that bows motions and projections, but rather light. Lights changing from yellow to green, antique gold and black. I see them also on black surfaces: it is black light. Indeed, the light coming from outside is the energy which sustains and pushes these sculptures into attitudes, into lift; an energy immemorial whom it is up to us to feed. While the luminosity emanating from their almost bronze-coloured circumferences is the energy coming from the intimacy of matter: it is the battery accumulated by all the languages of sculpture. And, as such, it is also the historical memory within which sculptures are placed: histories of spaces and times handed over to

Ecoide, 1998  
ottone colto  
32 x 52 x 32 cm

human civilization. An encounter, an exchange, therefore, between multiple and visible energies.

Now I would pass from the discobolus metaphor, by which I tried to describe the relationship between these sculptures and the viewers, to another metaphor - that of the atom's energy - which allows to explain through words the possible evolutions of art.

Everybody knows that science assimilates the action of the different elements of an atom to the motions of planets around the sun, with their elliptic orbits which make microcosm similar to macrocosm. Now, it seems to me that each "circle" of Ciuti's projects itself around with multiple elliptic motions, similar to those of atoms or of heavenly bodies, as the splendid energy of *Voluble* of 1998 demonstrates. Thus, the space of intervention of a work of art is widened within the process of interaction with the viewer, as well as with respect to the becoming of the energies which are strengthened or weakened in time. It is as if I could look into his matter.

The light within these circles, which behave like atoms, is a propellant for the vision and imagination of the viewer who wants, or is able, to hover highly above the ordinary troubles of life as well as of art. It is not the new that is in the future of art but rather the unknown, which could be very old and lost. In order to explore the unknown, in the universe or inside ourselves, the technology for the future is planning new kinds of traveling with very light spatial "vessels" and "sails" which should be driven by laser rays based on Earth. In other words, future forecasts a separation between vector and propellant, so that the unmanned spatial vessels of tomorrow, lightened of the weight of engines, will have long travel along highways of light, constantly fed from Earth. This kind of sculptures makes me think of such a *glider shape* of voyage - or of communication and expression - of which this sculpture makes me think of when I contemplate the extraordinary engagement, both spatial and sensual, of *Voluptuousness*.

As the philosopher Gilles Deleuze said, any casting of dice comprehends all the possible casts for the calculus of probabilities. Every cast contains all the potential casts. This can be seen, as it seems to me, in Franco Ciuti's sculptures which encircle the unknown with beauty. In each of their plural shape we may see the whole of all the possible shapes which concur in the discovery of beauty.

