



Giuseppe Spagnulo was born in Grottaglie (Taranto), one of the historical centers for ceramics, in 1936. Currently lives and works in Milan.

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Bruno Corà

# Giuseppe Spagnulo

## The Fire, Art





## THE FIRE, THE OVEN, THE FLAME

All of Spagnulo's works have withstood a certain collision, and their surviving permanence is permeated by an experience of heroic resonance, of a mythical degree of density, of an enduring already-happened that is invisible to the eye but discernible to all the senses.

Something has left the elaborated material to its creatural destiny, impressing on it an echo of itself of an intensity as tormenting as it is unprecedented. The traces the works display, with which the senses are pervaded like wall cracks after an earthquake, like uprooted trees after a hurricane, like a Paul of Tarsus thrown by his horse on the road to Damascus when struck by the light, evoke the magnetic residuality of the noumenal manifestation. The god that guides the hands of blacksmiths is that of fire; the art conceived by Spagnulo is brought into the world with fire. I have no difficulty imagining the adolescent Spagnulo growing up in his father's workshop in Grottaglie, working among ceramicists, next to lathes, in front of kilns, where fire, from one laboratory to the next, over and above the shapes resulting from the work, is the immutable essence of days, months and years.

As for that novitiate, I imagine the young Spagnulo, as in the pages of Gaston Bachelard, being proud of the knowledge acquired alongside his father "in the art of lighting the fire" and in baking in the flames the curved shapes of vases and other hand-made ornaments. Well, there is a highly significant consequentiality in the art of Spagnulo, which links his initial training and early experiences with terracotta and ceramics and, later, his intense work with iron and metals. These, in fact, originate in the bowels of the earth, from where, in the mines, humankind has always extracted minerals, replacing time in the slow process of chthonic maturation, helping and accelerating the phases of growth of the metals. Between earth and metal there is a relation like the one between the maternal womb and the embryo. In mythology and anthropology, the earth is *mater* and stone is *genitrix*. The human species itself, according to the Old Testament of the early Semitic tradition, is created from mud. The Lent Memento of the Christian cultures renews in humankind the sense of coming from and re-



*Cerchio*, 1992, cm 70x70x70, steel

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Giuseppe Spagnulo in his studio