

## SOMAINI IN AMERICA

**Fondazione Francesco Somaini Scultore**  
**Milano, Corso di Porta Vigentina, 31**  
**8 September 2021 - 31 March 2022**  
**Opening: 8 September 2021**  
**Press Conference: 7 September 2021**

On the occasion of Milano ART WEEK and Miart, the new headquarters and the exhibition activities of the Foundation are inaugurated by an important personal exhibition of the sculptor that explores the fortunes of his work in the United States for about twenty years, starting from the end of the 1950s. As a matter of fact, Somaini received in 1959 the prize for best foreign sculptor at the São Paulo Biennial in Brazil and in 1960 he held his first solo show at the Italian Cultural Institute in New York, organized by the Odyssia Gallery and presented by Giulio Carlo Argan. It collected works lent by American collectors. The selection, curated by Luisa Somaini and Francesco Tedeschi, recalls with new ideas the topic treated in other recent exhibitions held at the Triennale Palace, at the Gallerie d'Italia and at the Museo del Novecento in Milan in 2017 and at the Open Art Gallery in Prato in 2018, proposing some selected works which retrace that great season. Among these, some examples of the *Proposte per un monumento*, *Verticali*, *Orizzontali*, *Oblique*, *Memorie dell'Apocalisse*, *Racconti* and *Figure di fuoco*, that are motifs amid the most loved by American collectors. Among the sculptures on display – coming from the master's archive, from private collections and from Open Art Gallery – here are also some works of the series started by Somaini after the informal season, such as the *Cadute dell'uomo*, *Da sotto* and *Carnificazioni di un'architettura*, linked to the reflection on the relationship between sculpture and the urban context. This theme was triggered by the contact with American culture during his numerous trips to the United States and it was gained during his collaborative experiences with architects, which led him in 1970 to the creation of monumental works for the cities of Atlanta, Baltimore and Rochester. The exhibition is enriched by an accurate collection of images documenting the success of Somaini's work in collecting American, through the presentation of the collections of major US museums and institutions. For example MoMA, which acquires works by Somaini through donations from the Rockefeller family and by architect Philip Johnson, the Detroit Institute of Arts, with the donation of Lydia Winston Malbin, as well as the Kreeger Museum and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington. The exhibition, created by the Foundation in collaboration with the Open Art Gallery of Prato, is accompanied by a bilingual catalog (MF Edizioni, Signa/FI) with a text by Francesco Tedeschi, an in-depth critical anthology and biobibliographic apparatuses.

N.B.: Timetables are being defined. Admission to the exhibition spaces, by reservation only, is quota in compliance with the rules on containment and management of the epidemiological emergency from COVID-19. Please note that from 6 August 2021, following the entry into force of the decree-law of 23 July 2021 n. 105, to access the spaces of the Foundation it will be mandatory to show the Green Pass (Certification Covid Green 19).

For information and reservations, send an email to [fondazione.somaini@gmail.com](mailto:fondazione.somaini@gmail.com).

**Francesco Somaini** was born in Lomazzo (Como) on August 6th 1926. He attended the Brera Academy from 1945 to 1947 under the guidance of Giacomo Manzù. In 1949 he graduated in Law. They contribute to his training as a sculptor in these first years of activity the numerous trips made in Italy and abroad since the mid-forties. He made his debut at the Rome Quadriennale in 1948 and exhibited for the first time at the Venice Biennale in 1950, also featuring in the 1954, 1956, 1958, 1960, 1964, 1976 and 1978 editions. In 1955 he enrolled in the MAC Espace, intensifying collaboration with architects in the name of the "synthesis of the arts". In 1956 he participated at the Venice Biennale with large works in ferric conglomerate. Immediately noticed by international critics, he held his first solo show at the Strozzi Gallery in Florence, accompanied by the first monograph signed by Léon Degand. 1957 marked the beginning of his important informal season, based on the poetics of the fragment of matter, burnished in some parts to accentuate their expressiveness, which led him to international success. In these years Somaini also cast his sculptures in iron, lead and pewter, sometimes intervening on castings to create variations of the main motifs. In 1959 he received the Award for Best Foreign Sculptor at the São Paulo Biennale, Brazil. The following year he held his first solo show in the United States (at the Italian Cultural Institute, New York) with a presentation by Giulio Carlo Argan and was invited to participate with his own exhibition hall at the Venice Biennale. In 1961 he won the Critics' Prize at the Paris Biennale. In these years he held numerous personal exhibitions in Italy and the United States, taking part in all the most important national and international collectives. At the conclusion of his informal season, he instilled his sculptures with symbolic values, opposing organic forms with geometric volumes of architectural design. In the belief that sculpture has the task of requalifying the urban fabric (already rooted during the experiences carried out on a large scale, from mid-sixties to early seventies, in Italy and the United States), he formalized his ideas in design studies, published in *Urban Urgencies* (1972), written with Enrico Crispolti. He experiments with a personal processing technique through the use of a high-pressure sand jet, which since 1965 has become a fundamental component of his plastic language. From 1975 he studied a new plastic typology, executing bas-relief traces generated by the rolling of a sculptured matrix that leaves an imprint, revealing a cryptic image. In the same year he started using marble, which he carved personally. He presented matrices, traces and some photomontages of fantastic urban visions in the exhibition hall assigned to him at the Venice Biennale (1978) and in his solo show in Duisburg (1979). From the mid-eighties he executed monumental works in Italy and Japan, associated with positive-negative dialectics, and sculptures featuring a highly vitalistic organicity which he proposed in the retrospective at the Brera Palace in Milan in 1997. Francesco Somaini died in Como in 2005. The National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome dedicated the first retrospective to him posthumously in 2007.