

FONTANA'S VIA CRUCIS

Artist: Lucio Fontana (1899-1968)

Date: 1947

Material: Glazed ceramics

Dimensions: Approximately 17 x 29 x 27 cm for each of the 14 sculpted stations

The *Via Crucis* by Lucio Fontana, one of the main protagonists of Italian and International art of the last century, is absolutely one of the most important masterpieces of sacred art in the 1900's. This incredible piece may appear to rebel against the exterior senses. Its initial spontaneous provocation seems to be intended by the author and the subject matter. Finding sense in the suffering represented by the *Via Crucis* is always an arduous task for human reason. Yet after a brief moment of observation, the profound message of each station comes alive. The tangle of the ceramics and the brilliance of the finish draws one into the drama of the Cross. Fontana infuses into each twist and arch a depth of emotion that he himself experienced throughout his life. Anguish is balanced by acceptance, randomness by purpose and mystery by meaning.



Station I.

Page 93:
Station VI (detail).





Fontana's *Via Crucis* is neither figurative nor abstract, although at first glance it may suggest otherwise. All the characters and symbols present in the Passion are transfigured but maintain a perfect equilibrium between the autonomy of artistic language and the richness of the spiritual message represented. This is an extraordinary work, exclusively destined "for museums" where its worth can be appreciated and shared with many.

Lucio Fontana was born in Argentina of Italian parents. In 1947 he founded the "Spatialist Movement," an innovative revolution of the concept of space in works of art, inventing his famous "tagli" or "cuts" to break through the two-dimensional limitations of the canvas.

While working with cuts on his canvases, Fontana also experimented with various materials and new and old technical traditions. The artist enjoyed and celebrated the richness of ceramic for its plasticity, the splendour of its surface, the possibility to create new forms with a very flexible material and was able to communicate ancient and timeless messages.



The Vatican Museum's Collection of Contemporary and Modern Art is extremely interested in this fabulous work. We feel the Vatican Museums would be the ideal location for a work of this nature and of this importance.

An entire room, Room XXX, adjacent to the Matisse room, would be dedicated to this work to give it the special attention it deserves. The Patron who helps us in this acquisition would be our honored guest at the inauguration of this room and proper recognition of their gift would be duly noted in Room XXX of the Vatican Museums for this magnificent *Via Crucis*.