

Franco Monti

Milan 1931 – Ibiza 2008

Franco Monti was born in Milan in 1931. From an early age he was interested in the arts, particularly sculpture, and in the early ’50s he began modelling clay and carving anthropomorphic stone figures of abstract tendencies, encouraged by the sculptor Lorenzo Pepe who later became director of the art school of the prestigious Brera Academy in Milan.

He dedicates himself to the study of the French school of ethnology and his interest in African art leads him to travel extensively in sub-Saharan West Africa from 1954 to further his learning of those cultures. Later his trips to Peru, Mexico and New Guinea help to expand his knowledge about the cultures which at that time were called "primitive". In the following years he promotes initiatives and organizes exhibitions to make non-European art known in Italy and abroad.

Fully integrated into the cultural world of the '60s, particularly active in Milan due to the number and fame of Italian and foreign artists active then, he is friends with the most important representatives of culture in Italy like Franco Russoli, Lamberto Vitali, Guido Ballo, Luigi Carluccio, Raffaele Carrieri; with artists such as Alberto Giacometti, Marino Marini, Fontana, De Chirico, Morandi, Mario Negri, and other influential characters in the art world like Peggy Guggenheim, director John Huston or Eugene Bermann, designer of the Metropolitan Opera House and La Scala.

Corresponding member of the Syndicat Français des Experts Professionnels en Œuvres d' Art de Paris since 1962, he is considered an expert on African sculpture to which he has dedicated over 30 years of field research. He contributes as an expert on “primitive arts” to publications by Fabbri and De Agostini. For some time he writes for “Corriere della Sera” in the renowned art page directed by the writer Dino Buzzati. Due to his in-depth knowledge of primitive arts the Mondadori magazine "Panorama" interviews him in August 1965 to find out how his particular experience in Africa, in direct contact with those cultures, enabled him to form a group of collectors of an art hitherto almost unknown in Italy. In 1967 the Civic Museum - the Kunsthalle - of the city of Darmstadt (Germany) organised a retrospective exhibition of his African art collection.

In 1971 he is in charge of the section of Non-European arts in the exhibition "Il Cavaliere Azzurro" (Der Blaue Reiter) at the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna di Torino and in 1979 coordinates the same section of "Origini dell’Astrattismo", the most important and extensive exhibition on the subject ever held at the Palazzo Reale in Milan.

Since the early Eighties, he no longer travels to Africa and dedicates himself nearly exclusively to



his passion, being a sculptor, which he has not stopped thinking about all these years. He chooses the island of Ibiza as a place to work as here he can find the right retreat to create forms that seem to take inspiration from the surrounding colours and nature.

He begins experimenting with different materials - wood, metal, cardboard, stone – and then chooses concrete to develop forms which he gives shades of colour thanks to mineral pigments added to the concrete mix in the development phase. The works thus created are always unique specimens obtained by the artist's accurate work of "subtraction" from the raw shape once it is free from its mould.

In October 1996, the Swiss magazine "Galatea European Magazine", which already knew him as an African art expert, is interested in his sculptural work and interviews him in his atelier in Ibiza.

In the summer of 1999 the Town Hall of Palma de Mallorca organises the exhibition entitled "The geometry of the shadow. 1995-1998" (May–September 1999) with 16 monumental works located in the "Parc de la Mar". A sculpture ("S98/1 Grizzly Shadows" on page 25 of the catalogue) is acquired by the Town Hall and remains in permanent exhibition underneath the wall of the Almudaina Palace.

The local television station "Television in Ibiza and Formentera (TEF)" aired a short documentary on the work of Franco Monti filmed in the same place where the artist works in the summer of 2000.

In June 2001, he participates in a collective exhibition held in Verona (Italy) of artists present in the famous Panza di Biumo collection.

In September 2001, the "Consell Insular d'Eivissa i Formentera" (the local government) invited him to participate with three art works in the Art Fair of Ibiza.

In the summer of 2002, together with the acclaimed international painter Erwin Bechtold, he exhibits his work at the Van der Voort Gallery (Ibiza), in the exhibition "Encounters".

In June-July 2003 he is invited to participate with one of his sculptures in the exhibition "Mallorquins d' adopció", Krekovic Museum, Palma de Mallorca.

July-August 2003, the photographer Daniel Bühl exhibits photos from the series "el tríptic de l'



artista” in the Ramón Llull centre (Palma de Mallorca) and projects a short movie of Erwin Bechtold, Rafa Forteza and Franco Monti portrayed while working in their respective ateliers. Some of the pictures of Monti appear in the June 2003 issue of the magazine "Galatea".

In August 2003 he participates in a group exhibition at the Van der Voort Gallery in Ibiza.

In September-November 2005 his sculptures are exhibited at the “Àmbit Gallery”, Barcelona. The opening of the exhibition coincides with the launch of the monographic book "Steles of Colour – The Sculpture of Franco Monti" by the renowned Spanish critic and art historian J.F. Yvars.

Between May and August 2006 he presents five sculptures expressly made for the exhibition space of the "Church of the Hospitalet", managed by the Museum of Contemporary Art of Ibiza.

The Santa Bárbara Castle in Alicante hosts an outdoor exhibition of 39 of his sculptures between May 2006 and February 2007. In the “Sala Taberna” exhibition space of the same Santa Bárbara Castle, from October 2006 to February 2007, he exhibits 9 of his sculptures together with 30 ancient African Art works in the exhibition "Out of Africa".

From November 2007 to February 2008 he exhibits 20 of his most recent sculptures in the “Galeria Maneu” of Palma de Mallorca. This will be his last exhibition, as he passes away on 9 January 2008.

Between February and March 2009, Àmbit Galeria d’Art in Barcelona presents 17 works by Monti to commemorate the first year of the absence of this enigmatic sculptor.

The “Espai Micus” in Ibiza organizes an exhibition of 38 sculptures between April and July 2011.

In the summer of 2016, works by Franco Monti are included in the group exhibition “Paisajes velados” (Veiled Landscapes), organised by AP Gallery in Santa Eulalia del Río (Ibiza).

In the summer of 2025, Estudi Tur Costa in Jesús (Ibiza) organises the exhibition “RE-Encuentro”, which brings the works of Erwin Bechtold and Franco Monti together again, as in their 2002 exhibition “Encontre”.

Sculptures by Franco Monti are found in important collections of contemporary art, public and private, including the Museum of Contemporary Art of Eivissa (MACE), Palma de Mallorca City



Council, the Serra Collection (Mallorca), Ibiza Gran Hotel (Ibiza), Soho Farmhouse Ibiza (Santa Gertrudis), and the collections of Giuseppe Panza di Biumo (Milan, Biumo and Lugano), Gabriele and Giuseppina Caccia Dominioni (Milan), Vincenzo and Giuliana Novembre (Milan), Alberto Galaverni (Parma), Victor and Mayte Rahola (Barcelona), García Ventura (Barcelona), Estela Matutes (Barcelona), Erwin and Christina Bechtold (Ibiza), Rafael Tur Costa (Ibiza), Leszek Muszynski (Ibiza) and Marcel and Mary Floris (Ibiza), among others.

About Franco Monti's Sculpture:

- Ottolina Negri, "La scultura oltre il tempo", Galatea, October 1996.
- "Franco Monti. La geometría de la sombra. 1995-1998", Ses Voltes, Ajuntament de Palma, 1999. Institutional introductions by Joan Fageda Aubert, Mayor of Palma and Carmen Feliu Álvarez de Soto Mayor, the councillor responsible for Culture. Art introductions by Giuseppe Panza di Biumo and Mª José Corominas Madurell, curator of the exhibition.
- "Franco Monti: Me interesa la escultura africana", Diario de Mallorca, 12/5/1999.
- María José Corominas Madurell, "Die Geometrie des Schattens", Palma Kurier, 17/9/1999.
- Le guide del FAI. "Villa Menafoglio Litta Panza e la collezione Panza di Biumo", Ed Skira, 2001.
- "La Collezione Panza", Villa Menafoglio Litta Panza, Varese. Ed Skira, 2002.
- Exhibition "Encontre", Van der Voort Gallery, Ibiza, 2002. Sculptures by F. Monti with paintings by Erwin Bechtold.
- "Franco Monti", Galatea, June 2003, photographs by Daniel Bühl.
- "Mallorquins d' adopció", Museo Krekovic, Palma de Mallorca, June-July 2003.
- Daniel Bühl, "el tríptic de l' artista". Exhibition of the photos taken of three Balearic artists (Erwin Bechtold, Rafa Forteza and Franco Monti), Espacio Ramón Llull, Palma de Mallorca, July - August 2003.
- Carles Torres, "Franco Monti – Escultor" in "Mola", 29/9/2004.
- Vicente Valero, "Coincidencias insulares: Con Franco Monti", in "Viajeros contemporáneos", Ed Pre-textos, Valencia, 2004 (p. 211- 213).
- J.F. Yvars, "Estelas de color – La escultura de Franco Monti", Ed Ámbit, 2005.
- J.F. Yvars, "Franco Monti", Galatea, September 2005.
- Julio Herranz, "Franco Monti presenta en Barcelona una exposición y un libro sobre su obra", Culture section, Última Hora Ibiza, 4/9/2005.
- La Vanguardia, Agenda, 12/9/2005.
- "Franco Monti – Esculturas", Ámbit Galería d' Art, Barcelona, 15 September – 15 November 2005.
- Josep Maresma i Pedragosa, in "Crítica d' Art – ICOM", September 2005.



- “El Periódico”, in Agenda, 16/9/2005.
- C. Domènec/ J. Herranz, “Franco Monti convence en Barcelona con una exposición de sus esculturas”, “Última Hora Digital” 18/9/2005.
- “El punto de las Artes”, Editorial, 23-29/9/2005.
- El punto de las Artes, “ La escultura de F. Monti”, Editorial, 30/9- 6/10/ 2005.
- Ricardo Mas, “Franco Monti. Ámbit Galería d’ Art”, “Avui”, 8/10/2005.
- Josep M. Cadena, in “El Periódico”, 14-16/10/2005.
- Juan Bufil, “El color de la escultura”, “La Vanguardia – Dinero”, 23/10/2005.
- Anabel Herrera, in “Curator”, Oct.-Nov. 2005.
- J.F. Yvars, “Estelas de color”, La Vanguardia, 27/11/2005.
- “Franco Monti – La belleza callada de las piedras”, L’Hospitalet, Museu d’ Art Contemporani d’ Eivissa, 13 May – 31 August 2006.
- Exhibition “Franco Monti”, Santa Bárbara Castle, Alicante, May 2006 – February 2007.
- José Manuel Piña, “El alma de las piedras”, Diario de Ibiza, 13/5/2007.
- “Franco Monti: “Sueño mis esculturas y en la duermevela las pienso”, Balearia Magazine, February – April 2007 (pág. 34-38).
- “Franco Monti ”, Joan Oliver “MANEU” Galeria d’Art, 15 November 2007 – 8 February 2008.
- Ana Largo, “Fallece en Eivissa Franco Monti”, Ultima Hora, 17/01/2008.
- Joan Oliver Maneu, “En memoria de Franco Monti”, Ultima Hora, 17/01/2008.
- Redacción, “Muere en Eivissa el escultor italiano Franco Monti”, Diario de Ibiza, 18/01/2008.
- Lourdes Duran, “Fallece Franco Monti, el escultor que hizo poesía del hormigón”, Diario de Mallorca, 18/01/2008.
- María José Corominas, “Franco Monti en el record”, Diari de Balears, 20/01/2008.
- R.C., “El Espai Micus se entrega a la escultura de Franco Monti”, Ultima Hora, 20/04/2011.
- P.R., “El Espai Micus expone esculturas de cemento de Franco Monti”, Diario de Ibiza, 20/04/2011.
- Ibiza Actual, “Fascinating forms and colours”, pg. 72-73, April 2011.
- Group exhibition “Paisajes velados”, AP Gallery, Santa Eulalia del Río (Ibiza), summer 2016.
- Laura Ferrer, “Paisajes velados por siete miradas”, Diario de Ibiza, 1/09/2016.
- Exhibition “RE-Encuentro”, Erwin Bechtold and Franco Monti, Estudi Tur Costa, Jesús (Ibiza), summer 2025.
- Maite Alvite, “El Reencuentro de Bechtold y Monti en el Estudi Tur Costa”, Diario de Ibiza, 17/06/2025.
- R.I., “Bechtold y Monti se reencuentran en el Estudi Tur Costa”, Periódico de Ibiza, 19/06/2025.
- C.M., “Inauguración del ‘Reencuentro’ entre Bechtold y Monti”, Diario de Ibiza, 22/06/2025.
- Cristina Martín, “La Eivissa mágica, la de verdad”, Diario de Ibiza, 29/07/2025.



- Cristina Martín, “El latido de África en un bosque de esculturas de Eivissa”, El Dominical, Diario de Ibiza, 1/03/2026.

About Franco Monti and African Art:

- F. Monti, “Introduzione all’ arte africana”, “Arte Figurativa” nº 16, ed Alfieri & Lacroix, November–December 1959.
- F. Monti, “Le arti primitive”, volume IX of the collection “Capolavori nei secoli”, Fratelli Fabbri Editore, Milan, 1961-1964, dedicated to non-European arts.
- F. Monti, “Arti primitive. 35 sculture d’ Africa e d’America” published in “Collezione Le Presenze” by Galleria Blù, 1961-1962", vol. V
- F. Monti, “Sculture africane” for the congress “Colloquio Artistico Euro-Afro-Asiatico”, 6th-20th of July 1963, Livorno, under the auspices of the Italian National Commission for UNESCO. Introduction to the African Art section by Franco Russoli.
- F. Monti, “Le Muse”, Edizioni De Agostini, 1963-1968. Contributions to the monthly publications on primitive arts.
- L. Terzi, “Il cacciatore di idoli”, “Panorama”, ed. Mondadori, August 1965 (interview).
- F. Monti, “Maschere Africane”, Fabbri Editore, 1966.
- F. Monti, “Terracotte Precolombiane”, Fabbri Editore, 1966.
- F. Monti, “Arte dell’ Africa nera”, published in the magazine “il Capitale”, ed. Giada, July - August 1972.
- F. Monti, “I misteri dell’ arte nera”, “Bolaffi Arte”, ed. G.A. Salamon, March 1973.
- Roberto Tabozzi, “Puntare sul NERO”, in the magazine “Capital” nº 10, December 1980, Milan.
- Karen Blixen, “La Mia Africa – Sculture dell’Africa Nera – Fotografie di Mario Carrieri”, Olivetti private edition, Milan, 1981. F. Monti contributed to the selection of the African works of art that accompany this famous text.
- Maria Pia Quarzo Cerina, “Afrikanische Kunst aus europäischer Sicht”, in the magazine “du”, Zürich, April 1984.
- Marisa Vescovo, “Stupore e sacralità”, in the magazine “Leader”, Roma, March 1986.
- “Juliet art magazine”, nº 24, 1986, Trieste, review of the exhibition “Scultura monumentale della Nigeria. Le figure degli Ibo”.
- F. Monti, “Black Africa. The Legacy”, FMR, nº 49, 1991 (international English edition).
- F. Monti “L’ arte africana. Primitiva? No, primaria.”, Giornale dell’ Arte, Nº 142, March 1996.
- F. Monti, “L’Arte Africana, l’alfa e l’omega della civiltà”, Galatea – European Magazine, December 2007/January 2008, year XVI.



Selection of exhibitions of African, Pre-Columbian and Oceanic Art organised by Franco Monti:

- Galleria F. Monti, “Arti Primitive”, Milan, Italy, 1957 in collaboration with his friend Jean Pierre Dubosc.
- Galleria L’Ariete, Milan, Italy, 1958. African and Pre-Columbian Art exhibition.
- Galleria Il Sestante, “Arte Negra”, Milan, Italy, 1959.
- “Arte dell’ Oceania”, Galleria dell’ Ariete, Milan, Italy, 1959.
- Galleria Cichi, “Sculture dell’Africa Nera”, Roma, Italy, 1960.
- La Frezzaria, Venezia, Italy, 1960. Exhibition organised by Paolo Barozzi with the collaboration of F. Monti.
- Galleria La Palma, Locarno, Switzerland, 1960. Pre-Columbian Art exhibition.
- Galleria La Nuova Pesa, “Arti Primitive – Africa / America precolombiana / Oceania”, Roma, Italy, December 1961.
- Galleria La Bussola, “Arti Primitive”, Torino, Italy, 1961. African and Pre-Columbian Art exhibition. Catalogue introduction by Guido Ballo and texts by F. Monti.
- Galleria Blu, “Costanti Poetiche nell’Arte”, Milano, Italy, 1962. African and Pre-Columbian Art exhibition. Catalogue introduction by Franco Russoli followed by text on African Art by Franco Monti.
- Galleria Le Stagioni, “Arti Primitive”, Padova, Italy, May 1962. African and Pre-Columbian sculptures on show.
- “EUROPA OGGI Colloquio Artistico Euro-Afro-Asiatico”, “Les Sources du XX Siècle –Sculture Africane della Collezione Franco Monti – Milano”. Touring exhibition: Livorno, Montecatini – Isola d’Elba, Italy, July 1963.
- “Festival dei due Mondi”, Spoleto, Italy, 1965. African Art exhibition curated by F. Monti and organised by Gian Carlo Menotti.
- Galleria Milano, “Scultura tradizionale dell’ Africa”, Milan, Italy, May 1966. Exhibition curated by F. Monti.
- Kunsthalle Darmstadt, “Plastik Aus Schwarz Afrika”, Kunsthalle, Darmstadt, Germany, June–July 1967. General introduction by Hans-Günther Sperlich. Exhibition introduction by F. Monti.
- Galleria Civica d’ Arte Moderna, “Il Cavaliere Azzurro. Der Blaue Reiter.” Galleria Civica d’ Arte Moderna, Torino, Italy, 1971. Introductions by L. Mallé, L. Carluccio. The section of “Le arti primitive nella cultura d’ oggi” curated by F. Monti.
- Limited edition, not for sale, of 50 African Art photos taken by Mario Carrieri of pieces belonging



to the Monzino Collection with provenance F. Monti, Milan, Italy, 1976. In the introduction, Carlo Monzino pays tribute to F. Monti.

- Palazzo Reale, Comune di Milano, “Origini dell’ astrattismo. Verso altri orizzonti del reale” Silvana editoriale, Milan, Italy, 1979. The section on non-European art is curated by Franco Monti.
- Galleria Arte e Altro, “Capolavori della scultura africana”, Milan, Italy, 1984.
- Studio Carlo Grossetti, “Scultura monumentale della Nigeria. Le figure degli Ibo”, Milan, Italy, 1985-1986.
- Centro Culturale di Arte Contemporanea Internazionale, “Sculture Africane”, Rocca Borromeo di Angera, Lago Maggiore, Italy, 1990. Exhibition organised by F. Monti with the artistic collaboration of Pierre Restany.
- Studio Carlo Grossetti, “Masterpieces”, Milan, Italy, 1995. Exhibition of Igbo sculptures confronted with a selection of contemporary paintings.
- Museo e Villaggio Africano, “Africa dalla memoria all’immagine”, Basella di Urgnano, Bergamo, Italy, 2002. Introduction by Pierre Restany. Texts by Daniela Bognolo and F. Monti.
- Sala Taberna, Castillo de Santa Bárbara, “Memorias de África”, Alicante, Spain, 2006. African art confronted with a selection of concrete sculptures created by F. Monti.