

# On the Making of Signboards: Corporeal Inscriptions and Material Transpositions of the Writing into the Written

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**Abstract:** During the last forty years, a parallel yet separate reflection has unfolded across the Atlantic. While European semioticians have developed the concept of enunciation to tackle the relationship between the linguistic system and its concrete instantiations, North American linguistic anthropologists have explored discursive processes and their sedimentation as texts through the lens of entextualization. A key and partially overlooked aspect within both intellectual traditions concerns the materiality of the actual production, through gestural acts of inscription, of text-artifacts. In this paper, I focus on the enunciative-cum-artistic practice of a renowned sculptor, Arnaldo Pomodoro (1926-2025), to explore the process of turning discourse (and gestures) into text(-artifact)s. I draw on the artist's archive, on the critical literature about his work and combine these findings with direct observations and interviews conducted in the sculptor's atelier to describe Pomodoro's intermedial practice of negative inscription into a variety of substrates (e.g., cuttlebone, clay) and its positive transduction by casting molten metals into gypsum plaster or fiberglass molds. I argue that analyzing non-verbal forms of enunciation and entextualization may shed light onto our professional semiotic ideologies, furthering our understanding of crucial aspects of textuality and enunciation, such as the tension between structure and event, durable and ephemeral, and figurative and plastic.

**Keywords:** substrate, writing, artistic enunciation, crossmodality, intermediality, semiotic ideologies

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## Introduction: Volatile Words vs. Durable Scripts?

In his notorious essay on the epistemology of anthropology, Clifford Geertz (1973:19) claimed that to understand what anthropology is, we should examine what its practitioners do: namely, they write.<sup>1</sup> “[In] *social* anthropology,” claims Geertz (1973:19, emphasis mine), “what the practitioners do is ethnography. [...]. The ethnographer ‘inscribes’ social discourse; he writes it down. In so doing, he turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted.” Had Geertz considered linguistic (rather than social) anthropological practice, a somewhat different picture of the craft would have emerged. As Duranti (1994:40) points out: “to be a linguistic anthropologist means [...] [spending] hundreds if not thousands of hours [...] listening and transcribing” recorded speech. When, in the early 2000s, I moved to UCLA to undergo my linguistic anthropological training, after two years spent with sociocultural anthropologists in an Italian PhD program, I was socialized to the drill of recording (on magnetic tapes and later on a digital device) and transcribing natural interactions (on a notebook and later on a laptop).<sup>2</sup> I thus realized that while social anthropologists’ trademark practice concerns jotting down fieldnotes (which may be successively transformed, through various rounds of reinterpretation and rewriting, into published accounts), one of linguistic anthropologists’ distinctive professional commitments revolves around the recording and the extremely time-consuming labor of transcribing spoken interaction.<sup>3</sup>

This “methodological difference” (Duranti 1994:39) is theoretically crucial. If, according to Geertz (1973:20), social anthropologists’ mandate is to “inscribe social discourse,” to “rescue the ‘said’ of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms,” linguistic anthropologists have long been concerned with the “flow of social discourse” (Geertz 1973:28), with the recording of linguistic and semiotic practices on a magnetic or digital substrate and their “transduction-inscription” (Silverstein and Urban 1996a:4–5) into a transcript, that is, a “visual-channel text-artifact [endowed] with a certain concreteness and manipulability” (Silverstein and Urban 1996a:3). To say it with Ricoeur (1971, 2004[1997]) and Levinas (1981[1974]), with respect to their sociocultural colleagues, linguistic anthropologists give analytical prominence to “the Saying” (*le Dire*) over “the Said” (*le Dit*).<sup>4</sup> Indeed, not only do we go beyond the propositional and semantic content of the utterances (i.e., what it is said during the course of ethnographic encounters) to

analyze the forms of pragmatic addressivity and intersubjective responsibility that lie at the core of language-mediated forms of social life (Ochs 2012), we are also interested in documenting the concrete and context-specific processes whereby “discourse metamorphoses and precipitates as form” (Silverstein and Urban 1996a:2). This entails analyzing specific instances whereby ephemeral events of speaking are inscribed as texts (through virtually endless forms of discursive sedimentation, or text-artifacts), and, at the same time, describing the inherent reversibility of such crossmodal processes. As we will see, an important and often overlooked aspect within these processes is the distinction between texts—as coherent configurations of co-occurring signs as iterable, virtual types—and text-artifacts—that is, material, singular token embodiments of texts.<sup>5</sup> By focusing on how spoken discourse may temporarily morph into crystallized textualizations and then undergo multiple processes of verbal reenactment and reanimation, the different essays collected in Silverstein and Urban’s (1996b) groundbreaking volume, *Natural Histories of Discourse*, highlight the precarious and instable relations underlying the written and oral modality and reveal how the relationship between text and event is one of constant recalibration.

During the last forty plus years, continental semioticians have been concerned with a similar undertaking, namely, how to grapple with the divide (at once ontological and analytical) between the linguistic system and its concrete instantiations; code and message; structure and event. Dealing with this predicament is, according to Ricoeur (1976:2–3), the price that scholars of language “must pay for the tremendous achievements brought about by the *Cours de linguistique general* of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure [and his] fundamental distinction between language as *langue* and as *parole*, which has strongly shaped modern linguistics.” Indeed, Paris School semiotics, a label that refers to the approach centered around the work of Algirdas Greimas and his students and colleagues, has long been concerned with the conceptual problem of enunciation, originally posited by Benveniste (2014[1970]) as the “the conversion of *langue* into *parole*” (Padoan, this issue).<sup>6</sup> Various framed as the relation between *langue* and *parole*; *histoire* (i.e., the impersonal mode of enunciation of ‘historical narration’) and *discours* (i.e., a “plane of utterance” anchored in the situation of enunciation); *énoncé* (what is said, namely the utterance and its content) and *énonciation* (enunciation), this theoretical knot lies at the core of the European semiotic reflection.

In this article, I reflect on the “shadow conversation” (Irvine 1996) underlying these two disciplinary traditions, which have developed in parallel across the Atlantic, without taking much notice of each other (see Nakassis and Padoan, this issue). I argue that to foster a dialogue between North American linguistic anthropology and Paris School semiotics we need to place enunciation within its material context of production, which entails focusing on the crossmodal practice of turning (spoken) discourse into (written) text via the

mediation of text-artifacts.<sup>7</sup> However, instead of looking at the verbo-centric process of linguistic inscription, I examine the enunciative-cum-artistic practice of a world-famous Italian sculptor, Arnaldo Pomodoro (1926-2025), whose *oeuvre* has been characterized by an unrelenting meditation on how writing events and fleeting acts of inscription can be transposed into sculptural manuscripts and cast metal signboards.<sup>8</sup>

Long informed by a profound interest in writing as a gestural act of rhythmic inscription, Pomodoro's artistic process pivots on the intermedial practice of transduction across different materials. The sculptor is renowned for his "working in the negative" technique. This complex and time-consuming procedure entails inscribing into a variety of malleable substrates (e.g., cuttlebone, wax, clay) a dense script of gestures and movements (Figures 1–2), which then undergo a process of positive transduction by casting molten metals into molds made of refractory materials such as gypsum plaster, plasticine, or fiberglass to produce his signature metal works (Figure 3).<sup>9</sup>



**Figure 1. Arnaldo Pomodoro at work (engraving clay). Photo by Carlo Orsi 2013, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

To describe Pomodoro's artistic practice, I draw on the artist's archive and on the critical literature about his work, and I combine these findings with direct observations conducted in the sculptor's atelier and interviews with Pomodoro and his collaborators.<sup>10</sup> My

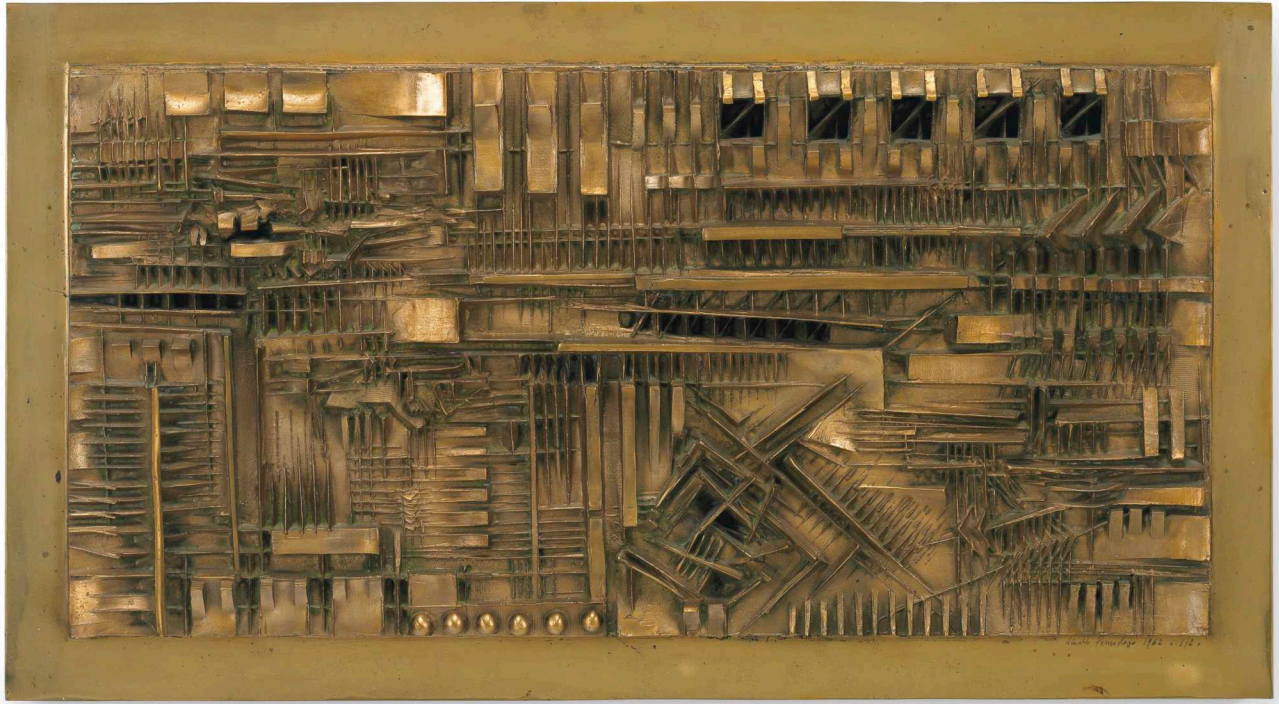
analytical object is thus a layered apparatus made of various materials: expressive gestures, technical routines, artist's statements, critical essays, retrospective commentaries, et cetera.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 2. Arnaldo Pomodoro at work (engraving clay). Photo by Carlo Orsi 2013, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

Exploring sculptural practice to study textual forms and processes of entextualization (i.e., the emergence, or making, of text; Silverstein and Urban 1996b) may seem a perplexing move or, at best, an unexpected detour. The choice, however, stems from several considerations. In the first place, we have Pomodoro's profound fascination with writing expressed through his frequent references to archaic scripts and his multiple collaboration with poets and writers.<sup>12</sup> In the second place, by foregrounding the visual-haptic modality and choosing as analytical starting points gestural acts of inscription aimed at producing non-semantic text-artifacts, I respond to recent invitations to entangle language "with other semiotic modalities [...] thereby displacing it beyond its putative borders" (Nakassis 2016:330). Finally, my long-term personal knowledge of the artist and his work environment and his international fame provide a rich body of data for my analysis. As we will see, the analysis of Pomodoro's enunciative-cum-artistic practice may offer a decentered vantage point from where to explore semiotic and linguistic anthropological perspectives on writing, reflect on our tacit disciplinary assumptions on text and text-

artificiality, and thus destabilize the simplistic conceptions of the supposed evenementiality of the spoken word vis-à-vis the alleged durability of its written transposition.



**Figure 3. One of Pomodoro’s bronze cast “signboards.” *Tavola dei segni*, 1962, IV, 1962, bronze, 65 × 118 × 5 cm (Inventory #350). Photo © Christie's Images Limited, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

By analyzing Pomodoro’s practices of inscription across different substrates (cuttlefish bone, clay, paper, tracing paper), and the material recording of the temporal unfolding of such inscriptions within a variety of materials (fiberglass, bronze, silver, cement), my goal is threefold: (1) to explore the crossmodal and intermedial dimension of enunciation, and the related notions of instauration and installation (Latour 2011; Mattozzi 2020; Padoan, this issue; Souriau 2015[1943]; Stengers and Latour 2015), (2) to reflect on the relation between ephemeral and durable and thus question the dichotomy between the inchoateness of evanescent speech and the durable fixity of written language, and (3) to discuss the misleading, at once partial and all-encompassing, notion of writing that has become naturalized within our spontaneous metapragmatic consciousness and “semiotic ideologies” —a term whereby linguistic anthropologists refer to “people’s assumptions, either tacit or explicit, that guide how they do or do not perceive or seek out signs in the world and respond to them” (Keane 2014:314)<sup>13</sup>—and thus highlight the gap between handwriting and its mechanical reconfigurations; between permanent and ephemeral writings (Cardona 2009[1981]); between irreversible inscriptions and digital reversibility (Barthes 1999); between manuscript form and its typographical transposition (McLuhan 1962).

## Writing as Gesture and Inscription

In a memorable article published in the journal *Semiotica*, ethnomusicologist David Samuels (2004) has proposed to reflect on modern mainstream Western conceptions of language from the peripheral perspective of *doowop*—a subgenre of rock-and-roll, which throughout the 1950s and 1960s, enjoyed considerable popularity as well as widespread stigma in North America and elsewhere. Epitomized by songs like “Rang Tang Ding Dong,” “Rama Lama Ding Dong,” or “Sh-Boom,” and based on vocal group harmony, little instrumentation, a simple beat, and, most importantly, ample use of meaningless syllables and logatomes, doowop, according to Samuels (2004:298), defies “modernity’s naturalization of a relationship between ‘language’, ‘semantics’, and ‘sense,’” thus enabling us to bracket taken-for-granted views of language engrained within the Western intellectual tradition.

In this paper, I propose a similar exercise of phenomenological reduction (Husserl 1931a, 1931b; Duranti 2010). Much like *doowop*, the various forms “of nonverbal or quasi-verbal writing” (Skaggs 2020:335) generally classified under the controversial label of “asemic writing,” offer an interesting standpoint from where to suspend our “natural attitude” (Husserl 1998) and gain an estranged perspective on conventional notions of writing based on the unknowing conflation between writing as a material practice happening in a specific here and now and writing as an abstract metaphorical concept, between writing as event and writing as product. Spanning across several decades and intersecting the work of diverse artists (e.g., Mirtha Dermisache, Mira Schendel, Christopher Skinner, Henri Michaux, Cy Twombly, Tim Gaze, Laurie Doctor, etc.) and scholars (e.g., Vilém Flusser, Roland Barthes, André Leroi-Gourhan, Jacques Derrida, etc.), the interest in writing, taken in the widest sense and understood independently from its instrumental function, as gestural marks and traces of corporeal events of inscription, may thus help us denaturalize our assumptions (both as professional writers and linguistic anthropologists) vis-à-vis writing.<sup>14</sup>

More specifically, I propose to examine Pomodoro’s intermedial technique for the production of “signboards” (*tavole dei segni*) to reflect on the physicality of writing, its connection with drawing, and the relation between events of inscription and their crystallized sedimentation into written products—a theme that features prominently in the work of scholars such as Barthes (1982, 1986, 1999), Flusser (1993), Leroi-Gourhan (1993[1964]), and Severi (2015).

As it has been long noted (Warde 1955; Plate 2012; Murphy 2015; Donzelli 2021), the process of reading (specially in its modern typographic incarnation) entails backgrounding the visual materiality of written words and “becoming blind to the word’s physicality” (Skaggs 2020:343).<sup>15</sup> In this article, I examine Pomodoro’s inscriptional poesis as a

standpoint from where to bracket our taken-for-granted assumptions on writing. If as scholars we spend most of our time writing (on several substrates with different tools and technologies) and forgetting about the concrete and embodied acts of writing underlying the production of the texts we compose (or read), as linguistic anthropologists we have become accustomed to devote a considerable amount of time and attention to rendering on the written page events of speaking, thus becoming oblivious to the event of writing. To expose such forms of professional vision (or blindness) and bracket our natural attitude, I propose a radical move of phenomenological reduction: looking at writing through Pomodoro's art making. Put differently, I argue that by stripping writing from semantics and by emancipating it from its subaltern position vis-à-vis verbal language, we may be able to achieve a different perspective on linguistic anthropology's signature crossmodal practice of turning verbal discourse into written texts and thus reflect on how dynamic processes of textual sedimentation mediated by writing inform North American and Paris school notions of entextualization and enunciation.



**Figure 4. *Sfera n.1*, 1963, bronze, ø 120 cm (Inventory #327). Photo by Aurelio Barbareschi, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

One of the most prominent post-war Italian sculptors, Arnaldo Pomodoro is internationally renowned for his majestic and geometric bronze works (see Figures 4–5). Pomodoro was originally born in a remote village in Central Italy in 1926, but moved to Milan in the mid 1950s and a decade later (in 1968) he established his studio in the *navigli* district—an area

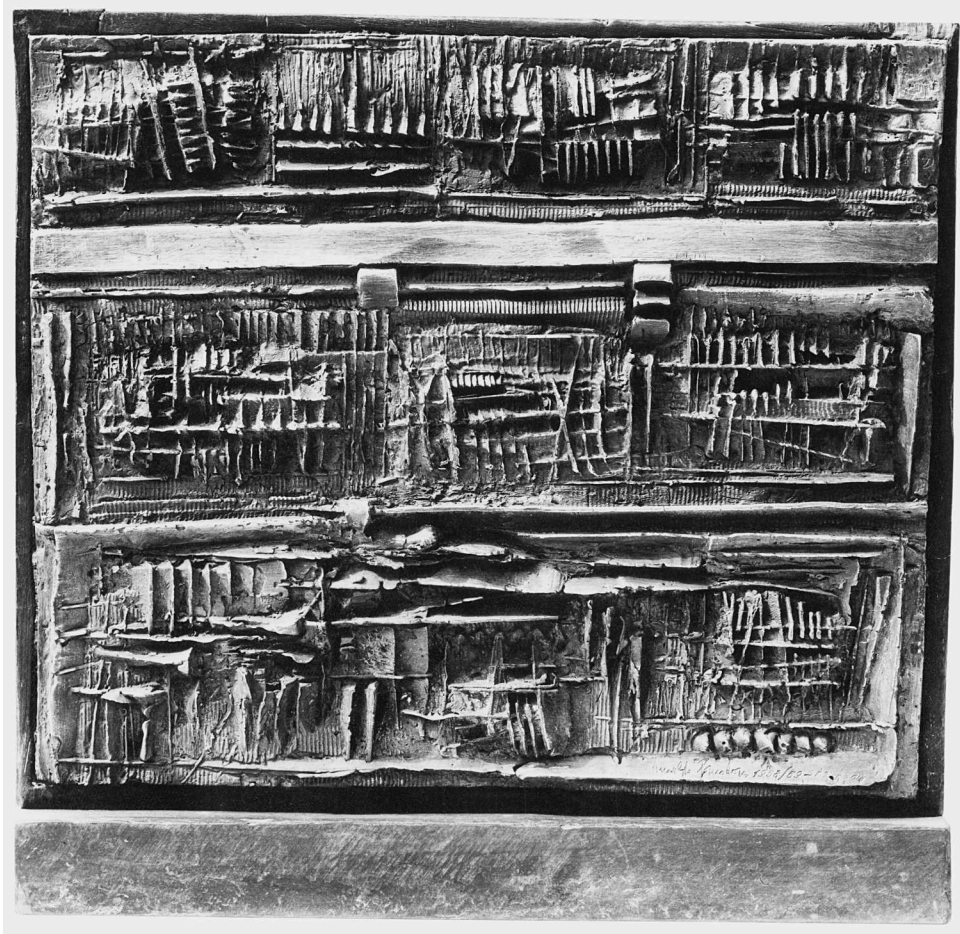
of the city characterized by an inland dock, the *Darsena*, a series of small alleys and bridges, and two canals—remnants of the network of waterways that used to connect the city with Lake Como, Lake Maggiore, and the lower Ticino river.



**Figure 5. *Sfera con sfera*, 1989–1990, bronze, ø 400 cm (Inventory #846). Photo by Carlo Orsi, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

Aside from the monumental sculptures—fractured and eroded geometric solids such as spheres, columns, pyramids—that gave him worldwide notoriety, a steady line of work in Pomodoro’s oeuvre has consisted of bas-reliefs of different sizes, shapes, and materials. Begun in the late-1950s,<sup>16</sup> this line of production, made of sculpted pages and cast metal signboards, encompasses a large corpus of works: from the *tavole dei segni* (“signboards”)<sup>17</sup> and *tavole della memoria* (“memory boards”) to the *tavole del matematico e dell’agrimensore* (“mathematician” and “land surveyor’s boards”), from *radars* and *colonne del viaggiatore to lettere* (“letters”), *fogli* (“folios”), and *papyruses*.<sup>18</sup> These “signboards” are emblematic of Pomodoro’s enunciative-cum-artistic practice (Figure 6). Made with different tools (spatulas, ink pens, soldering irons) and technologies (copperplate engraving, lost wax casting, metal casting and soldering) on different types of substrates (cuttlebone, clay paper, lead, wood, cement, bronze, brass), this body of work is an intermedial representation of the tension between the evenementiality of writing and its crystallization into written products; it thus provides linguistic anthropologists and semioticians with relevant insights to reflect on the relation between the writing and the written; structure and event; *langue* and *parole*.

Contrary to entrenched oppositions—encapsulated in the Latin adage *verba volant, scripta manent*—between the ephemerality of spoken words and the durability of writing, I understand Arnaldo Pomodoro’s artistic practice, and the production of his *tavole dei segni* (“signboards”) in particular, as an attempt to restore the emergent and contingent processes underlying specific events of writing. By recovering the corporeal acts of rhythmic inscription and the event-bound gestures lying behind the formation signs, Pomodoro’s signboards produce (perhaps unwittingly) a powerful subversion of the conventional representation, also common to semiotics and linguistic anthropology, of writing as a highly entextualized and context-independent semiotic formation.



**Figure 6.** *Tavola dei segni, 1958/59, I, 1958–1959*, lead, 36 x 42 x 5 cm (Inventory #118). Photo by Giorgio Boschetti, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro

## Professional Vision: Scholars and Their Semiotic Ideologies of Writing

In her recent monograph, Maria Giulia Dondero (2020:130) highlights semiotics' long-term neglect of “the formation of writing,” which would require a careful analysis of “the adjustment between a substrate, what is applied to it, and the gestural act of inscription.” Indeed, reflecting on the semi-symbolic analysis of images developed by Greimas

(1989[1984]) and Floch (1985, 2000), Dondero (2020:130) notes how attention to the semi-symbolic coding system (based on binary oppositions on the plane of expression and plane of content) “left aside the *substrates* of the images, as well as that which accompanies the inscription, that is, the gestural act of *inscribing the forms onto these substrates*” (italics in the original).<sup>19</sup>

In a somewhat similar way, anthropologists have long neglected the consideration of the physicality and materiality of writing (both as a process and as a product).<sup>20</sup> Reflecting on Ricoeur’s essay (1971) from which Geertz (1973:10) borrowed the key metaphor of culture as a text, Silverstein and Urban (1996a:2n1) note the “conflation [...] licensed apparently by Ricoeur” himself between singular, embodied text-artifacts and sociosemiotic processes and urge (1996a:3) not to “literalize a metaphor” and not to confuse text with its artifactual embodiment. It seems to me that to adequately respond to Silverstein and Urban’s (1996a) cautionary note and thus foster a cross-Atlantic dialogue between European semioticians and North American anthropologists we need to pay serious attention to writing, understood both as a gestural *process* and as a *text-artifact*.

In a posthumous (unpublished in English) essay on writing, entitled *Variations sur l’écriture* (“Variations on Writing”), Roland Barthes (1999:5) highlighted the general neglect suffered by writing understood as a “muscular act [...] of tracing letters.”<sup>21</sup> As Barthes (1999:5) seems to suggest, due to the very familiarity with written texts, scholars tend to relate to writing understood in a “metaphorical sense.” “Today,” continues Barthes (1999:5) “somehow climbing back to the body, it is the ‘manual’ sense of the word that I would like to attend to, [...]: that gesture with which the hand holds an instrument –a punch, a quill, a pen–, places it on a surface, moves it forward by pressing or caressing, and traces regular, recurring, rhythmic shapes [...]. We will therefore be dealing here with the gesture, and not with the metaphorical meanings of the term ‘writing’; and we will only talk about manuscript writing, which involves the tracing of the hand.”

Arnaldo Pomodoro’s work resonates with Barthes’s (1999) reflections and with similar semio-paleo-anthropological conceptualizations of writing as gestural action and corporeal trace of existential presence developed during the 1960s and 1970 (see Leroi-Gourhan 1993[1964]; Derrida 2001[1967], 1981[1968]; Barthes and Mauriès 1981; Cardona 2009[1981]).<sup>22</sup> In what follows, I explore how the interplay of medialities, modalities, and materialities may prove useful to further our understanding of writing events and their textual sedimentations.

The relationship between different semiotic modalities and their expression through different media and substrates is always shaped by specific semiotic ideologies (Keane 2003, 2007, 2014). In his famous essay on Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Derrida (1981[1968])

discusses entrenched representations (i.e., semiotic ideologies) of the relationship between speaking and writing and criticizes the Platonic notion of the spoken word (or *logos*) as the proper medium for philosophical reasoning and the related representation of writing as a deceitful and derivative expressive modality.<sup>23</sup> A Platonic subtext underlies Ricoeur's (1971:25–26) reflections on the distinction between (ephemeral) spoken and (durable) written language: the former exists only as a fleeting event, while the latter allows to fixate the “said” of speaking in a permanent form of inscription.<sup>24</sup>

In a famous article on linguistic anthropological transcription, Elinor Ochs (1979) highlighted how rather than being neutral or irrelevant, the conventional representation (left to right or top-to bottom) of spoken language onto a printed or hand-written page is a theory-laden enterprise. The habit of transcribing discursive interaction to turn it into a written text is likely to have clouded our disciplinary metasemiotic awareness, prompting a naturalization of our own transcription conventions and of the pragmatic effects of writing. In a similar fashion, Euro-American linguistics, possibly due to the inherited Platonic distrust towards the written word (Derrida 1981[1968]), has stubbornly assigned to writing the vicarious role of transposition of spoken language and “simple transcription of oral language” (Barthes 1999:19). In the classic elaborations of Saussure (1916:45) and Bloomfield (1933), writing is conceptualized as a “mirror of speech” or as a “sequence of signs that transcribe sounds of the language” (Cardona 2009[1981]:5).

During the second half of the twentieth-century, anthropological reflections on the relationship between cognitive processes of the human mind and the material technologies used to convey thought have emphasized the idea of an ontological difference between the “civilization of the book” (Derrida [1967]1997:8) and those of orality (Goody and Watt 1963; Goody 1986; Havelock 1986; Ong 1982). The work of these scholars has focused on the psychocultural implications of the spread of literacy within supposedly pre-literary societies, offering a different inflection to the Platonic model of the cognitive transformations triggered by writing. While overcoming the vision of writing as a secondary and subordinate semiotic modality, this line of research postulates a rigid dichotomy (and an implicit teleological movement) between civilizations anchored in a form of primary orality and societies based on literacy and the apprenticeship of (generally alphabetic) writing.

Contrary to these conventional (both scholarly and vernacular) representations, the work by Leroi-Gourhan (1993[1964]:187) stands out for its profound rearticulation of the relationship between writing and speaking, as well as for its original take on the connection between figurative arts and writing.<sup>25</sup> In his conceptualization of archaic writing systems, the French paleoanthropologist (Leroi-Gourhan 1993[1964]:192) sought to destabilize and overcome the cognitive bias deriving from applying contemporary

models based on alphabetic linearization to the understanding of paleolithic pictographic writing, which, pivoting on the visual modality, involved the translation of gestures into graphic symbols and was not originally subordinated to vocal language. Indeed, although Leroi-Gourhan (1993[1964]) did not employ a strictly semiotic metalanguage, his discussion on the evolution of language is a major starting point for developing intersemiotic analyses on the relation between the spoken and the written and for overcoming a verbo-centric model of language and semiosis.<sup>26</sup> His influence is clear in the writings of Derrida (2001[1967], 1997 [1967]), Fontanille (1998, 2005), Barthes (1999), Ingold (1999, 2007, 2010), and in the artistic work of Arnaldo Pomodoro himself.<sup>27</sup>

Three are the main points that Leroi-Gourhan (1993[1964]) drew from his study of paleolithic art and graphism (i.e., manual language): (i) the primary parallel (and independent) development of “phonation and graphic expression” (ibid.:192) as exteriorizations of a fundamental physiological and technological dyad: the “two functional pairs [of] hand/tools [and] face/language” (ibid.:187); (ii) the primeval common origin of (and intimate connection between) figurative art and writing (ibid.:190); (iii) the original abstractionist configuration of prehistoric figurative art.

The three ideas are strictly interconnected. In the first place, unlike conventional representation of writing as subsumed within the oral modality, Leroi-Gourhan (1993[1964]:193) claimed a relative separation between graphic expression and phonetic language, that is, “a relationship of coordination rather than subordination” (ibid.:195). In his view, language developed through the “interplay between two poles of figurative representation”: “the auditive and the visual” (ibid.:216). In this view (ibid.:210), before writing became completely subordinated to the linearity of speaking, the hand had its language, which was organized through a sight-related form of expression, and the face had its own, related to hearing. Criticizing the ethnocentric cognitive bias displayed by linguists “who studied the origins of writing” through their own familiarity with and use of alphabetic linearization, Leroi-Gourhan (ibid.:192) emphasized the radical difference between contemporary and archaic forms of mythographic writing. According to Leroi-Gourhan (ibid.:200), the main feature of non-alphabetic mythographic writing was a “multidimensional system of figurative representation,” which distinguished it “from linearly emitted spoken language.” Not only orality and literacy developed through parallel yet separate trajectories, but present-day writing systems have little in common with their prehistoric forerunners, for they originated from “the confluence between a system of elementary bookkeeping” and a “system of organized representation of mythical symbols [other times called mythographic writing]” (ibid.:200). Put differently, “early mythographic notation systems” were originally independent from phonetic language and verbal expression and relied on “an ideography without an oral dimension”; it was their subsequent convergence into systems of numerical notation that led to their phonetization

and to present-day forms of linear writing, which “began with numbers and quantities” (ibid.:203).<sup>28</sup>

Accordingly, the establishment of alphabetic writing and the related rise of linear graphism had a major side effect: severing writing from art. Although the four-thousand-year predominance of linear writing has created an illusory separation between art and writing, these are, in fact, according to Leroi-Gourhan (1993[1964]), two strictly related forms of expression, as both originated from a common tension toward the symbolic transposition of reality. Finally, as Fontanille (1998) has reminded us in an important visual semiotic essay (unpublished in English),<sup>29</sup> one of Leroi-Gourhan’s major contributions to the understanding of the development of the human symbolic function, concerns positing the original abstractionist configuration of prehistoric figurative art. Far from being a naïve and photographic reproduction of reality, “primitive art was not realistic at first” (Fontanille 1998:33–34). In this view, the history of art is driven by a tendency to move from abstraction to realism: “graphism certainly did not start by reproducing reality in a slavishly photographic manner. On the contrary, we see it develop over the space of some ten thousand years from signs which, it would appear, initially expressed rhythms rather than forms. It was symbolic transposition, not copying of reality” (Leroi-Gourhan 1993[1964]:190).

Leroi-Gourhan’s (1993[1964]) reflections on writing, its origin, and evolution, resonate with Arnaldo Pomodoro’s artistic enquiry, which has always revolved around an at times explicit, other times tacit, affinity with literary expression and a reflection on textuality.<sup>30</sup> Pomodoro himself has repeatedly insisted on his longstanding fascination with intelligible scripts and the gestural act of writing, epitomized by the Epic of Gilgamesh to whom he dedicated his work *Ingresso nel labirinto*: “All human marks fascinate me especially archaic ones: [...] from the primordial graffiti in caves to the first traces of writing that are found on the tablets of the Hittites and the Sumerians or in Egyptian papyrus scrolls” (Tonelli 2008:73).<sup>31</sup>

This emphasis, however, has been generally interpreted as a metaphor of semantic unintelligibility or as an allusion to generic mythical-archaic universe. As it seems to me, however, Pomodoro’s attraction for archaic forms of writing stems from a more specific reason: a specific interest in pre-alphabetic writing—a form of language that, again according to Leroi-Gourhan (1993[1964]:196), displaces the linearity of logical reasoning and evokes a multidimensional system of “mythographic writing” and a radial rather than linear “graphic representation of thought.”<sup>32</sup> It is indeed important to highlight how Mesopotamian writing (which dates back to 3500 BC and has always constituted a key source of inspiration for Arnaldo Pomodoro) was not alphabetic. To fully appreciate the

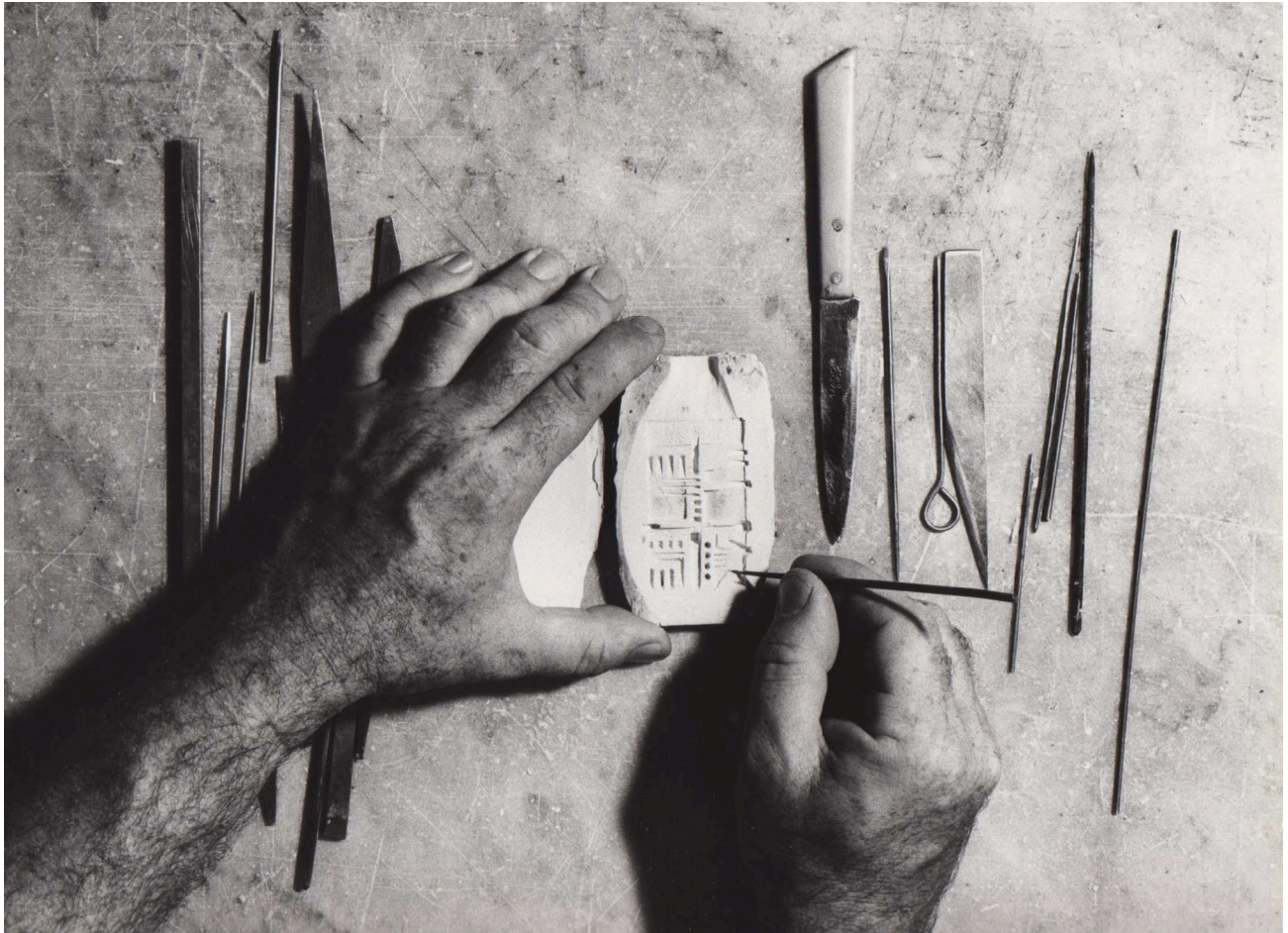
semiotic relevance of this point we need to briefly describe Pomodoro's art-making procedure.

## Artistic Instauration: Recording Corporeal Interactions with Substances and Surfaces

"I was born with the cuttlefish bone!" forcefully stated a 98-year-old Arnaldo Pomodoro during one of the last visits (June 28, 2023) I paid to his atelier. As we were chatting, I noticed a few cuttlebones that had been placed in a distant corner of the large work table where we just had lunch. Cuttlebone shapes and traces were all around us: hanging on wall behind us were the *Sogni*, a series of copperplate engravings displaying large (6.5 feet tall) colorful cuttlebone-shaped silhouettes, two huge tridimensional fiberglass cuttlebone reproductions were secured to another wall, and masterful simulations of cuttlebone grain and texture embellished the surface of the bronze sculptures positioned throughout the expansive atelier room. Preparations for an educational workshop on cuttlebone casting (more on this below) were underway, and an atelier staff member in charge of running the child-focused event had started assembling the material needed to illustrate the procedure. I took the cuttlebones, handed them to Pomodoro and asked him, "Why do you like cuttlebone so much?"

While handling the porous endoskeleton of cuttlefish, Pomodoro began to explain me the reasons for his attachment to the unusual material that constitutes the primary and preferred substrate for his artistic work: "Because it's not me who designs the cuttlebone, it's nature (*Perchè l'osso di seppia non sono io che lo disegno è la natura*)." As Pomodoro has often pointed out, he discovered the cuttlebone's intriguing biological structure and its metallurgic application during one of his first incursion into an elderly goldsmith's workshop in Pesaro. In a book-long interview with writer and friend Francesco Leonetti, Pomodoro described how the visit and the discovery of cuttlebone casting marked a fundamental turning point in his artistic practice (Pomodoro and Leonetti 1992:27–28). After this experience, Pomodoro began to carve cuttlebones with little knives and spatulas and pour molten metals into the porous yet resilient substrate (Figure 7).<sup>33</sup> Indeed it was the casting of metals (lead, silver, gold) into engraved cuttlefish bones that marked the beginning of Pomodoro's artistic research and the realization of his first works: "I started with a series of small castings. Then I attached the pieces to a surface, combining the castings with others [...] so I could reconstruct the whole thing. I worked on velvet backdrops which I faded using bleach, acids, iron filings, gluing [the castings I made], on panels on cement surfaces, somewhat like the way Klee worked with a weave of gauze, papers, and watercolors" (Pomodoro 2016:17). And indeed, the grain and organic texture of the original cuttlebone substrate is still visible in the artist's earlier works (Figure 8), which were "small reliefs covered in light, rhythmic signs, a tracery of knots, dots, and lines, forming a kind of archaic, illegible writing" (Pomodoro 2023:96).

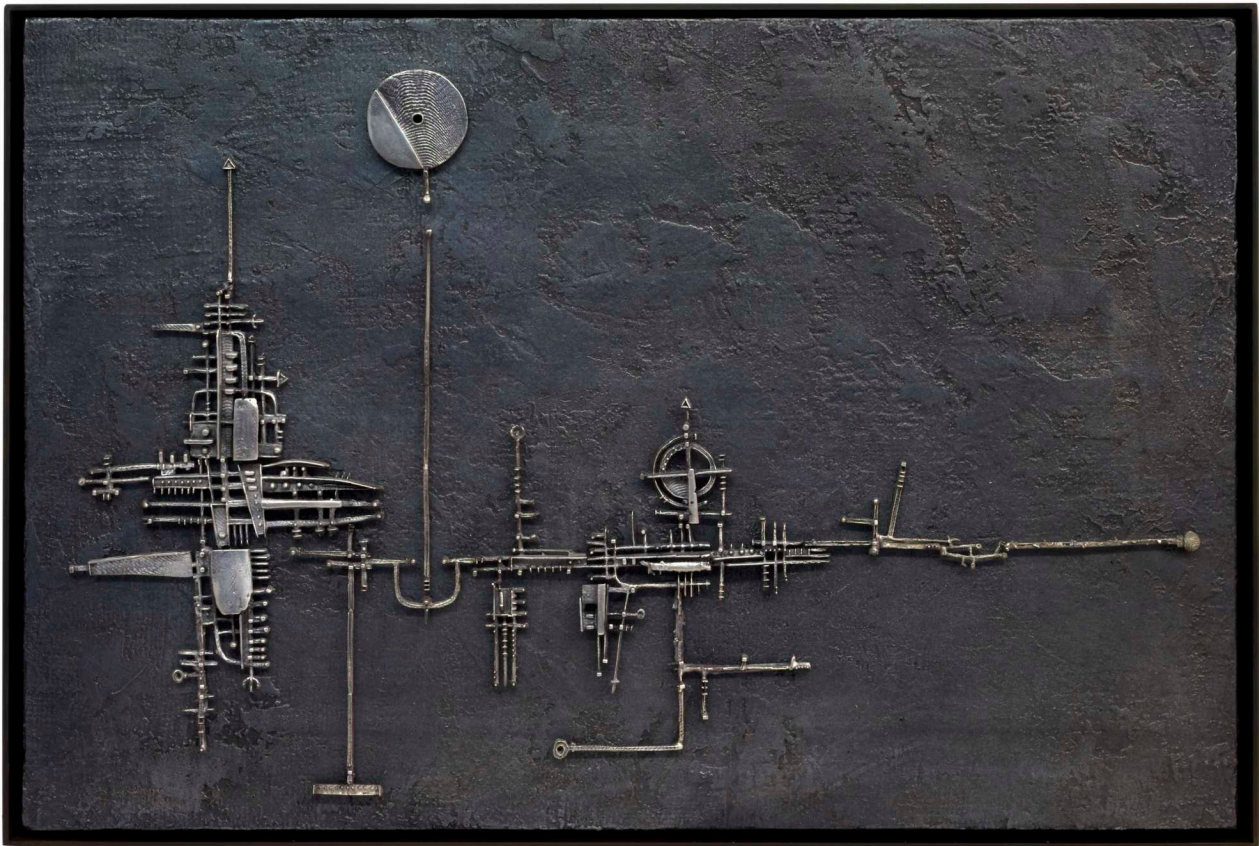
During my 2023 visit, Pomodoro further articulated how the carving of cuttlebones provided the ultimate synthesis between nature's organic signs and the artist's gestures, representing a prototypical encounter between two opposites semiotic systems: nature's markings and human writing technologies: "Do you see how many are the traces it leaves?" said Pomodoro while pointing at the dense texture of irregular and concentric patterns produced on the shell by the deposition of the aragonite crystals. "And," he added while tracing with a tooth pick a stylized human figure on the oval shaped shell, "you see it is made like a human person, this is the head, and this is the body [...] to carve on it is like telling the origin of humans."



**Figure 7. Pomodoro's hands carving a cuttlefish bone. Photo courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

While the cuttlefish's endoskeleton became a sort of archetypal organic substrate for Pomodoro's enunciative-cum-artistic practice, cuttlebone casting provided the paradigm for Pomodoro's "primary procedure" (Pomodoro and Leonetti 1992:27).<sup>34</sup> As Pomodoro explained to me, when he moved from the smaller bas-reliefs in lead, silver, tin metal, or gold to the monumental works of the 1960s and began to collaborate with artistic foundries specialized in bronze casting, he extended the scale of his primary procedure. Although he moved from cuttlebone to clay for the realization of his larger works, he

retained his main procedure, which still consisted in the direct treatment ‘in negative’ of a material (“*trattamento diretto in negativo di un materiale*”) from which a specular, or better said, flipped (“*speculare, o meglio rovesciato*”) positive version originates.<sup>35</sup>



**Figure 8. *Orizzonte*, 1955, silver and plastered and patinated jute, 40.5 × 61 cm (Inventory #10). Photo by Dario Tettamanzi, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

As I repeatedly observed during my visits to the artist’s atelier,<sup>36</sup> working in the negative through clay engraving constitutes the starting point for Pomodoro’s sculpture. Pomodoro generally begins with the production of a negative blueprint of what will become the final product of the bronze casting. Using a combination of spatulas, knives, wedges, ropes, scalpels, pins, and small iron utensils, the artist manipulates the soft surface provided by the clay and obtains a “negative” shape into which liquid gypsum is cast to create a mold. Once solidified, the gypsum mold provides a specular “positive” version (what could be called an enantiomorph) of the vertical and horizontal repetitions of the signs that had been initially engraved on the clay.

As Massimo Sassi—one of Pomodoro’s longest-term collaborators—explained to me: “when the plaster mold is realized, the hollow parts, originally dug into the clay, are transformed into reliefs, while the convexities morph into cracks and fissures”. This

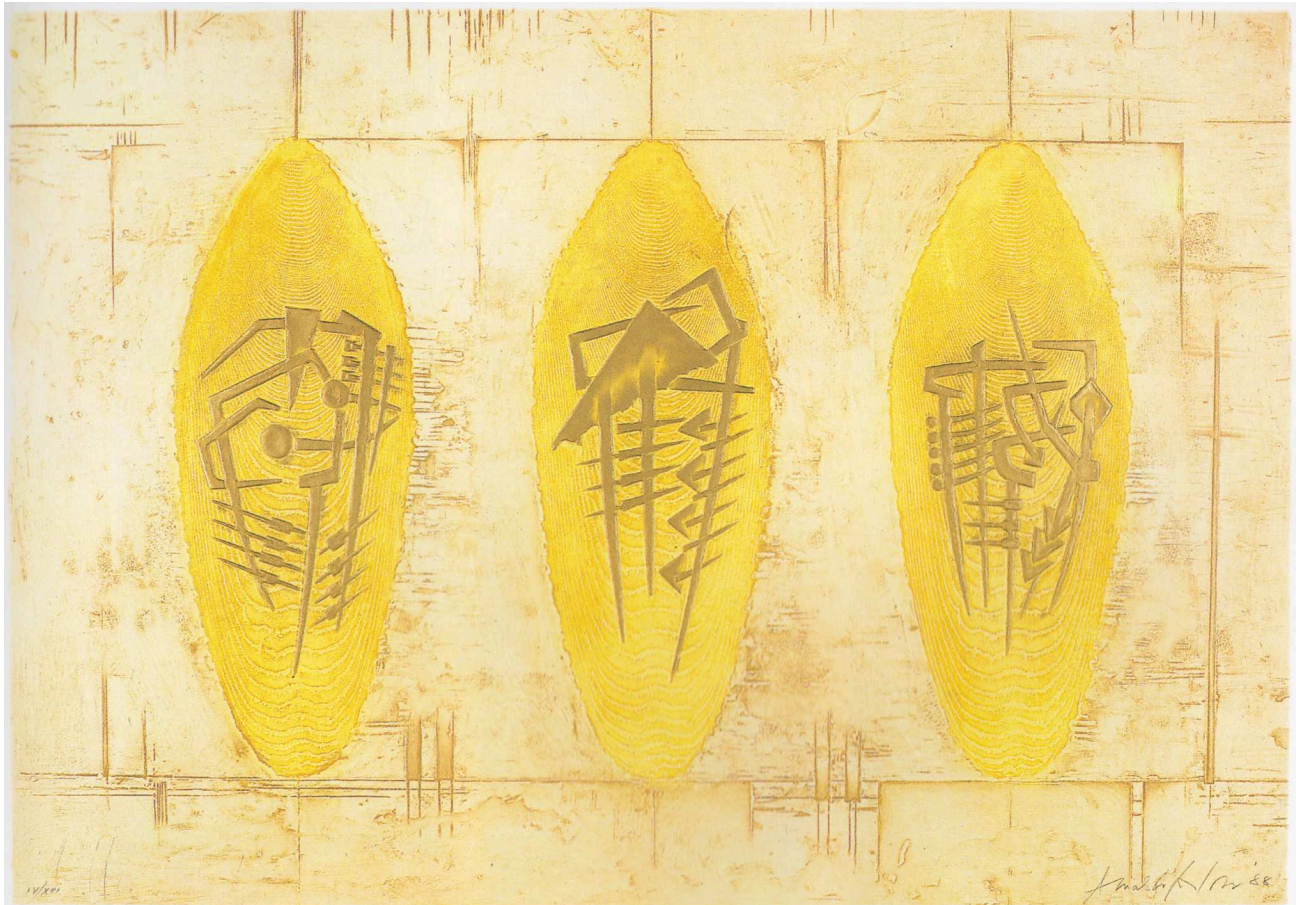
gypsum plaster simulacrum (which represents a kind of prototype of the bronze sculpture to come) is further chiselled and refined and then used to produce a fiberglass or silicone rubber die that again transduces the sculptural signs “negatively.” Molten wax is then poured into this new rubber die to produce a new (“positive”) substrate, which in turn, enveloped inside two layers of refractory material, becomes a dense hiatus between the two layers. Liquefying due to the pouring of molten bronze, the wax surrenders its space (made of both form and matter) to the bronze. The alternation of negative (clay), positive (gypsum), and negative (rubber/fiberglass) culminates therefore into the wax, which provides a dialectical synthesis of opposites: at once negation of the matter (since the wax is dissolved due to the heat) and creation of the form. Indeed, the space left by the wax provides room for the bronze, which stands as a memory of the forces that have determined the entire process.

Pomodoro’s artistic practice unfolds through a dialectic of negative and positive shapes produced by means of gestural interventions applied onto an alternation of malleable and refractory substrates. As we read in one of several artist’s statements on the topic (Pomodoro 2023:98): “My way of making sculpture is an act of excavation and relief. [...]. I work with my hands, using many different tools (spatulas, knives, wedges, ropes...) directly on the 'negative' clay. The ‘positive’ (mirrored, or rather inverted) result emerges through a series of complex steps and procedures that continue through to casting.”

Pomodoro is here providing a self-reflexive description of what Souriau (2009 [1943])—and later Latour (2013, 2014) and Latour and Stengers (2015)—called “instauration,” that is, the coming into being of a work of art. According to Souriau and Latour’s antidemiurgic view of art-making, the production of a work of art is “the exact opposite of a project” (Stengers and Latour 2015:17); in their view, the transformation of the “to-be-made” into “the-made” (Souriau 2009 [1943]) should not be understood as “a potentiality that is straightforwardly realized by the intervention of the more or less inspired artist” (Stengers and Latour 2015:17).<sup>37</sup> In Pomodoro’s casting technique, the organic texture and material limitations afforded by the specific natural substrates that the artist deploys strongly determine the production process.<sup>38</sup> Pomodoro, indeed, seems to experiment with different types of tension between material substrate and gestural intervention—what Fontanille (1998) calls *le support et l’apport*.<sup>39</sup>

In this sense, the outcome of Pomodoro’s inscriptions is not the result of a vision, “but the product of a sensorimotor interaction between the material and the hand which models it, or between the completed object and the hand that discovers it and travels through it” (Fontanille 1998:35). The variable perceptual emergence of the grain of the cuttlebone and the texture of the clay (transcribed and transposed through the metal casting process) indexically and iconically refer to specific “variations in the tension between the substrate

and the adornment” (Fontanille 1998:36). This tensive relation varies according to what could be imagined as a scale of transitivity of artistic action (Hopper and Thompson 1980), determining various gradients of “autonomization of the figurative” (*prise d'autonomie*) (Fontanille 1998:45).<sup>40</sup> With Fontanille (1998:36), the decorated surface of Pomodoro’s signboard can be thus conceived as the seat of a “sensorimotor syntax, which results from the tension between material substrate (*le support*) and gestural intervention (*l’apport*).”



**Figure 9. *Tre scudi*, 1988, copperplate engraving, Fabriano Rosaspina paper, 68 × 97 cm (Inventory #GR88). Photo courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

From a diachronic perspective, the historical unfolding of Pomodoro’s own procedure intriguingly reflects the “generative journey of expression” (Fontanille 1998:35) of humans’ symbolic function. Indeed, in Pomodoro’s oeuvre we can see a gradual transformation from his more “informal” (in an art history sense of the term) works of the 1950s in which the marking of the artistic gesture is profoundly determined by the material substrate and “rules of inscription” of the “formal substrate” (Fontanille 2005:8; Dondero 2020:135–36), the cuttlefish bone, toward a progressive independence from the substrate. In this way, the development of Pomodoro’s artistic-cum-enunciative practice over his career provides an exploration of the phylogenetic development of humans’ symbolic function wherein,

“manual rhythms are progressively semanticized; [giving] rise to forms in which we can recognize geometric figures, recurrences, then equivalences with figures from the natural world” (Fontanille 1998:37). Interestingly, in alignment with Fontanille’s (1998) and Leroi-Gourhan’s (1993[1964]:190) ideas, the most naturalist body of works of Pomodoro’s production is offered by the relatively recent Scudi (see Figures 9–11).



**Figure 10. *Scudo, I*, 1987–1988, aluminum, 252 × 95 × 35 cm (Inventory #825). Photo by Giorgio Boschetti, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

Figure 10 and Figure 11 are gigantic representations of the artist's original tool/matrix: the cuttlebone, whose original grain is visible in the smaller casting pieces (see Figure 8, especially the texture of top-left round element), along with the enlarged and artificially reproduced cuttlebone' texture, in a maximal figurative autonomization of the "outline" (*le tracé*) or "adornment" (*apport*) with respect to the "substrate" (*support*), that is, the "object" (*volume matériel*) (Fontanille 1998:36).



**Figure 11. *Scudo, IX*, 1987–1988, bronze, 252 × 95 × 29 cm (Inventory #833). Photo by Giorgio Boschetti, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

An important line of inquiry within the analysis of narrative forms and semiotic entities (and art making) concerns the distinction between genetic and generative approaches (Greimas and Courtés 1982; Greimas and Fontanille 1993[1991]): while the former entails focusing

on the specific production process of an object investigated in its temporal unfolding from origin to completion (or backwards from completion to memory) and in connection with the external occurrences and specific contingencies of its becoming, the generative trajectory aims at identifying the logical structure that models the generation of a work, the “deep structures” (or the style/worldview underlying the production of a work of literature or art), which through several levels of mediation produce concrete instantiations and specific manifestation (i.e., surface structures) of such underlying stylistic matrix. The account of Pomodoro’s procedure presented above occupies an intermediate position between these two different trajectories (generative and genetic), hinting at a sort of cumulative typification of specific genetic trajectories of artistic instauration. This point may deserve further unpacking.<sup>41</sup>

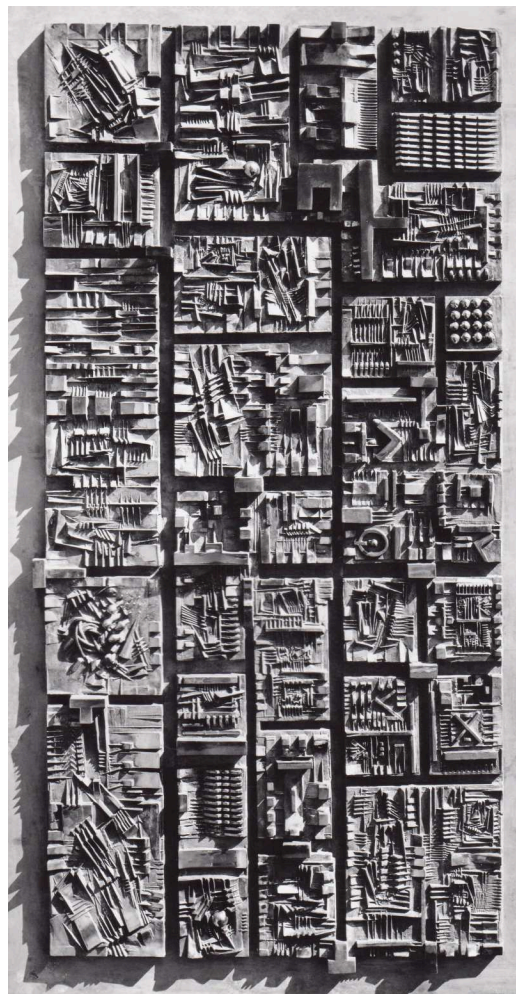
## Rhythmic Writing and Haptic Reading

There are two main features within the cumulative and generalized account of Pomodoro’s artistic instauration that need to be highlighted and discussed. In the first place, we should notice Pomodoro’s profound attachment to two technical procedures (i.e., cuttlebone casting and lost wax casting) that are quite unpractical and inconvenient due to the material affordances of both the materials and the procedures they are employed therein. In the second place, we should notice how, far from being limited to tacit interactions with said materials (or with his technical collaborators), Pomodoro’s work (what I call his artistic-cum-enunciative practice) is mediated by the artist’s own understanding and self-reflexive commentaries on his “primary procedure” and style. These are, in turn, the product of a series of interactions between the artist and his critics and between the artist’s meta-aesthetic awareness and the critical literature produced on his work (including the present article). Let us begin to tackle the first point.

Primarily employed in jewelry making and goldsmithing, cuttlebone casting can only be used for producing small objects. Once applied to larger metalworks, it immediately proved to be an unwieldy technique. As Pomodoro expanded, in the early 1960s, the scale of his work from smaller casts to the production of larger metal works, he had to shift to clay and lost wax casting. This latter technique is, however, a very laborious and expensive (both in terms of time and production costs) procedure. Since its establishment in 1968, Pomodoro’s atelier has seen a steady stream of large blocks of modeling clay. Once delivered, the bulky blocks need to be placed on raised platforms and duly arranged to be worked in the negative. Of my frequent and long visits at the atelier in the 1980s and early 1990s, I still have vivid memories of how Pomodoro would spend long hours bent on the clay, which he patiently chiseled through his personally assembled set of pointed gears. Working mostly alone, he would inscribe his markings in the malleable clay substrate, calibrating the pressure of his gestures and generally proceeding without a preformed sketch of the final product.<sup>42</sup> I would often observe him erasing his own

makings with a flat spatula or with his own hands, which were often plagued with dermatitis due to the prolonged contact with modeling clay and plasticine. This negative script was then transformed into a positive mold and processed in one of the few artistic Foundries Pomodoro had selected for producing his bronze casts.

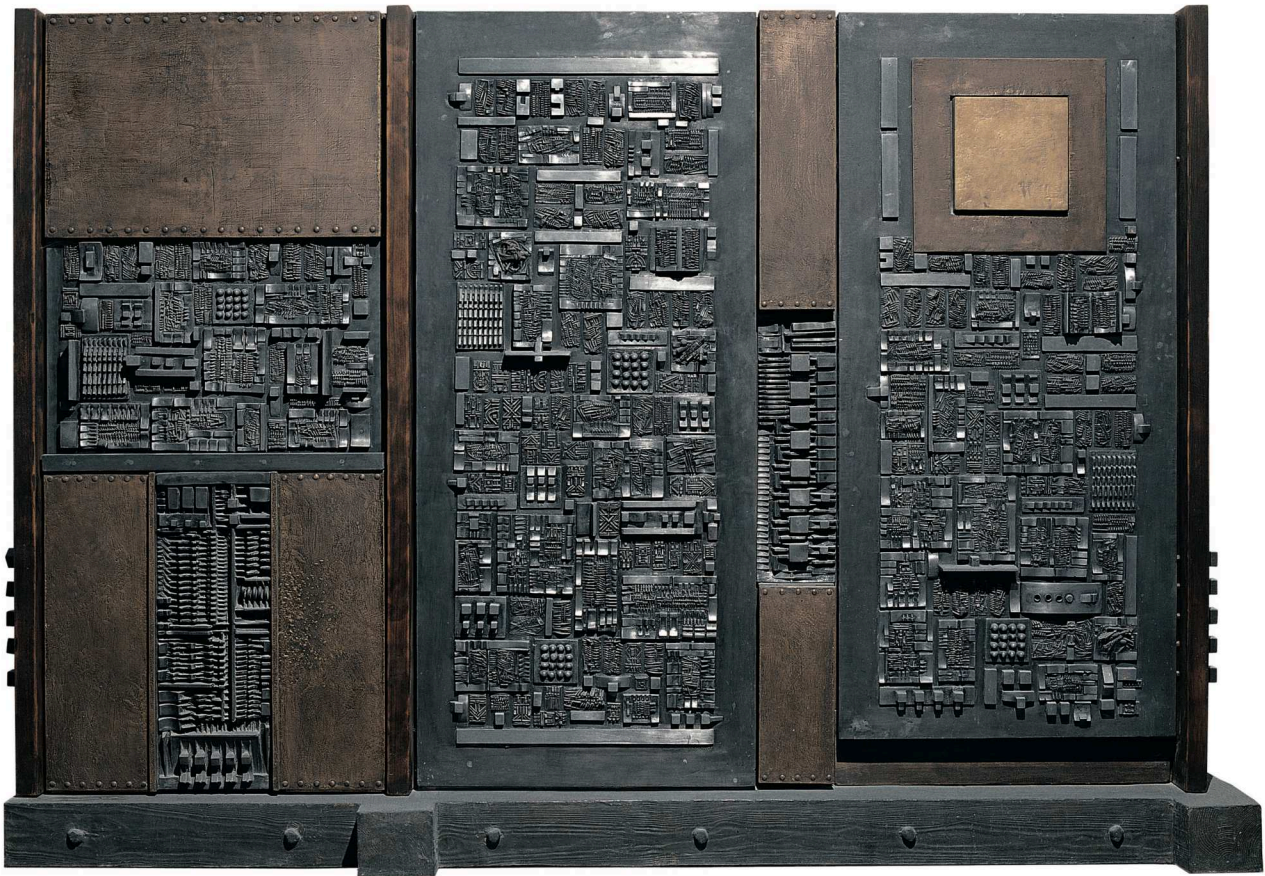
Compared to other procedures—such as sand casting or stirrup fusion (also called ground casting), which entails pouring the molten metal directly into molds—working in the negative and lost wax casting are extremely labor and time-consuming procedures. Yet, Pomodoro never abandoned his foundational techniques: he always worked on a 1:1 scale and never relied on delegating a professional molder to produce full size plaster dies for his sculptures. Although he sometimes made sketches and drawings, Pomodoro would generally undertake his work of inscription without a fully formed vision of the final product: “I don’t establish a specific center *a priori* because I want to leave space to create repetitions of the plastic sign vertically and horizontally, establishing a rhythm that seems to repeat itself infinitely” (Pomodoro 2023:98).



**Figure 12. *Grande tavola dei segni*, 1961/62, 1961–1962, bronze, 218 × 119 × 10 cm (Inventory #273). Photo by Giorgio Boschetti, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

Importantly, cuttlebone casting remained a fundamental reference for all of Pomodoro's metalwork. In spite of his move to clay as his privileged working material, Pomodoro never abandoned the original practice of cuttlebone incision. The larger "signboards" of the later years (Figures 12–13) are produced by assembling a mosaic of cuttlebone casting: as is the case for the *Tavole*, the *Porte*, the *Grande tavola della memoria* (1959–1965), and *Continuum X* (2000).

Pomodoro (2019:2) describes the *Grande tavola della memoria* (1959–1965) (Figure 13) as a "a sort of large sculptural board (*una sorta di grande quadro sculturale*) filled with signs and tangles, which are projects, thoughts. Here," continues Pomodoro, "I inserted everything I had known, almost in the attempt to restore a secret language, full of great poetic myths and private symbols." These works, according to Pomodoro (2016a:69), are meant to be read: "when you see the *Great Table of Memory* [*Grande tavola della memoria*] you need some time to 'read' the work, which should force viewers to have a certain reflective attention. The surface of the sculpture requires a slow, close-up view of individual details, even if shortly before you saw the monumental form as a whole and perceived the overall rhythm of the narrative."



**Figure 13. *Grande tavola della memoria*, 1959–1965, in lead, bronze, wood, and tin, 225 x 325 x 60 cm (Inventory #142). Photo by Giorgio Boschetti, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

Further, Pomodoro's attachment to the original substrate of his work is expressed by the reproduction, in several of his most recent bronze casts, of the enlarged radial appearance of the cuttlebone's texture, painstakingly realized through a fine work of spatulas and palettes to recreate the distinctive grain of the cuttlebone's aragonite biomineral structure (Massimo Sassi, personal communication, 7 March 2024) (Figure 14).

Pomodoro has long described the cuttlebone as "the key to all my artistic techniques" (Pomodoro and Leonetti 1992:27). As it seems to me, Pomodoro's faithfulness to the "material substrates" (Dondero 2020; Fontanille 2005) and original techniques across his career (and across different substrates that he later used: paper, tracing paper, lead, wood, cement, bronze, brass) stems from a commitment to the aesthetic exploration of the relationship between the writing and the written; the evenementiality of the gestural act of inscription and its crystallized fixation into a durable transcript. Through the combination of refractory and plastic elements (i.e., the sturdiness of cast metal vis-à-vis the porosity of the cuttlebone and malleability of the clay), Pomodoro's gestures are crystallized in a dynamic synthesis between the here and now and there and then (somewhat like the casts of Pompeii's eruption victims).



**Figure 14. *Punto dello spazio*, 2004, bronze and corten 63 × 61 × 53 cm (Inventory #1148). Photo © by Christie's Images Limited, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

The second main point underlying my account of Pomodoro's artistic instauration concerns the role played by the layered apparatus of text and the "co-texts" surrounding his artworks production (e.g., artist's statements, interviews, retrospective commentaries, and critical literature). While explorations of artistic-making (see, e.g., Ingold 2013; Latour 2013) have highlighted the role of nonhuman agents and the intervention of technical human delegates into the production process, generally representing the transformation of "to-be-made" into "the-made" as a dynamic yet tacit process of interaction with materials, their forces, and affordances, I would like to foreground here the important role of the interactions between the artist and his intellectual interlocutors of which the interview book he co-authored with Francesco Leonetti is an example (Pomodoro and Leonetti 1992). Put differently, this perspective reveals how Pomodoro's enunciative practice through nonverbal processes of inscription is partly determined by the large body of critical literature produced on his work, as suggested by the several excerpts from critical commentaries and artist's interviews quoted thus far.

Paolo Fabbri (2020:339), writing about a Pomodoro's show held at Franca Mancini's Gallery in the early 2000s, noted how: "In that visit, I understood [...] that the signs on the surfaces of his monuments are hieroglyphics." Fabbri's observation constitutes a recurrent theme in the poetic statements made by Pomodoro himself, who had described the marks that he makes "in the artistic material, the wedges, the piercings, the threads, the tears as a form of symbolic and illegible writing, open to various interpretations and multiple meanings. It is not," continues Pomodoro, "a writing intended to communicate something as one does with words. Lacking a specific reading direction, this form of writing is made solely of markings, sometimes nervy, sometimes calm, musical, which come to me from deep down, in search for harmony and visual rhythm, as a poetic form of sorts" (Arnoldo Pomodoro, personal communication).

The dynamic intermediality of Pomodoro's writing affects the sensorium, prompting crossmodal and synesthetic forms of reading. "Pomodoro's sign-objects," according to Fabbri (2020:344):

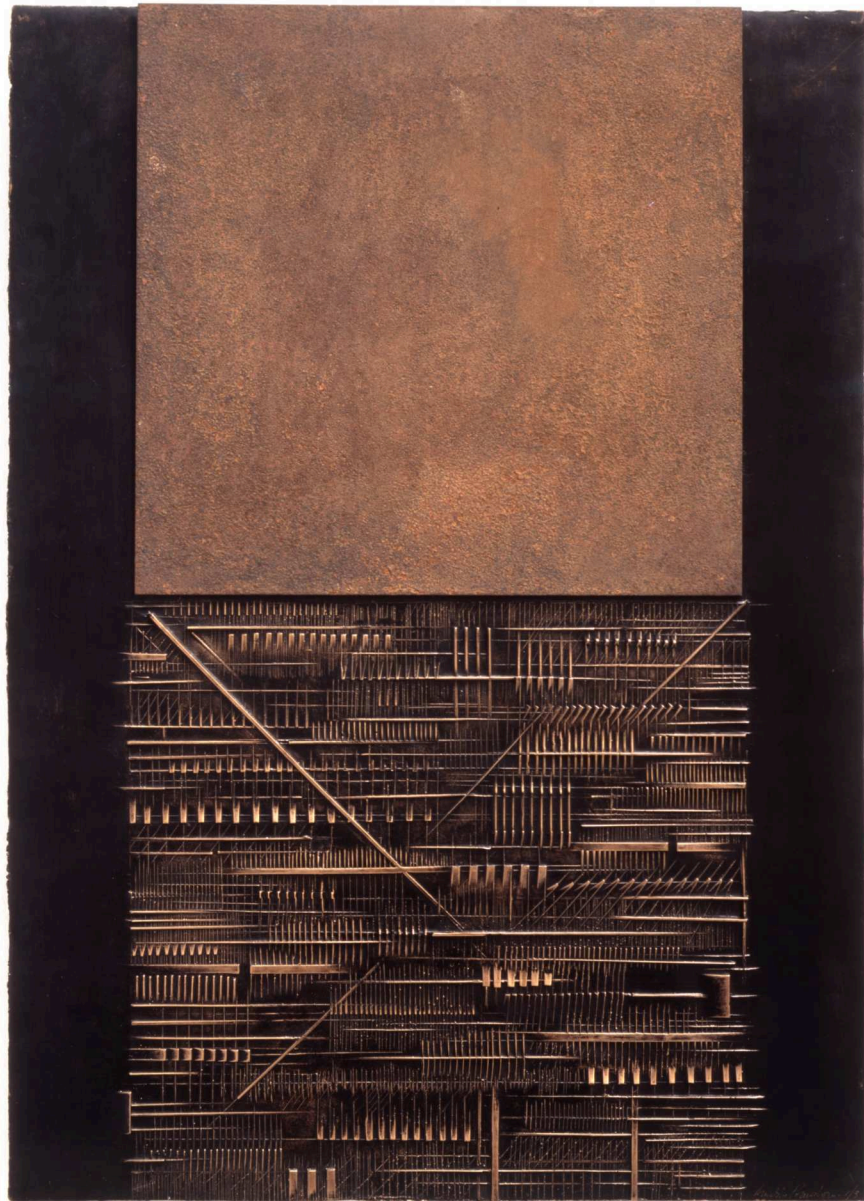
demand an internal silence to allow us to scroll through the surfaces, just as we read the bands of Egyptian temples or the spirals of Roman columns. It is not reading in the strict sense, but recognizing the hieroglyphic, mysterious, allusive character of inscriptions – signs, brands, traces, stamps. [...] These cast bas-reliefs [...] put a sensitive hand in our very eyes. Scrolling through them, we simultaneously perceive the intact surface and its scars. [...] Reading then is a tactile, 'haptic' experience, which makes us perceive, that is, understand with all the senses a meaning to come.

## Intermedial Explorations and Intersemiotic Transpositions

Pomodoro's longstanding fascination with writing took several forms: from frequent references to literary texts, to multiple collaborations with poets and writers, to a more specific enquiry into pre-alphabetic writing systems. And, indeed, an important subset of Pomodoro's oeuvre concerns sculptural representations of a variety of textual forms: from the extensive production of "signboards" (*Tavole dei segni*, see Figures 3, 6, and 12) evocative of Sumerian clay tablets, to the "letters" (*Lettere*; see Figure 15), and the "chronicles" (*Cronache*; see Figure 16), a series of letters addressed to friends and intellectual interlocutors, to the Papyruses. Interestingly, although Pomodoro has always been considered an abstract artist, a more careful look reveals two significant elements of realism in his oeuvre: one from the realm of nature and one from the realm of technology (writing).



**Figure 15. *Lettera a K.*, 1965, bronze, 56 × 37 × 9,5 cm (Inventory #388). Photo by Aurelio Barbareschi, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**



**Figure 16. *Cronaca 3*: Ugo Mulas, 1976, bronze, 100 × 70 cm (Inventory #598). Photo by Aurelio Barbareschi, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

As the artist himself pointed out:

on several occasions, one of my works has referenced an earlier literary text [...] signaling an inventive insurgence that occurred partly as a result of that “major” text’s imaginative solicitations [...]. This inspirational motif has taken the form of direct collaborations with writers and poets to create a number of artists’ books: some assembled using my graphics, others printed by blending in my irregular marks with poetic words, either near or around them on the page, next to the writing, the legible writing, my writing – which is illegible – as if conveying the feelings behind the words and verses. (Pomodoro 2023:90)

Pomodoro often engaged in a sort of reverse ekphrasis,<sup>43</sup> producing visual representations of literary works. This is, for example, the case of two works from 1974, *Immagine prima (scritta)* and *Immagine seconda (scritta)*: two multimodal plates where a poetic text by Leonetti (*Col principio di contraddizione*) and its transduction into prose (written together with Pomodoro himself) are engraved respectively in gilt brass on an oxidized iron substrate. These works (Figures 17–18) seem to allude to the primordial intersemiotic dimension underlying “the gestural origins of language,” when, way before the “appearance of writing proper, the gesture interprets the word, and the word comments upon graphic expression” (Leroi-Gourhan 1993[1964]:210).



**Figure 17. *Immagine prima (scritta)*, 1974, engraving, burnished brass, gilded brass, and wood, 100 × 70 × 5 cm (Inventory #M29). The burnished brass plate is engraved with an autographical text by Francesco Leonetti. Photo by Francesco Radino, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**



**Figure 18. Immagine seconda (scritta), 1974, engraving, burnished brass, gilded brass and wood, 100 x 70 x 5 cm (Inventory #M30). The burnished brass plate is engraved with an autographical text by Francesco Leonetti. Photo by Francesco Radino, courtesy of Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro**

A similar intersemiotic exploration of writing and textuality is conveyed the calcographicic sequence, *Segni e versi*—displayed in 2007 at the exhibition *Doppio sogno dell'arte*, a retrospective on Pomodoro's printworks by Stamperia d'Arte 2RC—consisting of nine poems by Francesco Leonetti spreading across Pomodoro's imaginary landscape of signs. The result (Figure 19) is a complex multimodal and intermedial experiment, which at the same time foregrounds the dual role (as medium and substrate) played by large sheets of Magnani paper and offers a material representation of two different types of language, again evocative of Leroi-Gourhan's (1993[1964]) distinction between phonetic and graphic

expression. Here, we have a clear juxtaposition of two forms of semiosis (and perhaps of two evolutionary stages of expression). On the one hand, the aural-visual modality underlying the linear language of the poems' typographic word conveyed by a paper backdrop (which is sensorially pushed in the background by the printed words); on the other hand, the multidimensional system of figurative representation, embodied by the haptic-visual modality of Pomodoro's gestural language applied onto (a now perceptually salient) paper substrate by means of a special printmaking technique formulated in analogy to the artist's signature sculptural procedure of negative and positive alternations (described above).<sup>44</sup> Whereas for the printed words, the paper acts as a support meant to be pushed into the background as the viewer reads and engages with the poems, for the engraved markings, the paper becomes the embodiment, the material substrate of the act of inscription. In this latter case, the paper is no longer functioning as "the ground of a form," that is, as "something which detaches itself from [... the text] in order for the form [of the letters and the words] to emerge, but is indeed indeed something which *supports* the formative act" of inscription (Dondero 2020:131, emphasis in the original).

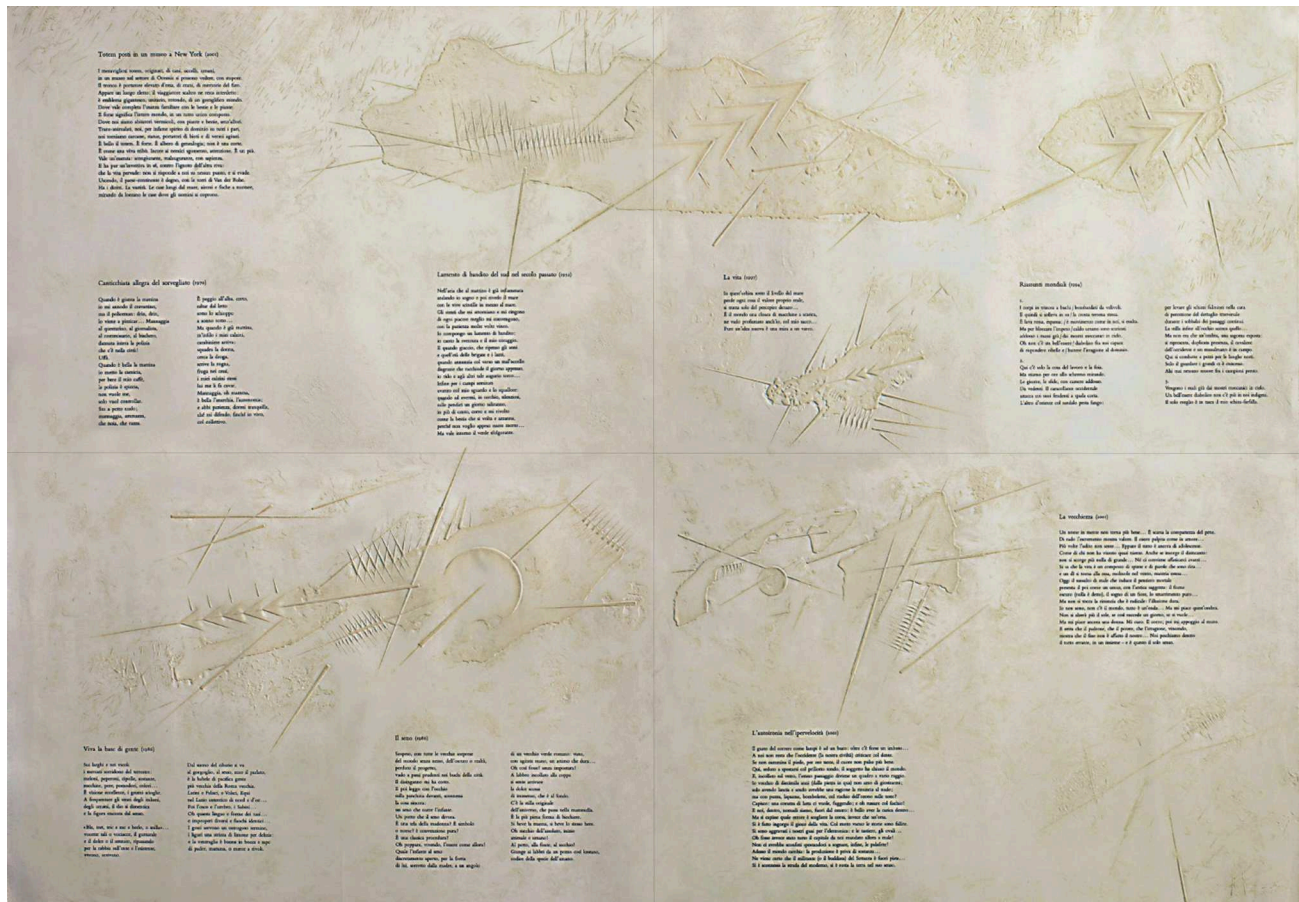


Figure 19. *Segni e versi* (poesie di Francesco Leonetti), 2007, copperplate engraving, Magnani paper, 140 x 192 cm (work consisting of 4 sheets, each approximately 70 x 96 cm) (Inventory #GR183).

## Conclusion

In this article, my aim has been to reflect on the notions of entextualization and enunciation from a somewhat eccentric perspective. I proposed to examine linguistic anthropology's signature methodology (i.e., the crossmodal practice of turning verbal discourse into written texts and the related intermedial transposition of recorded material onto the printed page) from the point of view offered by Arnaldo Pomodoro's artistic practice. The promissory note of this discussion, as noted in the introduction, is that looking at non-verbal forms of enunciation, entextualization, and artifactualization—such as Pomodoro's intermedial practice of negative inscription into various malleable substrates (e.g., cuttlebone, wax, clay) and its positive transposition by casting molten metals into molds made of refractory materials (i.e., gypsum plaster, plasticine, or fiberglass)—may shed light onto our professional “semiotic ideologies” (Keane 2003, 2007, 2014). In concluding, let me turn to this point.

As it seems to me, our (linguistic anthropological) emphasis on the *speaking event* and our sustained professional attempt at rendering it on the printed page through different transcription conventions has contributed to relegate the *event of writing* (and its material and intermedial conditions of production) in the background, making us unable to completely undo the conflation between texts and text-artifacts that Silverstein and Urban (1996a:2–3) urged us against. Non-linguistic forms of inscription may thus help us “de-literalize the metaphor,” reflect on how our own practices contribute to produce such (semiotico-ideological) conflation, and further our understanding of crucial analytical aspects of entextualization and enunciation such as the tension between structure and event, durable and ephemeral, figurative and plastic.

As I have noted, Pomodoro's artistic practice has been driven by an exploration of gestural language as it unfolds across different media and substrates. His relentless quest for the visual rhythm of poetry and the material expression of writing has been described by several critics and commentators. Pomodoro's artistic expression unfolds through visual enunciations that give material shape to “a narration without text” (Carandente 1978). Presenting the exhibition at the Obelisco gallery in Rome in 1955, Leonardo Sinisgalli (2000:253) described Pomodoro's work as: “a disconcerting form of writing that we feel to be packed with a new, almost magnetic fascination.” Here, Sinisgalli seems to allude to the idea of an absolute performative, a signifier without a signified, yet capable of producing effects on the world “just like”—to quote Sinisgalli—“an invocation [or] an abracadabra.” Similarly, Tommaso Trini (2000:136–137) describes a constant tension in Pomodoro's work towards a form of expression that, stretching beyond the literary, encompasses a broader linguistic-scriptural dimension. This, according to Trini is rendered

explicit in a “dialectic [...] between poetry and art, written sign and plastic sign, word that reflects the struggles of the world and image that harkens back to the problems of art.”

Contrary to his conventional ascription to the (somewhat muddled) category of abstractionist, Pomodoro may be, thus, understood as figurative artist devoted to representing the intermediality of the process of writing. In spite of a remarkable heterogeneity (ranging from monumental works, to artist jewels, from printmaking to architectural sculptures, from ambient installations to bas-reliefs), a steady line of work in Pomodoro’s oeuvre has consisted of inscribed surfaces, incised tablets, and sculpted pages: signboards in different sizes and materials, produced with different tools and technologies (ink pens, copperplate engraving, lost wax casting, electric hammer soldering irons) on different types of substrates (paper, tracing paper, lead, wood, cement, bronze, brass). Pomodoro’s signboards are material transcriptions of, and metasemiotic reflections on, the dynamic processes through which the oppositions between negative and positive, potential and actual, virtual and real, and between syntagmatic (*in presentia*) and paradigmatic (*in absentia*) relationships are recomposed in the dialectical synthesis of process (entextualization/enunciation) and product (text/*énoncé*). His signboards provide the fixation into a solid medium of the rhythmicity of previous manual movements and are paradigmatic of how the artist’s markings, signs, and scratches are not just applied to a surface but are actually produced through an organic interpenetration between form and substrate. They contain within themselves the very traces of the gestures and the memory of the forces that produced them, these works point to a dialectics of processes and outcomes, revealing a dynamic relationship between the ephemeral unfolding of writing and its permanent inscription.

In this sense, the relationship between the ephemeral writing act and its durable recording as a permanent written text, between event and code, *discours* and *histoire* emerges here as an immanence of absence, as a concrete representation of negation whereby the engraved surface offers a recorded trace of a sensuous act of inscription. The very technique of Pomodoro, based as it is on multiple transpositions of forms from one substrate to another, is an artistic meta-representation of intermedial, transcriptive gestures of writing.

Due to the extensive use of the recording technologies of the spoken word and to their habitual analytical practice of producing written transcriptions, scholars of linguistic interaction tend to relate to writing in a “metaphorical sense” (Barthes 1999; Silverstein and Urban 1996a), as the precipitated virtual (and thus reproducible) text embodied in some artifact (*viz. énoncé*), rather than understanding writing as a material, embodied gestural process (or entextualization/ enunciation). In this paper, I proposed to undo the conflation between the two—that is, between, on the one hand, texts-as-material-

artifacts(-instantiating-some-text-type) and texts-as-sociosemiotic processes—by examining the genesis, the making of a corpus of texts, which, unlike those generally produced by linguistic anthropologists, are highly plastic and scarcely figurative. There is an irony, here, since our attention to the process of social life (its “entextualization”) often relies on effacing the working of that very process in producing our own ethnographic texts (an irony not lost on the authors of *The Natural History of Discourse*). As such, I have tried to address both our professional blindness regarding the gestural and rhythmic dimension of writing (especially our own), as Barthes (1999) and Leroi-Gourhan (1993[1964]) put it, as well as engage with Continental semioticians’ call for a closer analysis of the enunciative making of the semiotic object (Mattozzi 2020; Parolin and Mattozzi 2013) in order to “approach the image as a material object” (Dondero 2020:132) and revisit the “exorbitant privilege” granted to the point of view of reception, over production (Fontanille 1998:45).<sup>45</sup> I thus focused on the artistic practice of a sculptor whose work revolves around a fascination with writing as mode of artistic enunciation/entextualization to prompt us to reflect on this very same thematic and process in our own work.

\* \* \*

I have a manuscript page in front of me; something [...] sets in motion [...] Singular cosmonaut, here I am traversing worlds and worlds, without stopping at any of them: the whiteness of the paper, the shape of the signs, the form of the words, the rules of the language, the needs of the message, the profusion of the interconnected senses. And the same infinite journey in the other direction, on the side of the writer: from the written word I could go back to the hand, the nerve, the blood, the urge, the culture of the body, its enjoyment. On both sides, writing-reading expands infinitely, engaging man in his entirety, body and history; it is a panic act, of which the only certain definition is that *it cannot stop anywhere* (Barthes 1999:58, emphasis in the original).

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essay is dedicated to Arnaldo Pomodoro, who found his way out of the labyrinth of life while this manuscript was in press.

## Endnotes

1. Geertz (1973) drew on Ricoeur (1971), who, in turn, drawing on Dilthey's (1972[1864]) hermeneutics, wanted to apply the interpretation of written texts to all forms of social actions. ↩

2. Astonishing as it may seem, when, in the late 1990s, I first went to the field as a Philosophy undergraduate student to collect data for my honor thesis, I only had a portable tape-recorder and a stock of TDK cassettes and paper notepads. ↩

3. It goes without saying that, far from being definitive and universally agreed upon within the two subfields, these disciplinary standards are abstract ideals and professional typification of actual work routines, which, in real life, are characterized by significant internal variation. Much could be said, for example, on the stronger emphasis placed by (mainly) West-coast linguistic anthropology on transcribed texts as the prototypical form of data vis-à-vis the (mainly) Mid-western interest in the analysis of “textual sedimentations” understood as a “metadiscursive notion” (Silverstein and Urban 1996a:2). My focus here, however, is more generally on linguistic anthropology’s signature crossmodal practice of turning verbal discourse into written texts and on the related intermedial transposition of recorded material onto the printed page. ↩

4. As Ricoeur (2004:84) explains in his reading of Levinas (1981[1974]), the opposition between the “Saying” (*Sagen*) and the “Said” (*Aussage*) corresponds to the distinction drawn by analytic philosophers of language between “a propositional semantics and a pragmatics of the utterance,” while the former concerns the act of predication, the second concerns the relation between the speaker and the one who is spoken to. In this sense, the Saying entails a form of intersubjective engagement, a responsibility that binds the speaker to the other who is interacting with her. ↩

5. I thank Constantine Nakassis for helping me flesh out this point. ↩

6. See, among others, Greimas 1987; Greimas and Courtés 1982; Greimas and Fontanille 1993[1991]; Fontanille 2007[2003]; Bertrand 1995. ↩

7. Pomodoro’s inscriptions are, on several levels, akin to various instances of “asemic writing” (Schwhich 2019) that have dotted art history since the early forms of Paleolithic graphism analyzed by Leroi-Gourhan (1993[1964]). ↩

8. As Tatsuma Padoan suggests, Pomodoro's art-making could be understood, drawing on the Aristotelian distinction between *praxis* ("action") and *poesis* ("production"), as a form of "enunciative poesis," that is, a productive form of enunciation, which, unlike enunciative praxis (i.e., the social or individual ways of doing things), entails the productive making of material semiotic artefacts. These two (practical and productive) sides of enunciation may also become the object of metapragmatic and metasemiotic reflection (as in Pomodoro's or his critics' elaboration of the artist's own artmaking), thus producing the meta-level of enunciative theory. I thank Tatsuma Padoan for this insight. For a compelling anthropological application of the Aristotelian distinction between making and doing, see Lambek 2010. ↩

9. Note that during his nearly seven-decade career, Pomodoro has experimented with multiple media and techniques, as I learned from interviews with his collaborators and observations I conducted during my long-term attendance of his atelier. While working in the negative and engraving malleable substrates is not his only procedure, it is clearly his primary, most dear and distinctive technique; and the core of his artistic research, on which he, together with a number of intellectual collaborators and interlocutors, produced a large body of critical texts, which form a sort of "enunciative theory" (more on this later). ↩

10. Data has thus been collected through a somewhat atypical assemblage of methods, ranging from consultation of the artist's archive and his critical catalogue to retrospective reflections on my extensive and long-term knowledge (of over four decades) of the artist, his atelier, and his entourage of collaborators, more recent and deliberate visits to Pomodoro's atelier and interviews with the artist himself and his closest collaborators (intermittently conducted in 2017–2024), and a visit (May 7, 2024) to the artistic Foundry currently used by artist. ↩

11. In this sense, my approach seeks to find a middle ground between the genetic and generative perspectives on art making (Greimas and Fontanille 1993[1991]) and highlights how a key component of contemporary artistic processes is conveyed by the apparatus of aesthetic commentaries (by the artist and his critics) on the products of such processes (more on this below). ↩

12. See, for example, the works *Lettera a K.*, 1965 (Inventory #388), "*Lo stagno*" *omaggio a Kafka*, 1957 (Inventory #53), "*Morte per acqua*" *omaggio a T.S. Eliot*, 1957 (Inventory #54), *Luogo di mezzanotte*, 1957 (Inventory #54). ↩

13. Semiotic ideologies can be more extensively defined as "those assumptions that help shape people's expectations about what is likely to be good evidence for a causal chain to be tracked down, an intention to be construed, or a code to be deciphered. Given one semiotic ideology, a bolt of lightning is a candidate for being a sign of divine intentions and thus requires a serious ritual response; given another, it manifests

nothing more than atmospheric conditions, warranting no further attention beyond, perhaps, installing a lightning rod” (Keane 2014:314). ↩

14. Though forms of non-lexical writing and textless narrative are as ancient as early forms of Paleolithic graphism, the label “asemic writing,” originally adopted and deployed in a systemic way by visual poets Tim Gaze and Jim Leftwich, generally refers to various forms of contemporary verbo-visual artistic experimentalism crisscrossing the visual arts and the verbal arts (Schwenger 2019:1). A similar tension toward the bracketing of the lexical and verbal component of writing is realized “by Islamic calligraphy where a line from the Qur’an may be made so ornate or geometrically intricate that it is no longer legible” (Skaggs 2020:345). In a similar fashion, in Japan the distinction between writing and drawing/painting is all but stark (Barthes 1982:21). As Tatsuma Padoan (personal communication) notes “the word for ‘writing’ (*kaku*) is currently the same used for ‘drawing.’” Severi (2015) discusses how ancient Amerindian civilizations combined material and pictographic elements with ritual performance as mnemonic technologies for the transmission of traditional knowledge. In my own work on Toraja (upland Indonesia) indigenous writing systems (Donzelli 2024), I described similar combinations of visual and haptic writing with ritual and political speechmaking, in which oral and written/visual modalities coexist in a relation of coordination, rather than subordination (Leroi-Gourhan 1993[1964]). ↩

15. In this light, by backgrounding the verbal signified, asemic artists restore the prominence of neglected gestures from which graphic written forms and visual signs emerge. As Skaggs (2020:335) points out, wordless/asemic writing and illegible graphic forms reveal “how legibility comes at a cost,” and helps us become aware of “what is lost to us when we read words.” ↩

16. An overview of Pomodoro’s entire production is available on the artist’s online critical catalogue: [https://www.arnaldopomodoro.it/catalogue\\_raisonne/artworks/](https://www.arnaldopomodoro.it/catalogue_raisonne/artworks/) ↩

17. Out of convenience, throughout the article I use the label “signboard” as an umbrella term for Pomodoro’s bas-relief oeuvre. ↩

18. A recent exhibition entitled *To Scratch, Draw, Write*, held in Genoa in 2021 and curated by Flaminio Gualdoni, offered a selection of this corpus, ranging from *Tavole dei Segni* realized in the 1950s to the *Continuum X* of 2010 and including the *Cronache* of the 1970s, *Papiro I* of the mid-1980s, the *Colonne del Viaggiatore*, and *Frammenti da ‘L’Arte Primordiale’ di Emilio Villa* (Pomodoro 2021). ↩

19. This is particularly relevant, continues Dondero (2020:130n67), given that “literature, which was the first field of study privileged by [Continental] semiotics, had never been studied from the point of view of writing, or as an *act of recording markings*” (italics in the original). ↩

20. But see recent linguistic anthropological work on graphic ideologies and textual artifacts (Hull 2012; Murphy 2017; Donzelli 2021, 2024, among others).↵

21. The text was originally drafted in the early 1970 and published in French in the mid-1990s within Barthes's *Œuvres complètes* and later released in Italian (Barthes 1999) together with *Le Plaisir du texte* in a volume edited by Carlo Ossola and was followed by a French edition (in 2000). All translations from Barthes 1999 are my own.↵

22. As Drucker (1996:39) points out, the twentieth century “exploration of various typographic, calligraphic, and even sculptural manifestations of poetic works” resulted indeed into a widespread proliferation of (typo)graphic, poetic, and verbo-visual innovations. It should be noted that the interest for writing and textuality crisscrossed (albeit with very different approaches) both the expressionist and informal research of the 1950s and the later (1960–1980s) movements of conceptual art, concrete poetry (Drucker 1996; 2012), and Arte Povera (Kotz 2007; Roberto 2020), which were characterized by a marked use of textual and linguistic elements, as in the 1967 exhibition *Language to Be Looked at and/or Things to Be Read* held at Dwan Gallery in New York and curated by Sol LeWitt and Robert Smithson.↵

23. Derrida (1997[1967]), drawing on Leroi-Gourhan (1993[1964]), describes the progressive hegemonic rise of linearization as stemming from the defeat of non-linear graphism and producing the separation between domains such as technics and art, or religion and economy, which, in fact, had coexisted in the mythographic thinking.↵

24. Indeed, in his plea for writing based on a critique of Plato's attack against writing, Ricoeur (1971:26) reinstates both the strict dichotomy between the ephemeral inchoateness of speaking and the durable permanence of written inscriptions and the idea that writing is not, as Derrida believes, an independent and autonomous semiotic modality.↵

25. It is interesting to note the somewhat paradoxical consonance between this point and Socrates' suggestion that writing is like painting (Ricoeur 1971:38).↵

26. On the topic, see the special issue that journal *Versus* dedicated to intersemiotic translation (Dusi and Nergaard 2000), Fabbri 2020, and Marrone 2009, among others.↵

27. *Le Geste et la parole*, first published in French in 1964, is an ambitious attempt to combine different fields (e.g., anthropology, linguistics, art history, technology, anatomy, and physiology) to provide an all-encompassing account of human evolution. Considered by some to be “one the great masterworks of twentieth-century anthropology” (Ingold 1999:451), the book remained largely unknown in the Anglophone

academic world and was only translated into English in 1993. Note that in spite of his considerable debt to the French paleoanthropologist, Ingold (1999) rejects Leroi-Gourhan's thesis (1993[1964]) of a primal radiality of the symbolic function (and its related graphic expression in non-alphabetic and mythographic forms of writing). Rather, Ingold believes that far from a late conformation to the linearity of spoken language, the history of writing is from the outset characterized by a linear structure. Put differently, according to Ingold (1999:446), linear writing was instrumental in establishing linearity into the structure of language. ↩

28. According to Leroi-Gourhan (1993[1964]:211), the development of linear writing system was decisive for the subordination of written language to spoken language: "At the linear graphism stage that characterizes writing, the relationship between the two fields undergoes yet another development: Written language, phoneticized and linear in space, becomes completely subordinated to spoken language, which is phonetic and linear in time. The dualism between graphic and verbal disappears, and the whole of human linguistic apparatus becomes a single instrument for expressing and preserving thought—which itself is channeled increasingly toward reasoning." ↩

29. All translations from Fontanille 1998 are my own. ↩

30. Although I am currently unable to determine whether Pomodoro had direct knowledge of Leroi-Gourhan and Barthes's reflections on writing, it is likely that he had heard about them from his friend and confidant Francesco Leonetti (1924–2017)—who was in strict personal contact with Barthes and was a great estimator of Leroi-Gourhan. A writer and poet himself (a prominent member of the *neo-avanguardia* movement, Gruppo '63), Leonetti met Pomodoro in the mid-1960s and became his main interlocutor for the following fifty years (Pomodoro and Leonetti 1992). ↩

31. See also similar statements in Respi and Villani 2023:100; Pomodoro 2016:61; Pomodoro and Leonetti 1992:38; and Parmiggiani 2006:31. ↩

32. "The thinking of pre-alphabetic antiquity was radial, like the body of the sea urchin or the starfish" (Leroi-Gourhan 1993[1964]:211). ↩

33. Note that while goldsmiths generally pour molten metal into a cuttlebone mold made by two halves of the shell sandwiched together (with the flat side closing the part that has been carved), Pomodoro works on whole shells without closing the carved part with the non-carved half (see also Pomodoro and Leonetti 1992:27–28). ↩

34. The cuttlebone grain is sometimes artificially reproduced in the artists' works, which did not directly employ the cuttlebone in their making (more on this later). ↩

35. Interestingly, despite the shift in scale, which marked the artist's production in the mid-1960s (and coincided with the 350 cm-diameter sphere, *Sfera grande*, he produced for the 1967 Montreal Expo), Pomodoro never gave up his primary procedure of negative inscription and positive transduction, he only shifted from cuttlebone to clay. On scale jumping and format, see Pierantoni 2012 and Migliore and Colas-Blaise 2022. ↩

36. A sense of Pomodoro's procedure can be grasped by the these two videos:

[https://www.arnaldopomodoro.it/archive/sections/audiovisuals/detail/1/arnaldo-pomodoro-makes-a-%20sphere\\_0516/](https://www.arnaldopomodoro.it/archive/sections/audiovisuals/detail/1/arnaldo-pomodoro-makes-a-%20sphere_0516/), which is an experimental video project representing the initial stages of the making of a large sphere that was displayed at the Montreal Expo in 1968 and

[https://www.arnaldopomodoro.it/archive/sections/audiovisuals/detail/16/arnaldo-pomodoro-racconto-dell%E2%80%99artista\\_0748/](https://www.arnaldopomodoro.it/archive/sections/audiovisuals/detail/16/arnaldo-pomodoro-racconto-dell%E2%80%99artista_0748/), which shows the clay working process (from 04:00-06:00) and cuttlebone casting technique (07:25-10:35). Note that to view both videos, it is necessary to register one's email on the Arnaldo Pomodoro's online Archive at: <https://www.arnaldopomodoro.it/profile/login/?lang=en>. ↩

37. As Mattozzi (2020) has illustrated in his discussion of "instauration," the relation between the to-be-made and the made entails a number of phases, which include designing, that is, producing "prospective descriptions [...] for things to be made." These descriptions, contends Mattozzi (2020) are not, contrary to Ingold's view (2013:55), mental representations, but "material artifacts themselves." ↩

38. Following Fontanille (2005), Dondero (2020:134–35) distinguishes between two sublevels or forms of mediation: formal substrate and material substrate, the former being defined by the "rules of inscription" afforded by each specific material substrate. ↩

39. Linguists Hopper and Thompson (1980) proposed to understand transitivity on semantic and pragmatic grounds (rather than as a merely syntactic phenomenon) through a set of loosely co-occurring and co-varying parameters. In their view, higher degrees of transitivity correlate with the enhancement of the agent's activeness and volition as well as with higher levels of individuation and affectedness of the object. In a similar way, Fontanille (1998:36) identifies three degrees of tension: "This tension can be *zero* (the outline strictly follows the lines of construction of the object/three-dimensional form), *maximum* (the outline is autonomous in relation to these construction lines), or *intermediate* (the outline more or less follows the lines of construction). ↩

40. Special thanks go to Maria Giulia Dondero for having helped me formulating this point. ↩

41. Throughout his long career, Pomodoro has had a small number of selected assistants. While for the technical aspects of his major architectural projects he deployed a variety of external consultants, for routine

work he had a selected entourage of temporary and permanently employed collaborators; among whom a delivery man, a bronze cleaner, a professional goldsmith, several molders, and a draftsman. He greatly relied on their help for both the most and least specialized aspects of his routine work, but he tended to have a solo approach to clay carving work or at least to the inscription of the “first draft.” ↩

42. The term *ekphrasis* refers to a type of intersemiotic transposition whereby a work of art is verbally rendered in poetry or prose. ↩

43. This printmaking process has as a starting-point a clay layer which Pomodoro engraves to produce a negative matrix, which is used to create a plaster cast (positive), which is then used to produce, this time by casting epoxy resin, a high-resistance negative mold, which is placed under a powerful press (on Pomodoro’s printmaking technique, see Donzelli 2023; Carandente 1978). ↩

44. As Dondero (2020) notes, the semiotics of images has privileged the analysis of the form of expression, and has only recently begun to analyze the substance of (the plane of) expression: “Greimasian semiotics left aside the analysis of the modes by which the form of expression was constituted, as if the forms were, in the end, integrated into no substance.” ↩

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