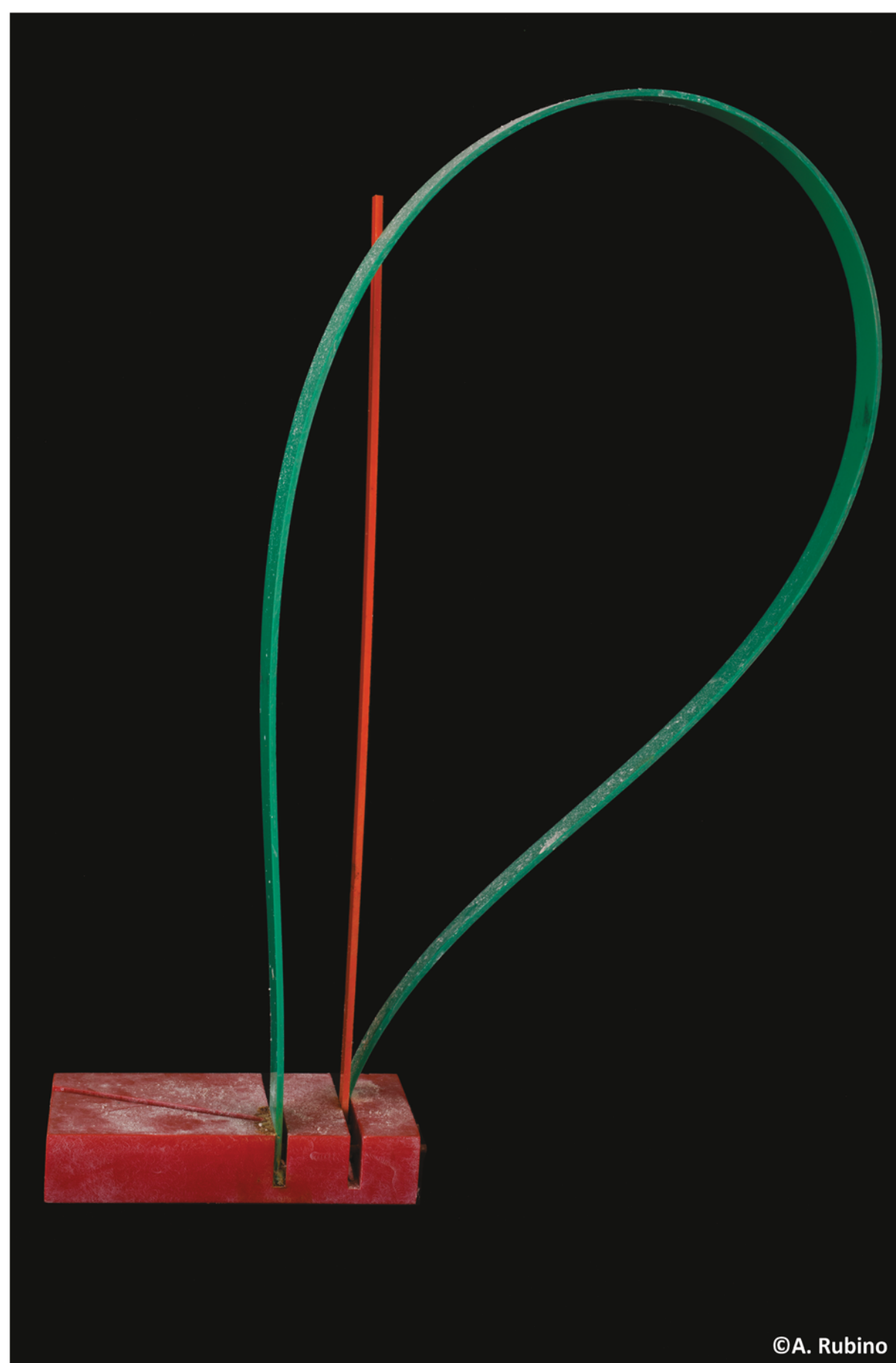


Changing to preserve. The replacement of fragments in contemporary art.

Antonella Malintoppi, Flavia Madeddu, Livia Marinelli, Isabel Tornaquindici



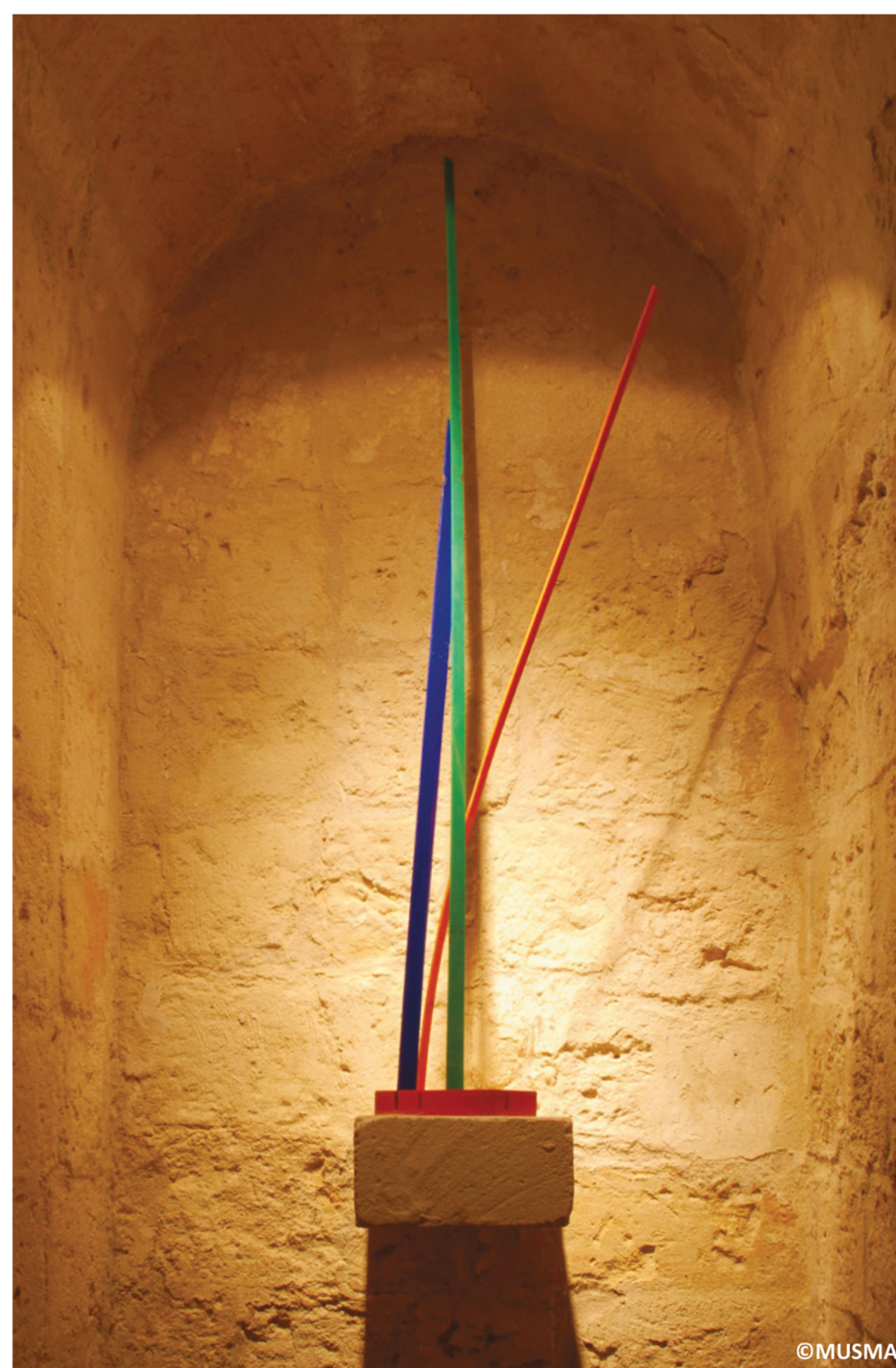
N. 1 - 2018, *Fiore 4* with deformed and fragmented elements

With the support of the art historian A. Rorro, the conservation team interviewed the 97-year-old artist, who explained that the original project of the artwork was based on the importance of maintaining a continuous reflection of the light on the material, with no interruption, like a graphic mark on a sheet of paper. This explains why it was impossible to recompose the artwork by using the original fragments, as recognized by the author himself.

According to the artist's will, the team (A. Rorro, S. Spinella - art historians; A. Malintoppi, A. Amoroso - conservators; E. Esposito, V. Genuardi, F. Madeddu, L. Marinelli, I. Tornaquindici - students) decided to give preference to the preservation of the artwork's message rather than its original materials. New exemplars of missing and broken parts were recreated in their integrity by using digital techniques, while the original fragmented pieces were recorded and stored. We used the following method: at first, the photo was put in AutoCAD without metric references. The picture was then scaled on the actual measurements, directly taken from the intact parts of the artwork. The scale factor was obtained by dividing the measurements of the actual object by those of its photographic representation. We checked that the dimensions obtained after the scale process were matching with the real ones, verifying the correspondence between the *spline's* measures and those of the element in our possession.

Recomposing the continuity of light. A case study about the conservation of a contemporary sculpture in PMMA: replacement of damaged elements and material fragments for conservation of the original project.

The case study concerns the artwork *Fiore n°4*, part of a series of sculptures made of Polymethylmethacrylate (Plexiglas®) and Polyvinylchloride (PVC) called *Fiori* (Flowers); the group was created in 1966 by the Italian artist Guido Strazza. In 2006 the entire series was acquired by the MUSMA -Contemporary Sculpture Museum of Matera- where in 2011 it was displayed on the occasion of the personal exhibition dedicated to Strazza (ph. n. 2). After the de-installation, the sculptures were stored in the museum depository and few years later some of them were found badly damaged. In particular, the elements of *Fiore n°4* were broken, missing or deformed (ph. n.1).



N. 2 - 2011, photo of *Fiore 4* at the MUSMA exhibition

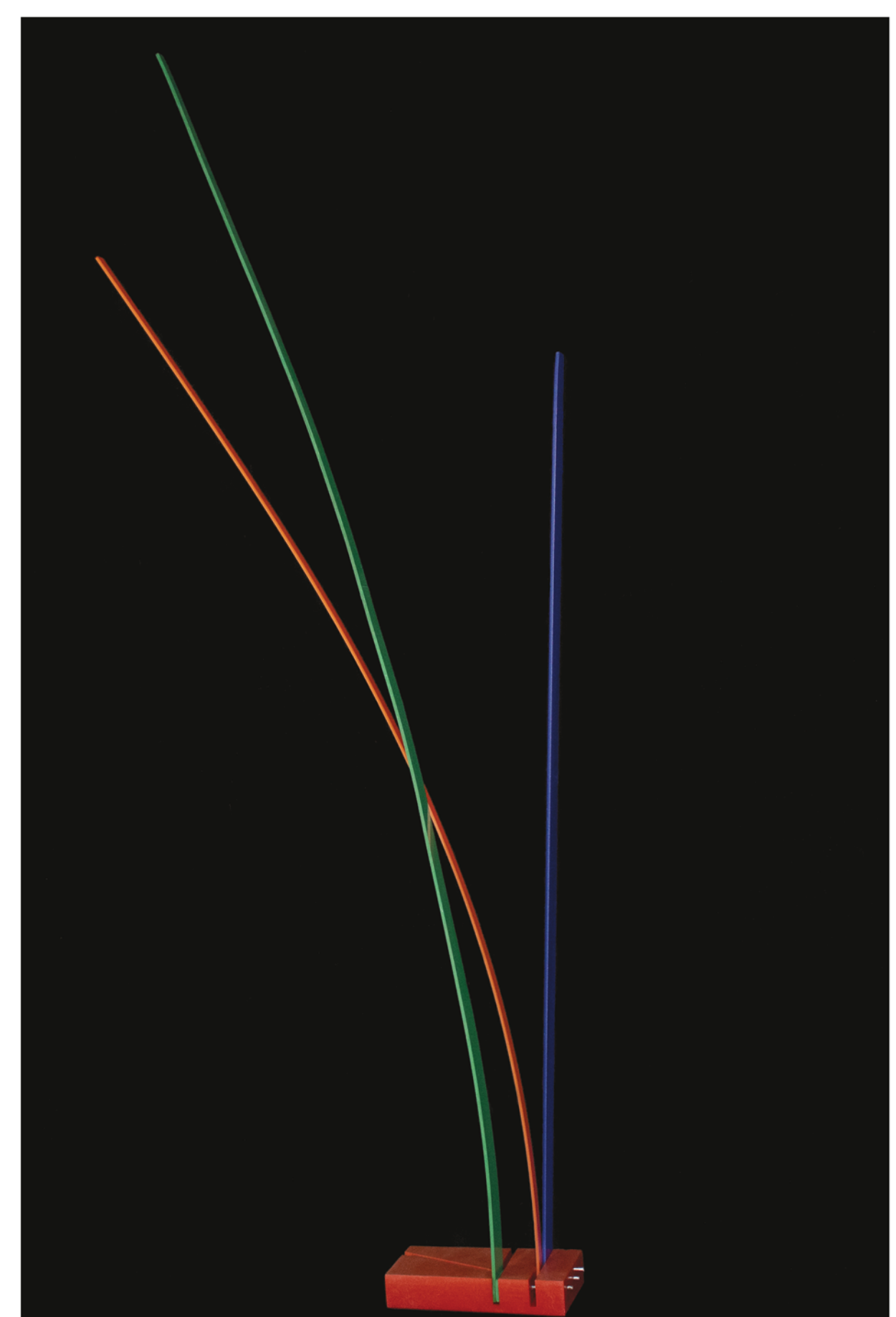
Furthermore, the scale process was based even on the niche's measurements obtained *in situ*, in order to assess and re-establish the correct proportions. The operation was possible because the environment - shown in the picture n.2 - is still the same today.

Thanks to the achieved match, it was possible to acquire the correct dimensions of fragmentary and missing elements applying the same method. Thus, we obtained a file with the correct reconstruction of objects in their integrity and actual dimensions and sizes. From the file, a laboratory in Rome specialized in the processing of PMMA realized a replica of the elements in the same colours and material, hand-making the cut in order to respect the executive technique. Each one of the new pieces has been signed to recognize it as non-original. The artwork was finally reassembled as it was in its origin, as confirmed by the author itself (ph. n.3).

During the academic year 2018/19, the whole series of sculptures has been taken to the ICR – School of Higher Education's Restoration Laboratory. In this context, the fourth-year students took care of them during the course of Conservation of Contemporary Art Materials under the supervision of their Professors.

One of the most difficult aspects of the conservation - restoration work was the lack of evidences about the sculptures' appearance before 2011. The reconstruction had to be carried out on the basis of a single picture of the sculpture portrayed inside a stone niche, taken during the previous exhibition at MUSMA.

The 2011 image at our disposal (ph. n.2) was of the utmost importance for the following operations, even if it was deformed by the normal distortions of the camera lens and available in low quality.



N.3 - 2019, *Fiore 4* after reconstruction