



If one wants to walk into the mirror, actually walk further into it, one must step back, turn around, and walk in the opposite direction. Looking into the mirror one can see one's own image walking into the mirror. For me this was the only possible way to reach the other side.

MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO

Michelangelo Pistoletto

***The Etruscan (L'etrusco)*, 1976**

Bronze, mirror

120 x 84 x 47 inches

Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth,

Museum purchase, The Friends of Art Endowment Fund

Acquired in 2001

Michelangelo Pistoletto has long been associated with the Arte Povera (literally, "Poor Art") movement that took place in Italy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The movement, which coincided with post-Minimalism in the United States in many ways, was characterized by its use of common (or "poor") materials. Other artists associated with the group – Jannis Kounellis, Mario Merz, Luciano Fabro, and Giuseppe Penone – used materials such as rags, dirt, and electric lights. In Pistoletto's case, his signature material became the mirror. His fascination with the mirror began in the 1950s while painting a series of self-portraits on black lacquer backgrounds. He noticed his reflection on the shiny black surface. "The canvas itself became the mirror, and I realized that – instead of a painted background – the living world appeared in the painting. Behind my own image in the painting, I noticed the wall of the room I was working in, and any other person could have seen his or her reflection in this area of the painting." Later in the 1960s he began applying photos to polished stainless-steel surfaces, which reflected the viewer and their surrounding space joined with the photographic image. *The Etruscan* takes this effect into the three-dimensional realm. The viewer joins the space of the life-size cast of an original Etruscan statue and then contemplates that merging of space in the mirror that the Etruscan's finger touches. In this sense, the mirror creates another space. Pistoletto has said about the piece, "The Etruscan, who comes from a faraway past, touches with his hand the point in the mirror where the future originates. He connects to a future that does not move directionally, but that has transformed itself through the mirror into an expanded flow, a fluid that opens up concentrically toward what is unknown." In Pistoletto's mirror, the viewer becomes an integral part of the piece, joining the Etruscan as he contemplates the present, shown by the point at which he touches the mirror; the past, which exists in the reflection; and the future, which is seen in the space surrounding him that he might walk toward. In this way, Pistoletto's piece becomes a direct vision of how our lives merge with people and objects (art, perhaps?) in our surroundings, and then continue on, changed in infinite ways by our momentary interaction with them.