



## CAROLE A. FEUERMAN

### GOLDEN MEAN

### DIVINA PROPORZIONE

Feuerman's 'Golden Mean *Divina Proporzione*' is a 14-foot stainless steel and epoxy patina sculpture dedicated to Venice, the only city that combines Renaissance art, science and the sea. An avid fan of the Olympics, Feuerman was inspired by and studied the shapes created by swimmers' bodies as they dove off the high platform, often from handstands. The parabola the body makes for only a moment resonated in her memory. 'Golden Mean *Divina Proporzione*', 2013, is based on Feuerman's 14-foot bronze 'Golden Mean' of 2012, which is on permanent exhibition in Riverfront Green Park overlooking the mighty Hudson River at Peekskill, New York (see photograph).

The golden mean is a beautifully simple piece of mathematics apparently discovered by Pythagoras of Samos, and first written down three centuries later in Euclid's *Elements*. Euclid called it 'extreme and mean proportion'. The golden mean is a ratio between two unequal parts of a quantity, roughly 1:1.6, which means that the smaller part is to the larger part, as the larger part is to the whole. This ratio yields an irrational number with infinite decimal places, 1.618... (Phi). The golden ratio is integral to the configuration of pentagrams, sacred to Pythagoras, and other geometric forms, including the parabola.

In 1509, mathematician Fra Luca Pacioli published in Venice his treatise *De divina proportione*, with drawings of polyhedra by Leonardo da Vinci. Pacioli called the golden mean 'divine proportion'. Merging science, art and philosophy in the Renaissance way, Pacioli wrote that the ratio is divine because it is a perfect and unchanging unity. On Pacioli's influence, the golden mean acquired the fame of being uniquely beautiful, although most artists have preferred to seek their own proportions. When Michelangelo was asked about the measurements of his figures, he said, "one needs to have compasses in the eyes and not the hands, because the hands work, and the eyes judge".

For Aristotle the golden mean was the desirable middle between the extremes of too much and too little. Looking at Feuerman's diver on the brink of leaving the platform suggests that today's term might be the 'tipping point'. Divers seek perfect form while challenging the limits of physics. Against the watery backdrop of the Venetian lagoon, the monumental sculpture towers 14 feet into the sky on six inch wrists.

Born in 1945, Feuerman began her career in the Seventies as one of the founders of super realist figurative sculpture, together with Duane Hanson and John de Andrea. She has exhibited many times in Venice, and her works are in major collections and museums of modern art. 'Golden Mean *Divina Proporzione*' was expressly made for this exhibition at InParadiso in the Giardini of the Biennale, under the patronage of the Concilio Europeo dell'Arte and the Muscarelle Museum of Art.

John T. Spike



Concilio Europeo dell'Arte



2013 ANNO DELLA CULTURA ITALIANA  
YEAR OF ITALIAN CULTURE

MUSCA-  
RELLE  
MUSEUM  
OF ART

at The College of William & Mary