BRANCUSI, Constantin
Hobitza, Romania 1876 - Paris 1957

Le commencement du monde
Beginning of the World
c. 1920
marble, metal and stone

free-standing abstract
30 x 20 x 20 in.

Acc. No.: 1977.51.FA
Credit Line: Dallas Museum of Art, Foundation for the Arts Collection, gift of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Clark

Photo credit: Tom Jenkins/Image courtesy Dallas Museum of Art
© Artist:

Dallas, Texas, Dallas Museum of Art
www.dma.org

Provenance

- 1977, Foundation for the Arts Collection, gift of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Clark

Bibliography

- Museum's website, 6 May 2010

1979 Bromberg
1983 Bromberg
Ann R. Bromberg, Dallas Museum of Art. Selected Works, Dallas, The Dallas

1997 Dallas
130, repr.

Comment

Museum's website, 6 May 2010:
A contemplative examination of elemental forms drawn from an elegant manipulation of
basic materials, Beginning of the World is exemplary of Brancusi's oeuvre. In his quiet
consideration of essential metaphysical issues, Brancusi clung to a relatively narrow
range of identifiable forms: eggs, heads, heads resting on necks, birds, columns; and
their nonobjective counterparts: ovoids, arching streamlined shapes, mounting stacked
objects. Each shape is infused with meaning to reveal its inner significance through the
artist's humble attention to the inherent qualities and demands of shape and material.
Like so many of his contemporaries at the turn of the century, the symbolists, the early
abstractionists including Piet Mondrian, Franzisk Kupka, and Kasimir Malevich as
Brancusi strove to give expression to spiritual themes and philosophical issues, he
discovered the most eloquent means of expression in nondescriptive or totally abstract
forms. Here the marble ovoid rests delicately, even precariously, on a round, polished
metal surface. The sculpture is redolent with a diverse range of associations: new life,
a precious newborn resting on a birthing dish, or a severed head on a salver, an image
comparable to the tiny disembodied elements that float in the works of Odilon Redon.
The marble ovoid and mirror metal disk are not anchored but rest on the cruciform
limestone base, which reinforces an aura of solemnity. Indeed, Brancusi's sober
reexamination of the basics of sculpture, the essence of its materials, and the subtle
relationship of object to base/pedestal, constitutes his crucial contribution to modern
sculpture in the 20th century.