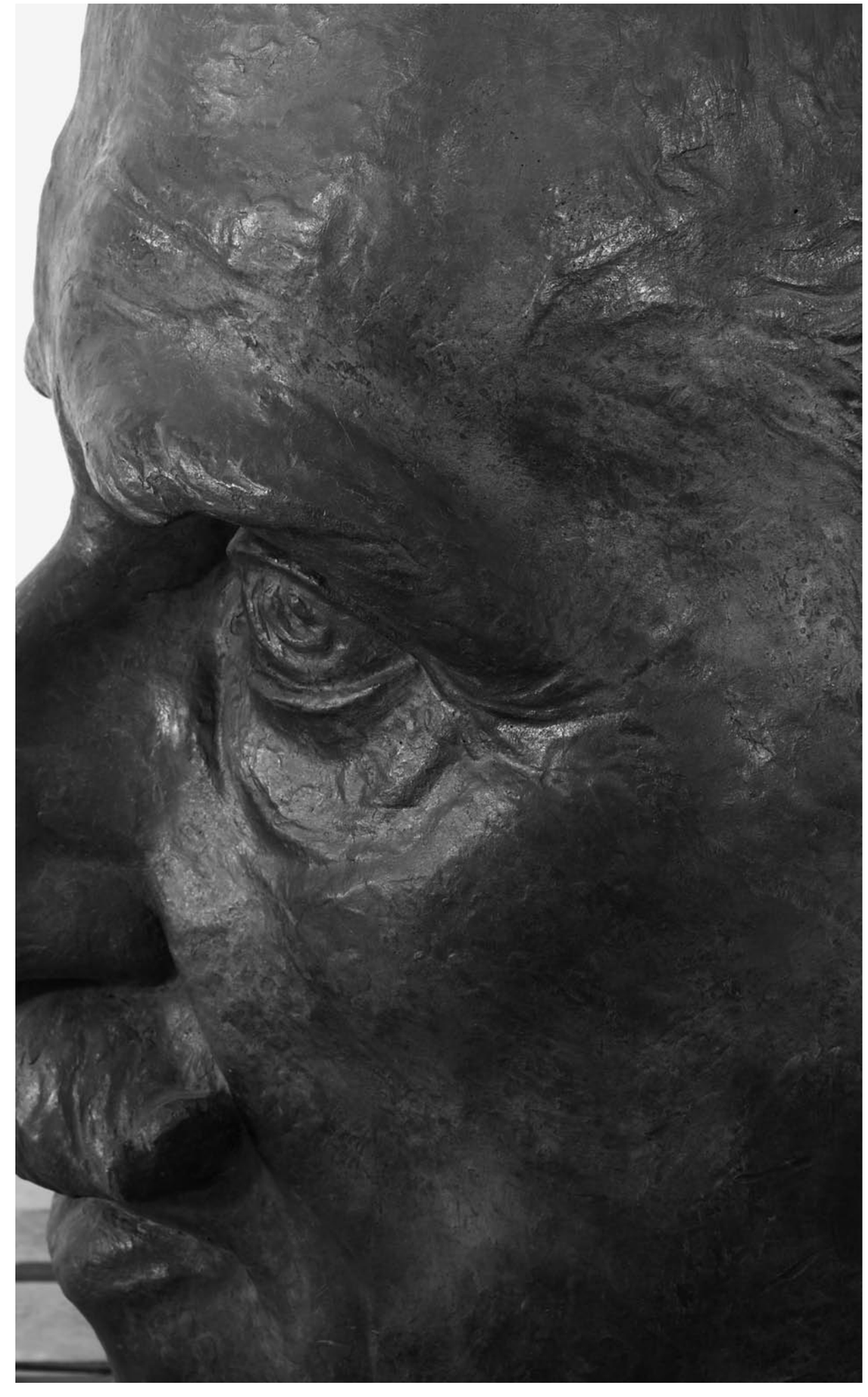
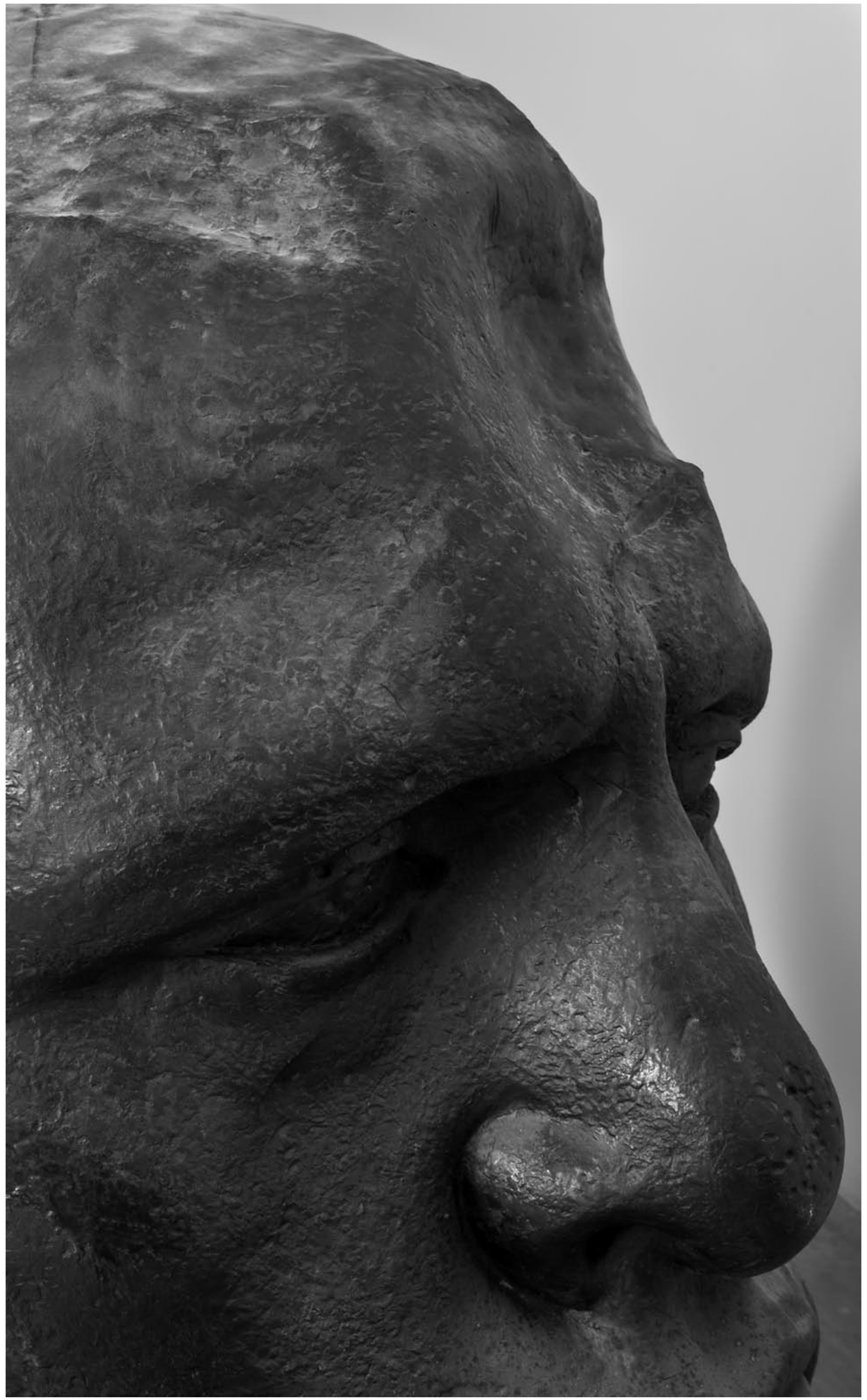
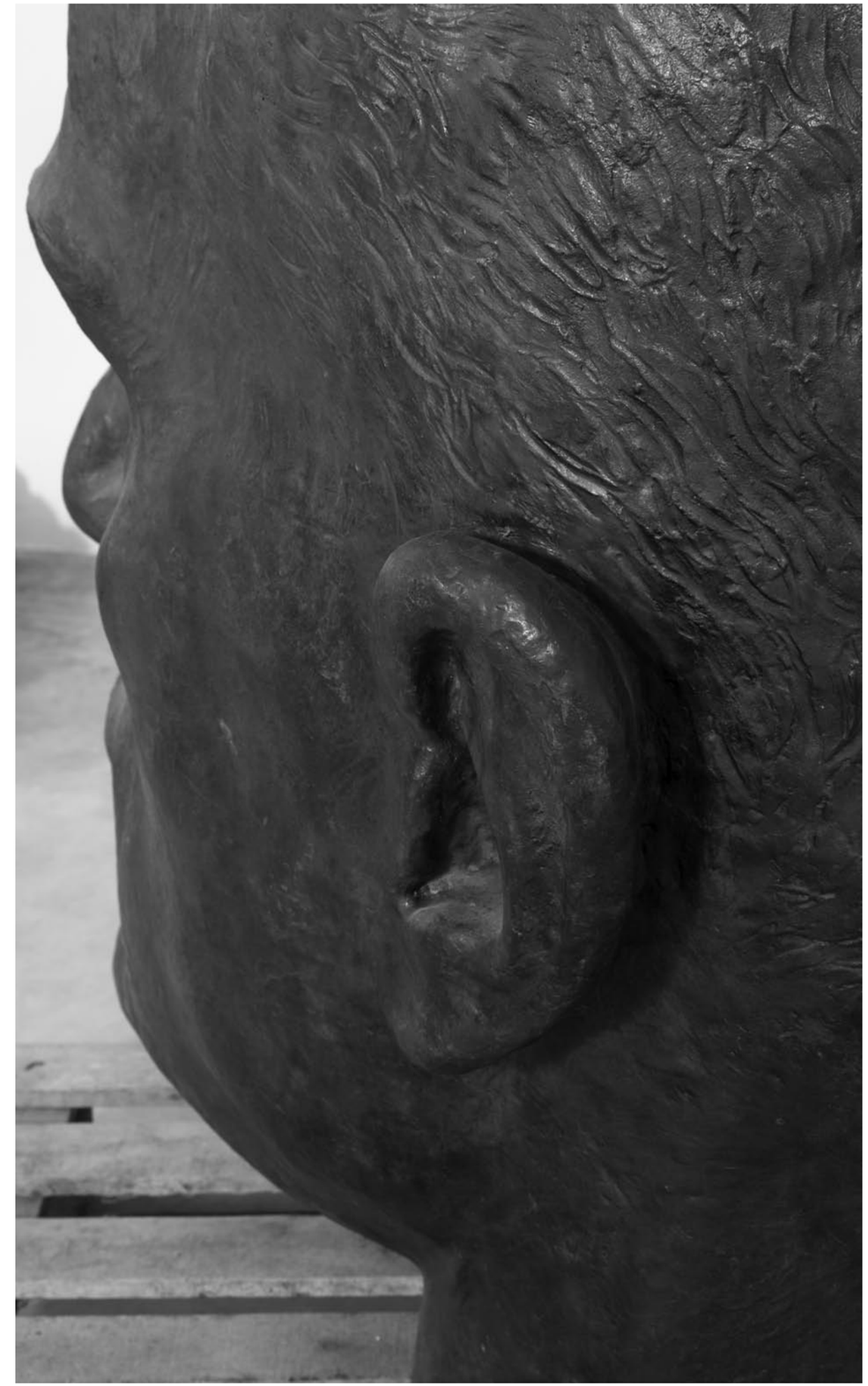
THE HEADS IN QUES-TION







EUR

The Heads in Question

An intervention by Rossella Biscotti

My discovery of five bronze heads of the dictator Benito Mussolini and King Victor Emmanuel III, locked away in the basement of the Palazzo degli Uffici in the EUR district in Rome, has been the starting point for a new project. Commissioned for the World's Fair of 1942 to the sculptors Giovanni Prini and Domenico Rambelli, the heads were however never presented to the public. In fact, the 1942 World's Fair, planned for Rome, never took place due to the outbreak of World War II. The Heads in Question project involved the temporary relocation of the bronze sculptures to the premises of the Nomas Foundation.
In this context, the heads showed their aesthetic value alongside their ideological and political aspects, becoming objects of observation and discussion. The display of the sculptures is not to be perceived as an exhibition in the classic sense, but rather as a process that allowed us to re-think their significance in relation to the present world. The busts are standing on simple wooden pallets, the same supports on which they were stored. We can walk around them, touch them and look at them from a new position. Seen from above, their monumental rhetoric, typical of fascist propaganda, is no longer intimidating.
The intervention becomes a pretext to define a new space in which to question our relationship to the past, and the shifting line between commissioned artworks and their use as propaganda. After a few days, the sculptures were returned to the basement, in a ritual of circularity that recalled a pagan procession.

Design by Louis Lüthi. Photography by Ela Bialkowska.
Courtesy Nomas Foundation / EUR S.p.A. / prometeogallery by Ida Pisani.