



Zuzana Križalkovičová, ed.

STILLNESS IN MOTION

CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

böhlau

Foreword by Ruth Noack
Photographs by Boris Vaitovič



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Stillness in Motion

Conversations on Maria Bartusová
Companion Book to the Documentary Film

With Cecilia Alemani, Ka Te Blažová, Maria Chapman,
Agata Jakubowska, Pavel Karous, Miroslav Kleban,
Grażyna Kulczyk, Joanna Mytkowska, Ruth Noack, Bojana Pejić,
Ivona Raimanová, Kasia Redzisz, Zora Rusinová, Lucia G. Stach,
Boris Vaitovič, Silvia Van Espen and others

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Photographs by Boris Vaitovič

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek:
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data available online: <https://dnb.de>.

© 2025 Böhlau, Zeltgasse 1, 1080 Vienna, Austria, an imprint of the Brill- Group (Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands; Brill USA Inc., Boston MA, USA; Brill Asia Pte Ltd, Singapore; Brill Deutschland GmbH, Paderborn, Germany; Brill Österreich GmbH, Vienna, Austria) Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Hotei, Brill Schöningh, Brill Fink, Brill mentis, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Böhlau, V&R unipress and Wageningen Academic

Editorial design: Tsai-Ju Wu

Cover image: Maria Bartuszová, *Untitled* (detail), 1987, © Foto: Boris Vaitovič

Cover design: Agáta Jurčíková

Proofreading: Gavin Cowper

Language editing: Elena Carcangiu, Aleš Hnízdl, Viktória Pardovičová and Paulina Tarara

Special insight: Synne Genzmer

Printed and bound: Prime Rate, Budapest

Printed in the EU

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage | www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com

ISBN: 978-3-205-22290-3

*A small emptiness, full of a small
infinite universe...*

— Maria Bartuszoová

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the Bartusz family: my deepest gratitude for your support and cooperation throughout the project. Your kind willingness to share personal recollections and visual materials has greatly enriched the final result.

I am deeply grateful to Ruth Noack for her invaluable support, her insightful discussions on Maria Bartuszová, and the thoughtful introduction which she has contributed to this publication.

A distinguished international network of art historians, artists and contributors — including Cecilia Alemani, Ka Te Blažová, Maria Chapman, Agata Jakubowska, Pavel Karous, Joanna Mytkowska, Ruth Noack, Bojana Pejić, Ivona Raimanová, Kasia Redzisz, Lucia G. Stach, Boris Vaitovič, Silvia Van Espen and countless other luminaries — all offered invaluable comments which helped to critically refine our conceptual framework of the *Stillness in Motion* project. These collaborations had a signifiant influence on both the documentary and the book.²

² Particular thanks are due to Vladimíra Hradecká for her expertise in video editing; Tomáš Jurčo and Martin Jombík for their co-editing contributions; the videographers Anna Ailincea, Jaris, Hugo Činčala, Jakub Grochowski, Lorine Laville and Juraj Marcin; Marian Kallinger for colour grading; and Daniel Špiner for composing the music.

Grassroots support from educational communities in Revúca, Tatranská Lomnica, Vranov nad Topľou and Vysoká pri Morave, complemented by contributions from professionals such as Maria Caffrey, Alexander Repáš and Miroslav Vyšný, provided essential contextual depth to our research.

Professional contributions from Stefan Schmitzer, Gavin Cowper, Tsai-Ju Wu, Agáta Jurčíková and Synne Genzmer expanded the theoretical envelope of the project, and their meticulous intellectual and design expertise greatly elevated and refined the academic and aesthetic dimensions of the final result. Special thanks go to Elena Carcangiu, Aleš Hnízdil, Viktória Pardovičová and Paulina Tarara for their language revisions, which further honed the precision of the final result. Many thanks also to Maciej Łyczek and Anna Maculewicz for their magic at the eleventh hour.

The research also benefited from a range of critical scholarly insights from an international consortium of experts, including Dorota Kenderová and Miroslav Kleban from East Slovak Gallery, Grażyna Kulczyk from Muzeum Susch (whom we particularly thank for her timely and invaluable support), Hans Knoll from Knoll Gallery Vienna-Budapest, Julia T. Bailey and Eva Drexlerová from Galerie Rudolfinum in Prague,

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Julia Jachs from ERSTE Foundation Vienna, Peter Mikle and Ingrid Tišliarová from National Memory Institute Archive in Bratislava, Zora Rusinová, Ronit Adler, Hannah and Gerhard Bruckmüller, Katarína Balúnová, Liddy Scheffknecht, and also posthumously from Marko Blažo, a remarkable talent whose artistic legacy has been preserved through the dedication of Ka Te Blažová.

Böhlau Publishing, and Sarah Stoffaneller and Waltraud Moritz in particular, transformed our shared vision for a series of art-scientific monographs into a definitive scholarly monograph through a process of collaborative excellence.

In conclusion, I would like to express my profound appreciation to my family and to my friends Asli Kurt Kudug, Monika Maurerová, Paulina and Filip Mondrzyk, Lenka, Max and Markus Oberauer and Martin Summer; their unwavering support has transcended this scholarly endeavor. I am also deeply grateful for all the serendipitous moments and challenges that I encountered during the course of this research which have enriched the project in a myriad of unexpected ways.

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FOREWORD

Ruth Noack

It is almost thirty years since the all too early death of Mária Bartusová, a sculptor who enjoyed a prolific yet long underrated career. She had chosen Košice as her home, a provincial Czechoslovak city close to the Hungarian and Ukrainian borders, and this is where she produced the better part of her oeuvre. Košice is where she taught and experimented, and where she sought, through the sculptures which she created for the blind, to forge another kind of audience intra-action than that which was being cultivated in Bratislava or Prague or in the former West at the time. Some of her work was collected, but after her death, most sculptures slumbered unseen in her studio, until the contemporary art world gradually started to take notice.

We have yet to understand the full depth and relevance of Mária Bartusová's contribution to the world, but the research into her work and its international exposition are gaining momentum; consequently, this companion book to Zuzana Križalkovičová's documentary film *Stillness in Motion. Conversations on Maria Bartusová* can itself be regarded as a companion to other takes on the artist's oeuvre.

In their supplementary form, handbooks to films or addenda to previously published materials typically retain a slightly ancillary character, and it is therefore of the utmost importance to emphasize the radical nature of the volume *you are now perusing*. Although not spelled out explicitly, the idea of companionship put forth by the editor of the book has an ethical feminist motivation.

Zuzana Križalkovičová not only situates the method and aims of her research and editorship in the context of feminist knowledge production, she also allows for a multiplicity of voices (and images) to enter into an apt evocation of Mária Bartuszová's oeuvre and life. These are the voices of the people who have themselves aspired to encounter the artist's life and work with respect, empathy, generosity and reciprocity. Indeed, we might describe their efforts equally as a form of companionship. Whether they are friends and colleagues who knew Mária Bartuszová during her lifetime or art historians and exhibition curators who have engaged with her work in more recent years, all of those represented here are above all interested in creating frameworks in which either the artist or her sculptures or both can come to life, can truly be seen.

FOREWORD

They are interested in Mária Bartuszová's oeuvre not only for its indisputable relevance as part of the canon that bridges modern and contemporary art, but for its bearing to viewers then and now.

Mária Bartuszová molded many of her sculptures under water, displacing her own body and mind onto the plaster, thereby effecting forms that are at once fragile and tangible, abstract and visceral. Her objects do not directly present the body, but its erotic presence can be felt; our act of viewing thus becomes a bodily experience in itself and may even produce a body within us. We can perhaps conclude that Mária Bartuszová's sculptures are the real companions here. And the impressions which they make upon us allow us to become companions to ourselves.¹

¹ Author's note: Bartuszová used two versions of her forename, Maria and Mária, and this is reflected in the different uses of her name by individual interviewees.



© Photo: private collection provided by the Bartusz Family

Maria Bartusová

BACKGROUND

The documentary film *Stillness in Motion. Conversations on Maria Bartuszo* reflects the multifaceted nature of Maria Bartuszo's artistic oeuvre, a body of work which lies in a symbiosis between expressive tranquility and the radiant vitality of meaning and emotion. The documentary was structured around a series of conversations that drew inspiration from the artists' works, transcending the boundaries of the artistic realm. This highly original and multidisciplinary approach juxtaposed the expressive serenity of Bartuszo's works with the dynamism of ideas and intra-actions³, evoking an expansive range of surprising and thoughtful responses from individuals from various contexts, both from the cultural sphere and beyond. This book serves as a companion to the documentary, enriching and elucidating the background and process of its creation. In recent years, the work of Maria Bartuszo has become increasingly visible, gaining wider recognition within the art world but also in a broader cultural context.⁴

3 Intra-actions, as defined by Karen Barad, are processes in which entities — both material and immaterial — continuously co-create their forms and meanings within dynamic relational contexts. Agency is not an inherent trait of these entities, but rather a result of the patterns emerging from intra-actions (Barad, 2007). In the context of art and the work of Maria Bartuszo in particular, this approach suggests that meanings and forms arise through ongoing intra-actions between the artwork, materials, viewers and their environment; rather than acting as static objects, artworks are conceived as being dynamically shaped by relational processes that generate new forms of agency and interpretation.

The research presented in this book builds upon my doctoral study, *On the Relevance of Material Performativity* (2021) and the interdisciplinary monograph *PLAN B: Intra-Active Becoming in Art and Beyond* (2024) which examined the entanglement of Karen Barad's agential realism, Maria Bartuszková's artistic legacy, Samuel Beckett's literary minimalism, and the 'butterfly effect' as a metaphor for 'intra-connectedness', and adopts a posthumanist perspective to reconceptualize Bartuszková's oeuvre not as a collection of static artifacts but as dynamic nodes within relational networks in which materiality and meaning co-emerge. By situating her work within a Baradian framework of intra-action, the study explores how Bartuszková's sculptures materialize agency through an ongoing negotiation with their environment, be it physical, cultural or temporal. Bartuszková's art is thus understood as an active participant in creating meaning, a site where artistic practice transcends traditional boundaries to emerge as a process of relational becoming. This perspective draws attention to the significance of Bartuszková's work and its potential to challenge anthropocentric paradigms, offering a groundbreaking framework for examining the intersections of materiality, agency and artistic creation.

4 Alemani, ed. 2022; Bingham & Garlatyová, eds. 2023; Čarná 2023; Gascoigne 2022; Noack 2021; Varteká 2022; Vydrová 2022, 2023.

BACKGROUND

Aims

The aim of our work is to contribute to a deeper understanding of Maria Bartuszová's artistic practice within a broader international context, transcending geographical and regional boundaries, and embracing a global perspective on art. Our analysis revealed how her works 'intra-connect' various cultural and historical frameworks, thus opening up new interpretations that extend beyond the conventional geographical categories of Central and Eastern European art and philosophy. We also focus on how the intra-activity of Bartuszová's work synthesizes a diverse scale of artistic, historical and socio-political dimensions, enabling an expansion of the context of her creation through posthumanist approaches that emerge from everyday reality and culture.

Furthermore, we explored the 'intra-sections' between scientific and cultural transfers within a broader transatlantic framework, contributing to a deeper and more complex understanding of her artistic legacy. This approach allowed us not only to rethink her work within traditional art historical boundaries but also to open up new interdisciplinary perspectives that bridge art, science and culture.

Methods and Multilingual Approach

Performative approaches are integral to contemporary academic research, enabling deeper insight into complex cultural and social processes. Their interdisciplinary nature, which bridges the spheres of art, cultural studies and the natural sciences, fosters new possibilities for interpreting and creating dynamic realities. Grounded in agential realism and posthumanist frameworks, these methods deconstruct traditional ontological and epistemological paradigms,⁵ paving the way for more innovative understandings of art as a process of intra-actions among materials, audiences and sociocultural environments.⁶

The integration of these new methodologies with other cutting-edge approaches such as gender deconstruction theories generates new and dynamic perspectives that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries.⁷ In this research, we utilize oral history methodology in order to capture authentic ideas and perspectives through interviews conducted across various locations and languages.⁸

5 Barad 2007, 2012; Bennett 2010; Braidotti 2022; Coole & Frost 2010.

6 Von Hantelmann 2007; Thun-Hohenstein 2016.

7 Babka & Schmidt 2019; Babka & Posselt 2024; Butler 2011, 2022.

8 Geiger 1994; Perks & Thomson 2015; Petrescu, Lazar, Cioban & Doroftei 2017; Ritchie 2014; Thompson 2002.

BACKGROUND

Language was explored as a complex system of communication, encompassing not only tone and speech pace but also silences, laughter, non-verbal communication and gestures.⁹

More than twenty interviews were conducted with individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, thereby providing nuanced insights into Maria Bartuszová's work, revealing dimensions that might otherwise have remained obscured, as demonstrated in the discussions held in Štúrovo. These x-logues (collective dialogues engaging multiple voices), encompassing generational, geographic and cultural differences, as well as curatorial approaches and emotional reflections, have significantly enriched our understanding of the artist and her legacy.

By fostering alternative perspectives, this research transcends conventional academic boundaries, facilitating an evolving interdisciplinary discourse that can address contemporary challenges that extend beyond the realms of art and culture.

— ZK

9 Austin 1975; Bakhtin 2010; Fischer-Lichte 2004; Phelan 2003; Schegloff 2010.

CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

Mária bola priateľka, na ktorú keď myslím, tak sa moje srdce usmieva. Citlivosť, jemnosť, radosť, priateľskosť a štedrosť to všetko bolo v tom priateľstve, ktoré sme my prežívali.

Mária was a friend who makes my heart sing when I think of her. Sensitivity, gentleness, joy, friendship, and generosity were all part of the friendship which we shared.

— Maria Chapman

The term 'heart' is perhaps evocative of the concept of Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO), a philosophical approach which aims to bring us closer to the 'the heart of things themselves'.¹⁰ OOO asserts that objects exist independently of human perception, taking into account anthropological limitations, and posits 'the real existence and true essence of things'.¹¹ However, what further strengthens this relationship between the quote and this book and the documentary is the fact that Bartuszová's works are themselves the beating heart of many of the exhibitions in which they feature.

¹⁰ Harman 2010, 95.

¹¹ Hope 2021, 23.







„Hommage à Mária B.“ je súčasťou série obrazov, ktorými som sa rozlúčila s priateľkou, úžasnou sochárkou a ženou. Stále mi chýba. Mala hlboké pochopenie nielen pre umenie, ale aj pre ľudí a ich vzťahy. Bola veľmi tolerantná. Spomínam. V tejto maľbe Márii píšem na biele plátno list čiernym akrylom na celú plochu obrazu. V hornom priestore veľkým písmom — znakmi, dole na úzkej divadelnej doske zhusteným menším textom, ktoré tvoria podklad pre výjav — dialóg Máriiných škrupín, či buniek. Následne som obraz prekryla vybranou kompozíciou v olejomaľbe. V tomto obraze s Máriou vediem dialóg o veľkej ústrednej bunke života — s veľkým tieňom smrti, v procese... je to divadelné predstavenie na javisku života, príbeh života, ktorý poznáme.

CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

'Hommage à Mária B.' is part of a series of paintings which I created as a farewell to my friend, an extraordinary sculptor and woman. I truly miss her very much. She was someone who had a deep understanding not only of art but also of people and relationships. She was such a tolerant person. I have only the fondest memories of her. In this painting, I am writing a letter to Mária in black acrylic on a white canvas which covers the entire surface of the painting. In the upper section, symbols, in large letters; in the lower part, on a narrow stage — like platform, a condensed smaller text forms a backdrop to the scene: a dialogue between Mária's shells or cells. I then covered the painting with the great shadow of death, in process... It is a theatrical performance on the stage of life, the story of life that we are all familiar with.

— Ka Te Blažová



CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

Mária prišla z intelektuálneho kultúrneho prostredia Prahy do nového prostredia, kde s rodinou bývala mimo centra Košíc. Postupne sme sa zoznámili na kurzoch jógy. Bola uzavretá, vyhranená osobnosť a ja rozbehnutý živel. Dopĺňali sme sa a pomáhali si. Naše stretnutia a rozhovory často končili oslobodzujúcim smiechom nad našimi omylmi.

Mária and her family moved from the intellectual and cultural circles of Prague to a completely new environment on the outskirts of Košice. We gradually got to know each other through our shared yoga classes. Mária was somewhat reserved, a distinctive personality, while I was more of a free spirit, and we complemented and supported each other nicely. Our regular encounters and chats often ended in cathartic laughter as we reflected wryly on our various trials and tribulations.

— Ka Te Blažová

Maria Bartusová

Zuzana Križalkovičová, ed.: Stillness in Motion

Untitled, 1986 (above), courtesy of the East Slovak Gallery, Košice

Untitled, 1985 (below), courtesy of ART FOND – Central European Contemporary Art Collection



CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

Nikdy nezabudnem na jedno zaujímavé stretnutie. Prišla som na čaj a ona mi povedala: 'Toto je moja nová práca.'

Bola to malá škatuľka. Otvorila ju a vo vnútri bol kameň s ostrými hranami. Jednoducho dodala, že všetky veci, ktoré zažívame v našich životoch, všetko, čo nám život postaví do cesty sa zahojí, ale jazvy zostanú.

I will never forget one interesting encounter. I had come over for tea, and she told me, 'This is my new work'. It was a small box. She opened it, and inside was a stone with sharp edges. She simply added that all the things that we experience in our lives, everything which life throws at us will heal, but the scars will remain.

— Maria Chapman

Mala veľmi láskavé oči. Bola človekom s hlbokým pokojom a tie chvíle boli nesmierne vzácne, keď na ne spätne spomínam.

She had very kind eyes. She was a person of great tranquillity, and those moments were so precious, looking back on them now.

— Boris Vaitovič

Maria Bartuszová graduated from the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague in 1961. Although she was born in Prague, where she also spent her student years, her artistic career took a significant turn when she relocated to Slovakia shortly after her marriage to the sculptor Juraj Bartusz in 1961.¹² The couple's move to the eastern city of Košice in 1963 represented a major geographical shift for the young couple and imposed limitations on her access to artistic opportunities.¹³ Nevertheless, Bartuszová strove to maintain her own artistic identity and developed unique artistic methods and techniques which differed markedly from those of her husband. In this way, she preserved her artistic autonomy and emerged as a prominent figure within the Czechoslovak art scene and beyond.

12 Juraj Bartusz (1933) moved to Košice after completing his studies in Prague. He worked mainly in large- and small-scale sculptures, land art and action pieces. He was an important figure in the establishment of the Faculty of Arts at the Technical University in Košice where he taught as a professor for many years. <https://artfond.sk/en/umelec/juraj-bartusz-en/>, 24.1.2024

13 This geographical disposition has led many art historians and critics to regard her not merely as a Czech artist but also as a distinctly Slovak one (from a conversation with Pavel Karous and Ivona Raimanová, Prague 2022). The author inclines more to the view of Miroslav Kleban of the East Slovak Gallery that Bartuszová should be considered as a Czechoslovak artist (Košice 2023).

CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

She became an inspirational example of artistic independence, navigating the complex realms of her craft with extraordinary mastery. Bartuszová's artistic journey is exceptional due to the remarkable degree to which it transcended conventional gender roles. She owned a car, a rarity in her time, established a personal studio, secured public commissions, and diligently worked on developing her artistic style. This assertion of her individuality and independence also resonates powerfully in the broader socio-cultural context of her era, one which was defined by the intricate interplay of artistic expression and prevailing societal norms.

— ZK

Maria Bartuszová

Diagonal Sculpture | Two diagonals | Melting Snow, 1984-1989

Dormitory, Technical University of Košice



CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ



© Photos: Boris Vaitović, 2024

Maria Bartusová

Fountain | Germination, 1986-1987
Dargov Department Store, Košice

Zuzana Križalkovičová, ed.: Stillness in Motion



CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ



© Photos Boris Vaitovič, 2024

Maria Bartuszová

Fountain, 1967- 1971

Institute for Physically Handicapped Children, Košice



© Photos: Boris Vaitovič, 2023





Juraj Bartusz
Halley's Comet, 1987
Vranov nad Topľou

Inscription on sculpture: "This sculpture was created to commemorate the appearance of Halley's Comet in 1986."



CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

Socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality.

— Milan Kundera

© Photos: Mária Krizalkovičová, 2024



To bola veľmi špecifická doba. Málokto si uvedomoval pozíciu výtvarníka za socializmu, keďže takmer každý musel byť zamestnaný. Mnohí študenti umenia si možno vybrali túto cestu práve preto, že v nej videli priestor pre iný druh slobody. Profesor Bartusz spomínal, ako s Máriou, pri príprave sôch v parku, ich zastavila hliadka. O jedenástej hodine, keď boli ulice prázdne, pretože všetci museli byť v práci a deti v škole, sa im čudovali, čo robia na verejnosti.

It was a rather unusual time. People couldn't understand the role of artists during socialism because everyone had to be employed. Many pursued studies in art because they felt there was a space for a different form of freedom. Professor Bartusz told me that once when he and Mária were working on sculptures in the park, they were stopped by a police patrol. It was eleven o'clock in the morning; the streets were deserted because everyone had to be at work and the children in school; the police were puzzled as to why they were outside in public.

CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

Bartuszovci, keďže boli registrovaní výtvarníci, vyštudovaní a zaregistrovaní v zväze, „nechodili do práce“, no keď mali verejnú zákazku, museli prísť a objednať si miesto v parku. Polícii sa zdalo podozrivé, že sa niekto potuluje po parku a pozerá sa na kríky.

Since the Bartuszes were registered artists, qualified and registered in the union, they 'didn't have to go to work'; but when they had a public commission, they had to visit the site and choose a spot in the park for their sculptures. The police found it suspicious that someone was wandering around the park and looking at bushes.

— Boris Vaitovič

V reálnom živote sme poznali problém našej tvorby, nájsť si pre ňu čas — v rodinnej bunke dvoch umelcov, hľadaním ateliérov, vedením domácnosti s deťmi a riešením najbližších vzťahov. Mali sme spoločný záujem o východné umenie, náuky a filozofiu. Pomáhali nám cvičenia jógy a kurzy meditácie, ktoré v 1980-tych rokoch dobre fungovali v Košiciach. Naše myslenie zachytávajú naše kresby. Myslím, že v tomto období, nás obe v tvorbe inšpirovala sila materstva — téma zrodu, vajíčka a kruhu.

In our everyday lives, we often struggled to find time for our creative activities — within the family circle of two artists, searching for studio spaces, staying on top of our housework, looking after the children and dealing with our nearest and dearest. We shared a common interest in Eastern art, science and philosophy. Yoga exercises and meditation courses, which were all the rage in the 1980s, even in Košice, were a god-send for us. Our drawings capture our thoughts. During that period, Mária and I were connected in our creativity through our interest in the power of motherhood — the motifs of circles and eggs.

— Ka Te Blažová

CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

No preto, že Mária Bartuszová je žena, akosi prirodzene hľadáme v jej diele väčší podiel citovosti, menej psychologických a intelektuálnych zábran. Naozaj obdivujeme zaujímavú psychológiu konkrétneho tvaru, ktorá je len novou variáciou starej pravdy, že fyziológia estetického zážitku sa často dáva do pohybu z ireálnych, mnohokrát zložitých a nepochopiteľných pohnútok, tak ako vitálna dispozícia k rytmu, ornamentu, k zákonitosti, ku kontrastu a ďalším kvalitám ľudského vnímania a interného organizovania reality, mŕtvej vo svojej ľadovej objektívnosti.

Bartuszová is a woman artist, and it therefore seems almost instinctive to seek out a greater emotional depth in her work, expressions of feeling which are relatively free from psychological or intellectual restraint. We genuinely admire the fascinating psychology of her specific forms which offer a refreshing variation on an enduring truth: the physiology of aesthetic experience is often set into motion by unreal, frequently complex, and incomprehensible impulses. These impulses can mirror our vital predisposition to rhythm, ornament, structure, contrast and other qualities intrinsic to human perception and our internal organization of reality — a reality that remains essentially lifeless in its cold objectivity.

— Marián Kvasnička



Ka Te Blažová
Triad, 2005

CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

Conceptual creativity is simply unimaginable without some visionary fuel.

— Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*

Ka Te Blažová
Belief, Hope, Love, 2005



© Artist's images



Milada Horáková seated among representatives of the Czech Social Democratic Party.
© National Memory Institute Archive, Photograph Collection 1/A

Ve stejném roce, kdy se Milada Horáková stala obětí justiční vraždy, byly její návrhy na zákony prosazeny právě v narovnání postavení ženy ve společnosti. V padesátých letech se na pozadí stalinských zločinů odehrává obrovská sociální mobilita celé poloviny obyvatelstva, kdy jsou ženy právně uznány jako rovnocenné mužům, alespoň v té úředně právní rovině. Samozřejmě, že patriarchát poražen zdaleka nebyl. Žena se najednou mohla rozvíjet. Mohla pracovat bez souhlasu manžela, otce, mohla jít na vysokou školu, mohla se uplatnit v tzv. mužských oborech. To platilo i z hlediska umění, kde byla v minulosti tradičně účast žen omezena na oblasti, jako je tapisérie a keramika. To vedlo u nás k prosazení mezinárodně uznávaných sochařek v 60. letech 20. století, fenomén, který na západě nebyl příliš častý v té době.

In the same year when Milada Horáková¹⁴ became a victim of judicial murder, her proposals aimed at creating a more equal status for women in society were actually being implemented. In the 1950s, against the backdrop of the repressive Stalinist system, women experienced a huge increase in social mobility with women being legally recognized as equal to men, at least in an official legal sense. This was also true in terms of art, as women's participation in the past had traditionally been limited to areas such as tapestry and ceramics. This led to the emergence of internationally acclaimed female sculptors in the 1960s, a phenomenon which was not very common in the West at that time.

— Pavel Karous

¹⁴ The Czech lawyer and politician Milada Horáková (1901–1950) was sentenced to death at a show trial and executed in 1950. She subsequently emerged as a symbol of resistance to the communist regime.

Martina Pachmanová had written an excellent text on Art in the Margins in 2002. Her thesis was that the changes in Czech, or perhaps Czechoslovak sculpture had been largely the work of artists working with ceramics. And this is also something that we can say is true for Bartuszová. She made huge advances, and it is unfortunate that it is only now that we are beginning to recognise her significance.

— Bojana Pejić

Es ist eine Frage der Bildung. Das lässt sich noch immer bei slowakischen, tschechischen und sowjetischen Künstler:innen sowie stark auch bei polnischen Kunstschaaffenden beobachten: Sie verfügen über eine andere Art von Bildung, insbesondere in Bezug auf die Moderne, den Konstruktivismus und verwandte Bewegungen. Ihr Wissen in diesen Bereichen ist häufig fundierter und differenzierter.

This is a question of education. It can still be observed among Slovak, Czech and Soviet artists, and equally strongly among Polish artists: they possess a different kind of education, particularly regarding Modernism, Constructivism and other related movements. Their knowledge in these areas is often more well-founded and nuanced.

— Ruth Noack

CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

Socializmus mal určité princípy. Keď sa narodíte v určitej dobe a žijete v tej dobe, prijímate veci také, aké sú. Všetky ženy mali prístup k vzdelaniu, ale v podstate museli pracovať, či už sa im to páčilo alebo nie. Nemali sme veľký výber. V rodinách, keď sa dievčatá vydávali alebo žili samostatne, [...] ani nebolo možnosťou, že by nenašli miesto a prácu. Ak to považujeme za emancipáciu — čo vidím, že na Západe je to považované za emancipáciu — keď som sem prišla [do Londýna], v tom čase sme ako systém boli veľmi emancipovaný.

Socialism had certain principles. When you are born into a certain era and live in that era, you accept things as they are. All women had access to education, but they basically had to work whether they liked it or not. We didn't have a big choice. In families, when girls got married or when they lived on their own, [...] it wasn't even an option that they wouldn't find a place and work. If we consider that as emancipation, and when I came here [to London], I saw that this is considered emancipation in the West, then at that time, we, as a system, were very emancipated.

— Maria Chapman

EXCURS:
PORTRAIT OF THE SCULPTOR MÁRIA BARTUSZOVÁ
Documentary Film, 1981



The opening scene of the 1981 film shows the studio of Mária Bartuszová.

A short documentary film from 1981 produced for a cultural magazine on Czechoslovak Television (ČST) features Bartuszová and some of her work.¹⁵ The artist is described as a *sculptor* who had studied under the national artist Otto Eckert at the Academy of Fine Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague.

¹⁵ *Portrait of the sculptor Mária Bartuszová*, Director: Marián Kleis, Camera: Milan Štelbaský and Jozef Hardoš, Moderator: Dana Fedelešová, 6: 48 min. Film, 1981, © RTVS - Archive of the Radio and Television of Slovakia, Bratislava

This might initially appear to be incorrect, however, as Bartuszová had actually studied *ceramics*, but the discrepancy perhaps serves as another example of how the artist chose to present herself; Bartuszová, who did indeed work as a sculptor, intentionally avoids being associated with the traditionally (and in the institutional reality of the Academy) 'feminine' discipline of ceramics. In the television feature, Bartuszová makes reference to the concept of 'active objects' and 'speaking objects': When introducing some of her monumental works in public spaces, Bartuszová chooses, among other things, a memorial plaque from the *Path of Heroes* in Košice.

In the film, Maria Bartuszová does not speak. She is seen in her studio, working, while we hear the voice of the presenter Dana Fedelešová and some personal statements of the artist.

As an artist who was very aware of the importance of shaping her image, she likely determined the sequence and arrangement of the displayed works: first the public pieces, then 'social work' sculptures for the blind and partially sighted, interspersed with smaller studio works.

— ZK

Maria Bartusová

Dukla Memorial Plaque, 1967

installed at the military cemetery in Vyšný Komárnik
on the Polish-Slovak border.

© Author's image, 2025

Zuzana Križalkovičová, ed.: Stillness in Motion



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ISBN Print: 9783205222897 — ISBN E-Book: 9783205222903

CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

Pocity hlbkej úcty a vzrušenia nás naplnia vždy, keď vstúpime do priestorov duklianskeho bojiska. Sú to posvätné miesta pre český a slovenský národ. Miesta posvätené krvou odvážnych bojovníkov. Tu dokáže prehovoriť každý kopec a možno aj každý strom a kameň [...].

Feelings of deep reverence and excitement fill us whenever we enter the spaces of the Dukla battlefield. These are sacred places for the Czech and Slovak nations. Places sanctified by the blood of courageous warriors. Here, every hill and perhaps every tree and stone can speak [...].

— General Ludvík Svoboda, *Path of Heroes*, 1946

Zuzana Križalkovičová, ed.: Stillness in Motion

Maria Bartuszová

Reclining Figure / Fountain Sculpture,
1964-1967, Lunik II Housing Estate, Košice

[this work had previously been catalogued
and dated as *Seated Women*, 1966]

Stillness in Motion, documentary footage



Images, drone footage, 2023

CONVERSATIONS ON MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

Ono totiž také záleželo i na těch architektech, koho si vybrali ke spolupráci, oni měli možnost jmenovat umělce, který by tam udělal sochu v rámci jejich architektonického projektu a řada architektů se snažila právě finančně vypomoci tady těm umělcům, kteří neměli tolik zakázek. A tak oslovovali právě takové ty tzv. v opozici a podařilo se jim je tam nějakým způsobem prostě procpat.

It also depended on the architects with whom they chose to collaborate. They had the opportunity to select the artists who would create sculptures within their architectural projects, and many architects made an effort to financially support artists who didn't gain so many commissions. They approached artists who were considered as 'persona non grata', and they somehow managed to squeeze them into those projects.

— Ivona Raimanová

Matúš Ponechal (above) and Max Polák (below), pupils
at the Private Elementary Art School, Vysoká pri Morave, 2025



*It is a seated woman in a fountain. There are fish guarding
a treasure. Ants are trying to climb up to the woman's head,
and one is almost at the top.*

— Matúš Ponechal



