

PRESS RELEASE

GALERIA MARILIA RAZUK – SÃO PAULO

SECTION: BACK TO THE FUTURE

ARTIST: LIUBA (BULGARY, 1923 - SÃO PAULO, 2005)

Participating for the first time in Artissima, Galeria Marília Razuk brings to the section Back to the Future a selection of sculptures by Liuba from the 1960s to 1979s, as part of a larger strategy aiming at making the work of this extraordinary artist finally properly known in Europe.

Liuba's signature, unmistakable sculptures are always cast in a dark, dense bronze. The skin of her fantastic, archetypical animals is deeply black, at times smooth and at others rough, often bearing the trace of the fingers molding the clay. Always monumental, even when small in scale, her zoomorphic creatures can appear, depending on the angle from where one looks at them, abstract, friendly, menacing or even evanescent, despite the solidity of the bronze. While often compared to that of sculptors such as Marino Marini, Brancusi, Giacometti or her master Germaine Richier, her work is in fact unique, as Western contemporary references are merged in her practice with pre-Columbian forms and myths, which she encountered in Brazil and in her travels through South America. In that sense, another artist she could be inspiringly related to is Brazilian sculptor Maria Martins, who was also very inspired by local myths and revisited them in her work, although Liuba's figures don't fit into the surrealistic tenets as Martins did.

Born in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1923, Liuba spent her childhood in an educated, bourgeois environment, studying literature and music. During the Second World War, a few months after the occupation of her country by the soviets, Liuba's family moved to Geneva. In Switzerland, she started sculpting under the influence of Germaine Richier, the renowned sculptor of Paris School who had also fled to Switzerland because of the war, with whom she would go on studying and working also after the end of the war, at the studios in Zurich and Paris. With Richier, Liuba learned the traditional technique of bronze sculpture that she would use in her practice, modelling an original in clay, producing a counter mold in plaster through a lost-wax process, finishing the plaster to achieve the precise effects she looked for, overseeing the casting in bronze (always in edition of six), and then personally applying the patina to achieve the dark brown or, more often, black tone she preferred. From the mid of the 1950s, Liuba's style becomes more personal, concentrating on forms that depict or suggest animals and plants, either real or fantastic. She opened a second studio in São Paulo, keeping the one in Paris, and her work begun to be recognized. In the 1960s, she took part in many important exhibitions, such as three editions of the São Paulo Biennial (1963, 1965 and 1967), the Salão Nacional de Arte

Moderna in Rio de Janeiro (1962-1963), and the Salon de la Jeune Sculpture de Paris (1964-1979), while the Museu de Arte Moderna in Rio de Janeiro organized an important solo exhibition of her work in 1965.

Considering that the decision to become a sculptor was taken in the midst of the horrors of the Second World War, it is not surprising that Liuba's works always carry a disquieting, even menacing presence. Some of her figures are suffering (as *Crying Beast*, 1965), either from physical or psychological wounds; others are on the verge of transforming, of becoming unrecognizable (*Winged Animal*, 1965) or dissolve into mere abstractions (*Three Elements*, 1967). Even when the face is reduced to a surface without expression and defining elements such as wings or mouth are stripped down to their essence, Liuba's animals, almost paradoxically, are full of pathos and feelings, revealing "an almost unbearable anguish", as Brazilian critic Maria Alice Millet wrote.

1. BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1923 in Sofia, Bulgaria, LIUBA enters the School of Fine Arts in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1943. From 1944 to 1949 she studied with the French sculptor Germaine Richier, first in Switzerland and then in Paris, where she began to live and work in 1946. In 1949, still living in Paris, she also set up a studio in São Paulo. She married Ernesto Wolf in 1958 in Brazil, and began to divide her time between the ateliers in São Paulo and Paris. From 1989 on, she also established an atelier in Switzerland. Died in São Paulo, Brazil, in 2005.

Of the many solo and collective exhibitions, she held, the following institutions stand out: Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, 1965; National Museum of Modern Art in Paris, 1967; Museum of Saint Paul de Vence in France, France, 1968; Hakone Open Air Museum in Japan, 1985; Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, 1996. She participated annually of the Salon de la Jeune Sculpture of Paris in the period between 1964 and 1979; of the National Salon of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro in 1962 and 1963; of the International Biennial of São Paulo in the years 1963, 1965, 1967 and 1973; and of several editions of the Panorama of Brazilian Current Art at the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo in the period from 1970 to 1985. Her works are part of important international public collections such as the Fond National d'Art Contemporain in Paris, the Museum of Saint Paul de Vence in France, the Kunsthalle of Nuremberg in Germany, the Hakone Open Air Museum in Japan and the Musée de la Sculpture en Plein Air de la Ville de

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Paris; and are also part of important national public collections such as the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de São Paulo, the Coleção da Bienal de São Paulo and the Museu do Artista Brasileiro in Brasília.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Galeria Marília Razuk is established in Sao Paulo and was inaugurated in 1992 with the aim of divulging, promoting and disseminating contemporary art production through the representation of national and international artists of various generations, through participation in international fairs and through exhibitions organized by invited curators. By being open to the variety of spheres of artistic creation that move its director, Galeria Marília Razuk represents both established names, essential to the correct understanding of Brazilian 20th century art, as well as emerging national and international artists.

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Three Elements, 1967. Bronze 100 x 100 x 60 cm



Crying Beasts, 1965. Bronze 45 x 33 x 27 cm



Winged animal, 1965. Bronze 100 x 130 x 100 cm



Double composition, 1998. Bronze 48 x 31 x 15 cm