



MARIA PAPA ROSTKOWSKA

FORCE OF DESTINY

15 June 2014 - 21 September 2014

MW / Muzeum Rzeźby im. Xawerego
Dunikowskiego w Królikarni

Maria Papa Rostkowska, one of the most prominent sculptors of the 20th Century, was a beautiful and independent woman with a strong personality. While still living in Poland, she was politically linked with both the Polish Democratic Party and Zegota – an organization which assisted many Jews during the German occupation. She actively participated in the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 as a messenger in the ranks of the People’s Army and, as such, received Poland’s highest military distinction, the Virtuti Militari. She was also a socialite, friend of Tadeusz Rozewicz, Marc Chagall and Joan Miro. Above all, she was an artist who created refined abstract sculptures from Carrara marble. Today her elegant, shiny pieces are part of prestigious private and public collections worldwide.

Maria Papa Rostkowska was born in Brwinow, near Warsaw on 4 July 1923. Her maiden name was Maria Baranowska. During the war she studied at the Women's College of Industrial Design named after St. Noakowski. One of her professors was the artist Wanda Telakowska. In 1943, she married Ludwik Rostkowski Jr., an activist in the Democratic Party. He and his father were members of Żegota and helped Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto. Ludwik, who died in 1950, was posthumously awarded the Righteous Among the Nations Medal. Maria was also active in assisting the Jews though she never claimed any credit for it.



In 1946, she enrolled in the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts first as a student, later working there as an Assistant and Associate Professor. After the war she actively participated in the reconstruction of the country. She worked on the artistic rehabilitation of one of the houses of Lublin's Old Town. Her paintings of the Socrealism type were exhibited in national Polish exhibitions. However, Maria spent the most oppressive years of Socrealism on a UNESCO scholarship in Paris. This city deeply impressed her. The opportunity for a second trip to Paris occurred in 1957 at the invitation of the French artist Edouard Pignon. A year later she married Gualtieri Papa di San Lazzaro – an Italian writer, art critic, gallerist and publisher of the iconic magazine « XX-e Siècle » who introduced her to the most interesting international artistic circles and she became actively involved in the artistic life of Paris.



Maria befriended and was close to leading figures of the artistic and cultural world such as Joan Miro, Marc Chagall, Serge Poliakoff, Marino Marini, Henry Moore, Hans Arp, Jean Dubuffet, César, Eugène Ionesco, Tadeusz Rozewicz, Alina Szapocznikow, Eustachy Kossakowski, Jan Cybis and Arika Madeyska.



with César, 1964



Egenore Fabbri with sculpture *Król Ubu*, 1965

Her work as a sculptor was initially in terracotta but, in the middle of the 1960's, she started making stone sculpures and this remained thereafter her preferred way of artistic expression. She was fascinated by the inner structure of the materials she used. The rougher forms of her early works were gradually replaced by refined and subtle ones with smooth shiny surfaces. She executed all her pieces in « direct carving » with her own hands from uncut pieces of marble that she kept working on until she finalized the piece. She also polished her sculpures personally.



Testa d'ariete e *Testa reale*, 1962, photo: Eustachy Kossakowski

Maria Papa Rostkowska was the first woman to be invited to participate in the Querceta (Lucca) Marble Symposium by Henraux, a leading marble extractor and producer in the Carrara region. Michelangelo, among others, used marble from the same provenance. She became permanently associated with the Carrara area at the end of the 1960s when she purchased an old chapel transformed into a house in Pietrasanta, a charming historic town which had become the center of attraction for many artists from around the world. She died in 2008.

Her monumental works are part of prestigious public collections all around Europe, namely the Henraux Foundation, the town of Pietrasanta, the Università degli Studi of Milan, the city of Paris, the city of Menton, the Palais Bourbon - seat of the French Parliament - the Nantes Museum and the National Museum of Poland in Warsaw. Her workss are also included in private collections in France, Italy, Switzerland, Japan, United States, Russia, Belgium and Poland.

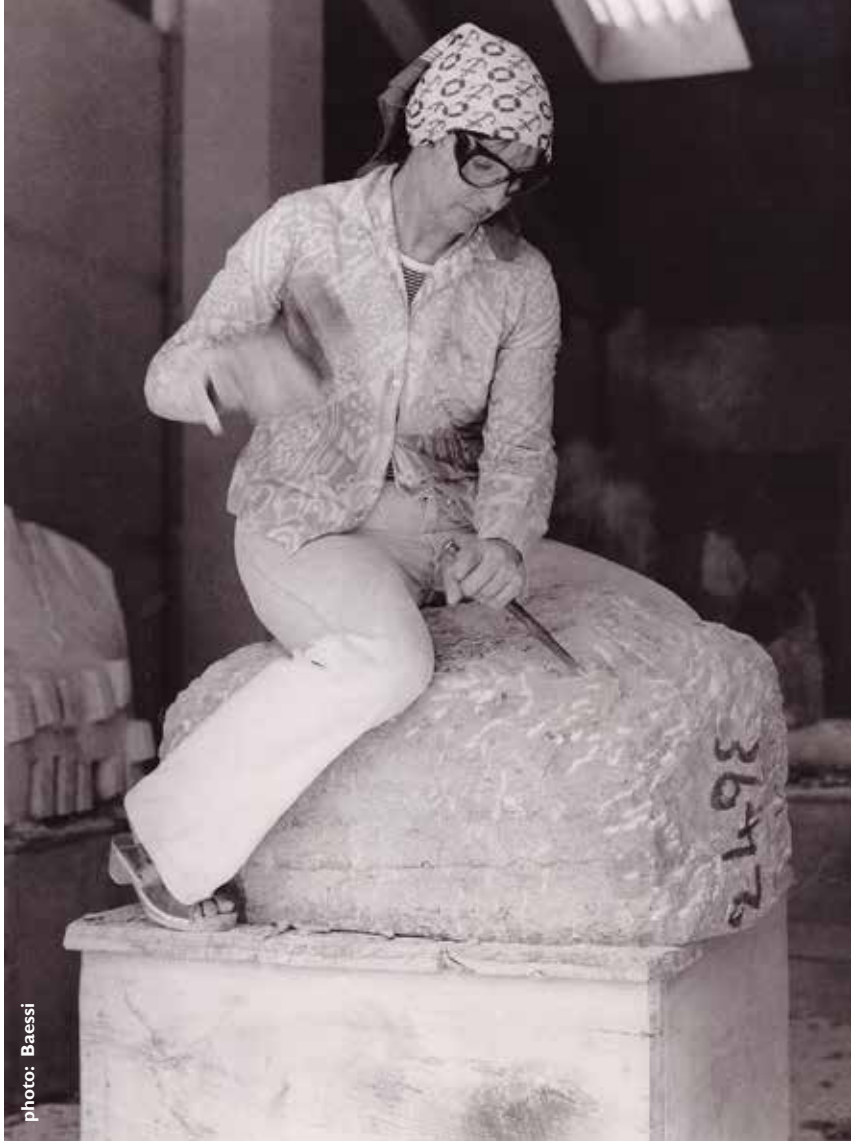
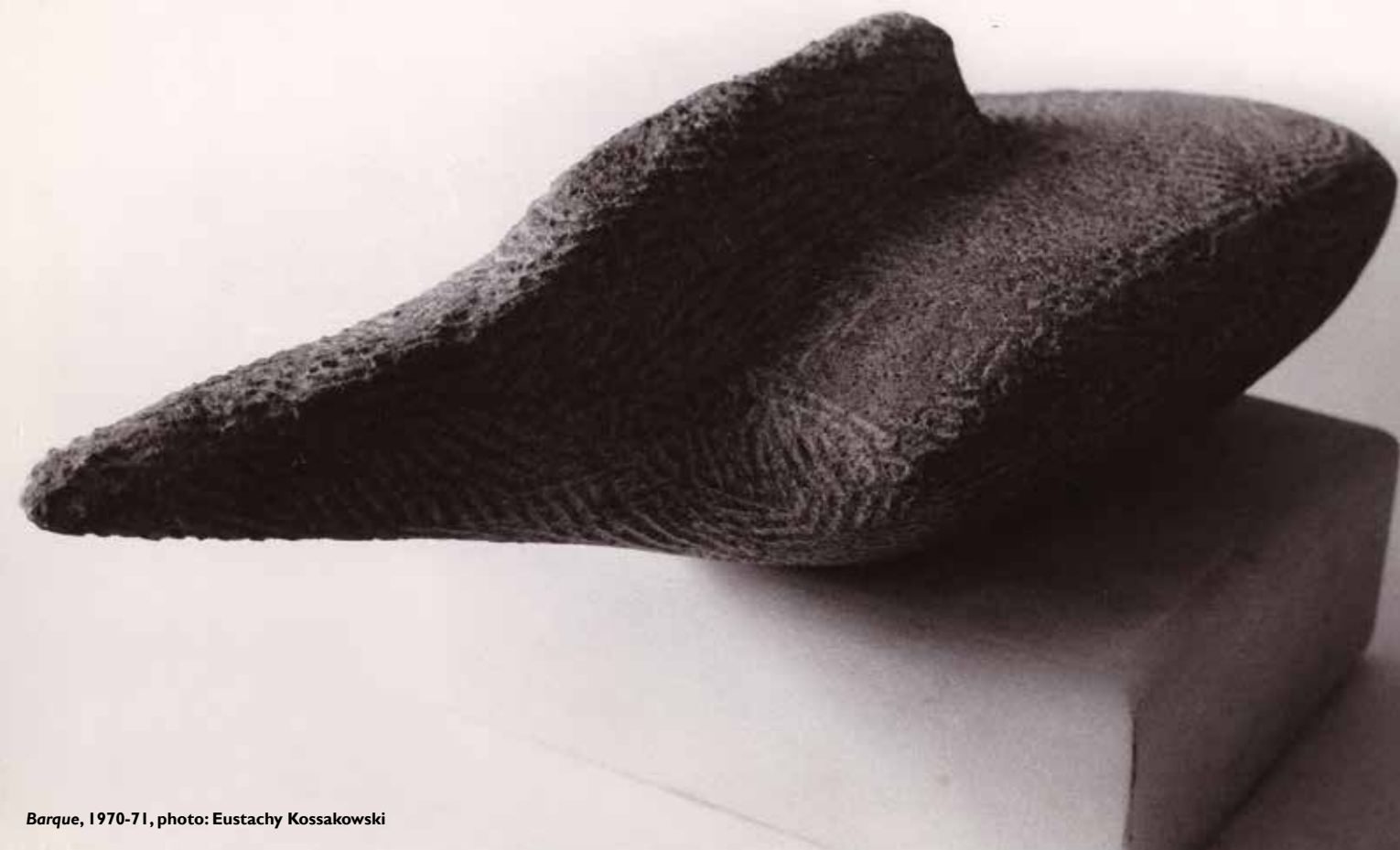


photo: Baessi



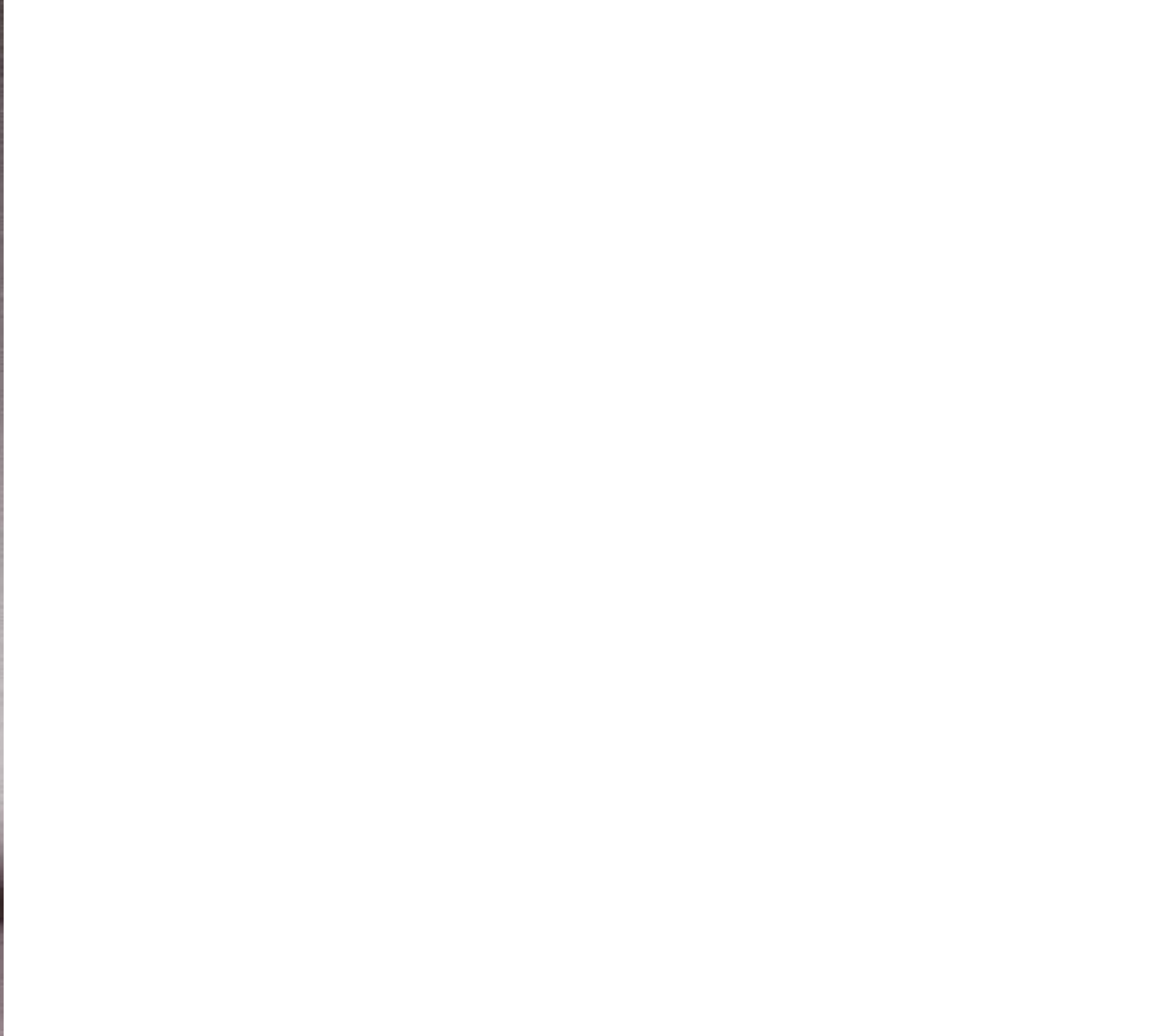
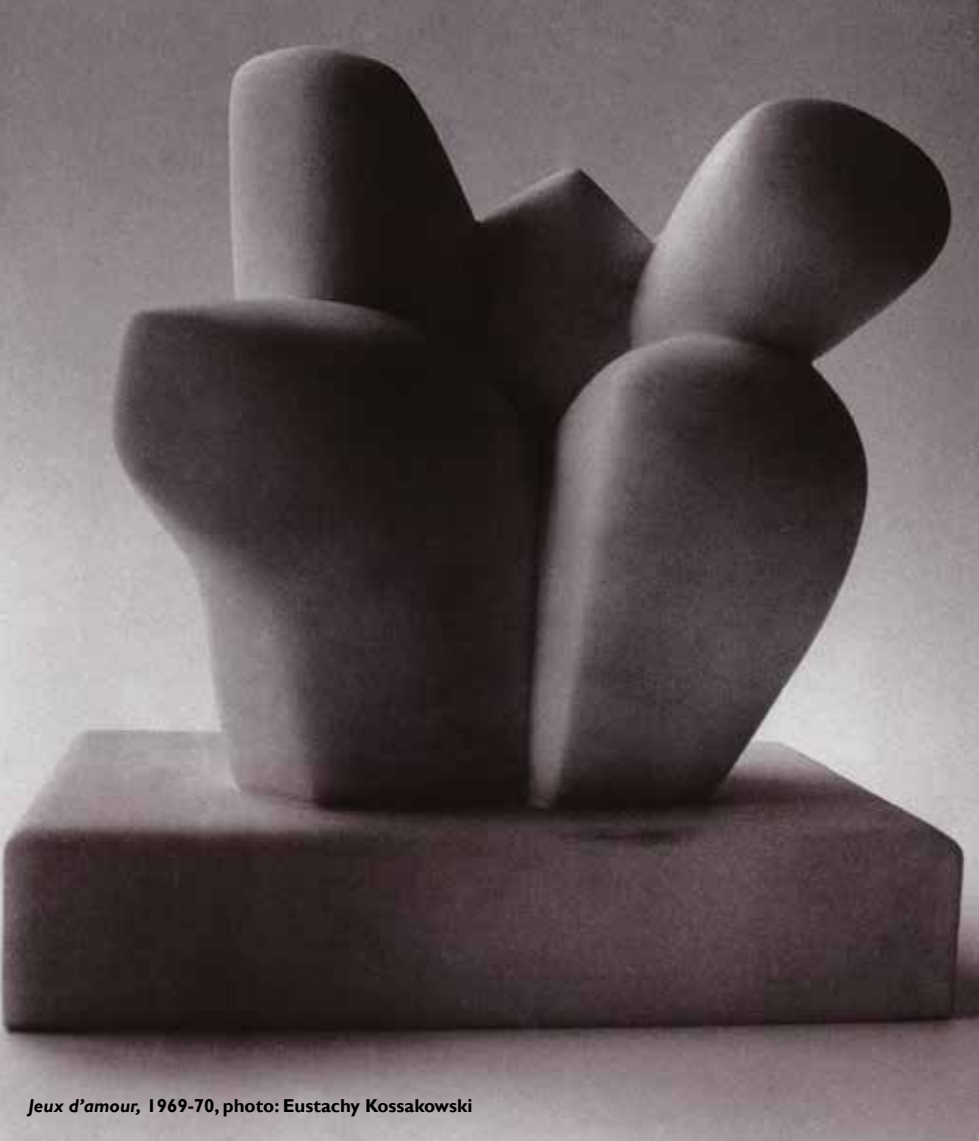
Barque, 1970-71, photo: Eustachy Kossakowski



Untitled, 1966-67, photo: Eustachy Kossakowski



Couple, 1969, photo: Eustachy Kossakowski



Jeux d'amour, 1969-70, photo: Eustachy Kossakowski