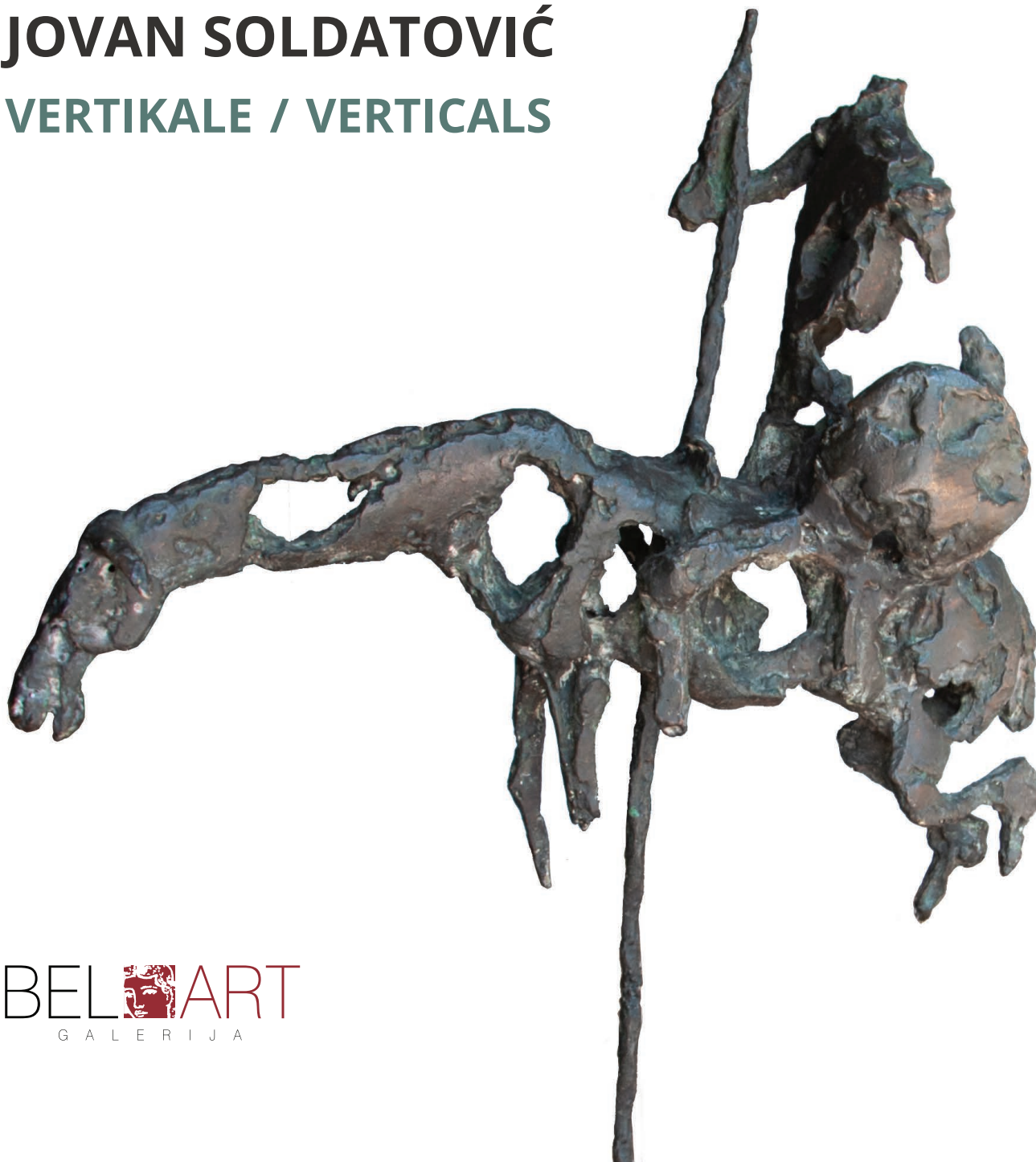


JOVAN SOLDATOVIĆ

VERTIKALE / VERTICALS





SUĐAJE / FATES, cca 1970, bronza / bronze, h 50 cm

„Ljudski sadržaji su u stvari razlog što radim skulpturu”, Jovan Soldatović

Teško je pronaći nove podatke i dati nova tumačenja o umetniku koji je svojim prisustvom i svojim stvaralaštvom, dugim više od pola veka, imao od mladosti veliki ugled, važnu poziciju u kulturi, aktivnu društvenu i profesionalnu ulogu. O njemu su pisali bezmalo svi istoričari umetnosti i kritičari njegovog vremena, mnogi pisci, novinari... Njegovo stvaralaštvo je analizirano u mnogim studijama, a posthumno je izdata jedna od najbogatijih i najsadržajnijih monografija posvećenih nekom našem umetniku.¹

Značaj Jovana Soldatovića se iz Novog Sada i Vojvodine preliwao širom Jugoslavije: izlagao je na svim prestižnim manifestacijama u zemlji i najznačajnijim vajarским smotrama u Evropi; njegove monumentalne skulpture su bile postavljene u javnim prostorima mnogih gradova – čak i u parku oko Le Korbizijeove zgrade Organizacije ujedinjenih nacija u Njujorku i u postavci Muzeja savremene umetnosti u Hirošimi gde je svojom figurom *Čoveka s mrtvim detetom* jasno iskazao osudu rata i nečovečnosti. Dobio je veliki broj nagrada. Bio je zahvalan sagovornik-erudita: davao je zanimljive i podsticajne intervjuue medijima. Ipak, svečanost povodom obeležavanja stogodišnjice od rođenja Jovana Soldatovića prilika je da se, danas, ipak, još jednom, rezimiraju rezultati tog velikog stvaralaštva i da se opravda stanovište da je mesto ovog umetnika nepromenjeno: na samom vrhu skulpture našeg posleratnog modernizma.

Iako je – kao i svaki umetnik - prolazio kroz različite faze, različita interesovanja i raspoloženja, za Jovana Soldatovića se sa sigurnošću može reći da je ostvario koherentan, prepoznatljiv i izuzetno ekspresivan, ali ne i radikalan opus. On je, naime, od najranijih vremena, na samom početku svog samostalnog rada posle završene Likovne akademije 1948. godine, proveo kod izuzetnog profesora Tome Rosandića, u njegovoj Majstorskoj radionici još četiri godine (1949-1953). Specijalizacija kod vrsnog pedagoga, poštovanje stečenog znanja, druženja i izlaganja sa prvom generacijom mladih vajara na kojima će počivati naša skulptura posle Drugog svetskog rata, veoma brzo su ukazali da je Soldatović samosvojan: krenuo je svojim putem koji se uveliko razlikovao od onoga što se u to vreme smatralo aktuelnim i što je odlikovalo celokupno njegovo pokolenje, a to je bilo istraživanje apstraktnih mogućnosti formi i sadržaja. U ranoj, hrabroj odluci da se ne podređuje vladajućim izazovima vremena, već da sledi zov svog temperamenta i senzibiliteta, Jovan Soldatović se tokom celog svog radnog veka posvetio radu na figuri – antropomorfnoj i animalističkoj.

I u tom zatvorenom krugu je radio u bronzi, drvetu, terakoti, kamenu, sa poliesterom, armaturom od gvožđa i sargijom sa gipsom. Te skulpture i reljefi su dosledno i uporno nudili nežne ili dramatične sadržaje - uvek ispunjene dubokim humanističkim osećanjem i iskrenom verom da umetnost – skulptura namenjena, pre svega, javnom prostoru – može i mora život čoveka učiniti boljim, plemenitijim. Vrednijim bivstvovanja... Uprkos smrti.

Iako to idealističko viđenje mesta umetnosti u životu modernog čoveka realnost nije potvrdila, Soldatović se nije pokolebao: do kraja svoje egzistencije verovao je u visoko postavljene ciljeve, njima se rukovodio i uporno radio, izlagao, borio se... kao Don Kihot, napisao Sava Stepanov, evocirajući tu impresivnu Soldatovićevu skulpturu,agrađenu

¹ Izd. Galerija Bel Art, u saradnji sa Galerijom likovne umetnosti - poklon zbirkom Rajka Mamuzića i Vega media doo, svi iz Novog Sada (2012) sa izuzetno značajnim uvodnim tekstovima i sećanjima Vesne Latinović, Save Stepanova, Bele Durancija, Miroslava Antića i Olivere Janković; monografija je praćena brojnim, odličnim reprodukcijama, reprintovanim ranijim kritikama i kompletnom dokumentacijom, na 368 strana velikog formata.

na Oktobarskom salonu 1970. godine - metaforu umetnikovih bitaka s vetrenjačama ali i nepokolebljive vere u svoja humana ubeđenja, o kojima piše i Pavle Vasić.

Još sredinom pedesetih godina, Mića Popović je napisao da „romantično sanjalački” impulsi Jovana Soldatovića imaju „velike emotivne potencijale” koje je on stavio u funkciju vitalizma, pokreta, ovladavanja prostorom, razigranosti mase i ritma. Osećanje za siluetu skulpture i promišljen odnos punih formi i praznih prostora između njih ostvaruje žive, dinamično razigrane arabeske u kojima nema slučajnosti i koje su istovremeno prozirne, lake ali i snažne, ubedljive. I istovremeno lirske, što je odlika vojvođanskog mentaliteta, po rečima Save Stepanova. Na pojedinim delima Soldatović ostavlja jaku, gotovo grubu, ekspresivnu i dramatičnu fakturu, dok je kod drugih epiderm sveden, pojednostavljen – u blagom tonu i mirnom raspoloženju. Sve te različite odlike umetnikovih skulptura Lazar Trifunović je s pravom nazvao „egzistencijalnim ekspresionizmom” čime se Soldatović oko 1970. godine približio tada aktuelnom likovnom diskursu vremena, ne napuštajući pri tom svoju tematiku, i svoje ubedljivo figurativno opredeljenje. To se odnosi i na eksperimentalan rad na obojenim reljefima početkom osamdesetih godina. Istina, pojedine dinamične transformacije ljudske ili životinjske morfologije dolaze do granice apstrakcije, ali iza toga uvek stoji amblematska stilizacija forme kao metafora ljubavi, mira i porodične idile, ili bitke između dobra i zla uz uzaludnu veru da – dobro pobeđuje.

Počev od *Keruše*, kojom je ranih pedesetih godina evocirao Jesenjinovu poemu i odmah stekao prepoznatljivost i poštovanje, preko gromadnih glava - bilo ih je 72! - raspoređenih 1972. godine uz mistično osvetljenje lojanicama i čitanje angažovanih pesama na Petrovaradinskoj tvrđavi, gde je više od pola veka vredno vajao u svom ateljeu, i preko rada na spomen-obeležju Sremskog fronta s mnogo nedoumica i nesporazuma, pa sve do instalacija skulptura po novosadskim mostovima, uništenih NATO bombardovanjem 1999, umetnik evocira tragediju čovečanstva, opominjući na krhost smiraja i nestalnost sreće: *Dode li rat odoše ljudi*, naziv je jednog Soldatovićevog ciklusa. Sebe je smatrao angažovanim umetnikom – s razlogom. O tome svedoče i njegovi impresivni antiratni spomenici u Čurugu, Žablju, na levoj novosadskoj obali Dunava gde su pod led bacane nevine žrtve zlodela mađarskih fašista...

Umro je u jesen 2005, tokom trajanja izložbe *Aspekti savremene skulpture u Vojvodini* u novosadskom Muzeju savremene umetnosti, kada su bile izložene i njegove *Mrtve ptice*, *Ubijen jelen* i *Kentaur* - simboli odlazaka, transformacija ali i neodustajanja.

Jovan Soldatović ostaje prepoznatljiv po svojoj „gotskoj vertikali”, po rečima Radeta Predića. O toj karakterističnoj vizuri njegovih skulptura pišu gotovo svi kritičari, upravo ga vezujući za sindrom vojvođanske horizontale i dalekih perspektivnih tačaka, njene ravnice kojoj umetnik u potpunosti pripada, nudeći joj svoj beleg – svoj dijalog pitomog mira i razumevanja. Brojni analitički napisi o Soldatovićevoj skulpturi dotiču pitanje sličnosti i razlike sa Albertom Đakometijem. Uglavnom su svi saglasni s činjenicom da se kod velikog italijansko-švajcarskog vajara, koji je započeo svoju karijeru bliskom saradnjom sa francuskim nadrealistima, prepoznaju njegove nihilističke misli o individualnoj nesreći i otuđenju, o nemogućnosti komunikacije s okolinom, usamljenost i egzistencijalna nemoć. Kod Soldatovića - naprotiv - čitamo opštehumanističke ciljeve, želju da se kroz tišinu, ljudske dodire i porodična srastanja prevaziđu zebnja i negativni porivi, i da život otpočne čak i na mestima najstrašnijih tragedija gde je kao sasvim mlad čovek bio svedok.



PORODICA / FAMILY, cca 1980, bronza / bronze, h 46 cm



PORODICA / FAMILY, cca 1980, bronza / bronze, h 46 cm

„It's the human dimension that keeps me sculpting”, Jovan Soldatović

It is hard to find new insights or something fresh to say about this artist whose creativity spanned over fifty years. Besides his professional status and active role in culture, even as a young man he enjoyed a distinguished reputation. Writers, the press and almost all the art historians and critics of his time have written about him. His work has been the subject of numerous studies, including one of the most substantial and informative books dealing with a local artist, published after his death.

Jovan Soldatović's renown preceded him from Novi Sad and Vojvodina throughout the former Yugoslavia. His works were exhibited on all major occasions at home and at prestigious art events abroad. His monumental sculptures are to be found in the public areas of many cities, including the park of the Le Corbusier building that houses the UN Headquarters in New York and the Hiroshima Museum of Contemporary Art, where his *Man Holding a Dead Child* is a patent condemnation of the inhumanity of war. He was the winner of many awards, a gripping and inspiring interviewee to the media, a valued and erudite conversationalist. The hundred-year commemoration of his birth seems an appropriate moment to sum up the results of his immense creativity and to confirm that his place as an artist remains unchanged, i.e., at the very top of post-war modernist sculpture in the former Yugoslavia.

Although like any artist he experienced various phases, interest and moods, we can safely say that Jovan Soldatović's work formed a coherent, recognizable and expressive opus, if not a radical one. When in 1948 he left the Fine Arts Academy to work independently, he spent another four years from 1949 to 1953 in the master workshop of Professor Toma Rosandić. Specialisation of this kind under the tutelage of an exceptional teacher, respect for the knowledge he acquired, his friendship and exhibitions with the first cohort of young sculptors to emerge from World War II, quickly showed that Soldatović would go his own way, one that diverged widely from what was current at the time and characterized his entire generation: the abstract potential of form and content. In an early, courageous decision not to knuckle under the ruling challenges of the time but to follow the call of his own temperament and sensibility, Soldatović devoted his entire life to figurative art – anthropomorphic and animal.

Within this closed circle, he worked in bronze, wood, terracotta, stone, with polyester, iron armature, burlap-and- plaster. These sculptures and reliefs were consistent in both their tenderness or drama, always filled with a profound humanity and the unwavering belief that art - sculptures mainly intended for open spaces – could and must make life better, more sublime, and in spite of dying, worth living.

Even if reality did not sustain this idealistic vision of art in the life of modern man, Soldatović was not to be dissuaded: to the very end he believed in the high goals he set and was guided by them. His constant exhibitions were part of the struggle to achieve them, like Don Quixote, as Sava Stepanov was to write, evoking the impressive sculpture awarded at the October Salon of 1970 – a metaphor for the artist's battles with windmills and his unshakeable faith in human

¹ Ed. Bel Art Gallery together with the Fine Arts Gallery (Rajko Mamuzić Gift Collection) and Vega Media, all from Novi Sad (2012), with particularly interesting introductions and memoirs by Vesna Latinović, Sava Stepanov, Béla Duránci, Miroslav Antić and Olivera Janković. This large dimension book of 368 pages contains excellent reproductions along with reprints of early reviews and is excellently documented.

convictions, of which Pavle Vasić has also written.

In the mid-1950s, Mića Popović wrote that Soldatović's „romantic dreamer” side had „great emotional potential”, which he used to portray vitality, movement, mastery of space, the interplay of mass and rhythm. Feeling for the silhouette of the sculpture and the careful relationship of full forms to the empty spaces between them gave birth to lively, dynamic, playful arabesques that owed nothing to chance. At the same time they were transparent, light but strong, convincing yet lyrical, characteristic of the Vojvodina mentality, as Sava Stepanov remarked. Some works evince a powerful, almost rough, expressive and dramatic facture, while others are smoother, simplified, in gentler tones and serene mood. Lazar Trifunović calls these various features „existential expressionism” and around 1970, they brought Soldatović closer to the artistic discourse of the time, though he still adhered to his themes and avowed preference for figurative art. This especially refers to experiments on coloured reliefs from the early 1980s. True, certain dynamic transformations of human or animal morphology border on the abstract, but behind this there is always an emblematic stylization of form as a metaphor for love, peace and the family idyll, or the struggle between good and evil in the vain belief that good will triumph.

Beginning with *The Bitches* in the early 1950s, an evocation of Yesenin's poem immediately greeted with recognition and respect, in 1972 came massive heads - all 72 of them arranged in the mystic light of tallow candles and accompanied by a poetry reading at Petrovaradin Fortress where for over fifty years he had a studio - then work on a monument to the Syrmian Front which was plagued by problems and misunderstandings, to the installation of sculptures on the bridges of Novi Sad destroyed by NATO bombing in 1999, the artist evoked the tragedy of mankind, warning against the fragility of peace and the impermanence of happiness: *War comes, men go*, is a Soldatović cycle. He saw himself as an artist committed to a cause, and with reason. In testimony to this are his imposing anti-war monuments at Čurug in Žabalj and on the left bank of the Danube at Novi Sad, where in January 1942, thousands of victims of Hungarian fascism were pushed under the ice to drown.

He died in the autumn of 2005 when the Novi Sad Museum of Contemporary Art was showing *Aspects of Contemporary Sculpture in Vojvodina*, an exhibition that included his *Dead Birds*, *Killed Stag* and *Centaur* – symbols of leaving, of transformation, but also of refusal to give up.

Jovan Soldatović will remain recognizable for what Rade Predić calls his „Gothic vertical”. Almost all critics refer to this particular characteristic, linking it to Vojvodina's broad horizons and immense distances of perspective, the plains to which the artist so thoroughly belonged, offering them his distinguishing mark, his dialogue of kindly, homely peace and understanding. Many analytical treatments of Soldatović touch on similarities to the works of Alberto Giacometti. In general, however, they agree that the great Italian-Swiss sculptor, who began his career in close collaboration with the French surrealists, is recognizable for his nihilistic thinking on individual misery and alienation, loneliness, existential helplessness and the impossibility of communicating with those around us. In Soldatović, on the contrary, we see humanistic ambitions for all mankind and a desire that through silence, reaching out to one another and families drawing together, anxiety and negative impulses will be overcome and life begin again even on the site of unspeakable tragedy, to which as a young man he bore living witness.



RITERI / KNIGHTS, cca 1980, bronza / bronze, h 98 cm

Jovan Soldatović

(Čerević, 1920 - Novi Sad, 2005)

Nakon završene škole rezervnih oficira u Mariboru, godine 1940. upisao se na Tehnički fakultet, odsek za arhitekturu, u Beogradu, gde su mu profesori Nikola Dobrović, Milan Zloković, i mnogi drugi. Studije je prekinuo zbog rata, i vratio se u Novi Sad, gde je sarađivao sa NOP-om, a u NOB-i je aktivno učestvovao od 1943. godine. Na veliku Jugoslovensku umetničku scenu stupio je tokom ranih pedesetih godina proteklog veka. Još kao svršeni student akademije likovnih umetnosti (1949) u Beogradu, te kao polaznik čuvene Majstorske radionice Tome Rosandića, pokazao je ranu stvaralačku zrelost. Rosandić je govorio da mu je upravo Soldatović najbolji učenik.

Prvu samostalnu izložbu priredio je u Galeriji Grafičkog kolektiva u Beogradu 1952. godine. U Novi

Sad se vratio 1953. godine, gde je po pozivu učestvovao u osnivanju vajarskog odseka Više pedagoške škole, u kojoj je i prvi profesor vajarstva. Učestvovao je u osnivanju prvih ateljea na Petrovaradinskoj tvrđavi. Kao stipendista fonda „Moša Pijade”, 1965. godine, proveo je dva meseca u Londonu i Parizu.

Kontinuirani razvoj Soldatovićeve skulpture podrazumevao je konstantno bavljenje figuracijskom skulpturom. Posvećen čoveku i njegovoj egzistenciji Soldatović se bavio ljudskom figurom nastojeći da ostvari opus lirsko-ekspresionističkog stava, izraz „u slavu čoveka”. Princip vertikale, tako suprotstavljene beskrajnoj horizontali vojvođanske ravnice, efektno je došao do izražaja u nekolicini monumentalnih spomeničkih skulptura. U tim ostvarenjima



Soldatović izbegava evokacijsku priču te svedenom antropomorfnom formom simbolizuje prkosan, a kako je sam govorio i „sremački stav” o pobedi života nad svim silama zla.

Soldatović je tokom svog celokupnog opusa, koji je trajao više od pola veka, kao izrazito socijalno svestan i angažovan umetnik, a sa svojim fragilnim, lirskim ekspresionizmom, nastojao da sačuva dignitet oblikovane forme, ali i njenih suptilnih plastičkih vrednosti, protestujući svojim skulpturama protiv zla – spomenici posvećeni žrtvama i učesnicima NOB-a, skulpturom Figura sa mrtvim detetom (1961) posvećenoj žrtvama atomske kataklizme u Hirošimi, izložbom na otvorenom prostoru Petrovaradinske tvrđave priređene povodom Godine prava čoveka UN

(1968); performansom Dode li rat, odoše ljudi (1972), postavljanjem krhkih gipsanih ljudskih figura iz ateljea na ruševine mosta nakon bombardovanja 1999. godine, itd. U svakom slučaju, izdužene figure, ljudske i animalističke, ovaj umetnik je pretvorio u svoj „zaštitni znak”, u prepoznatljiv i samosvojan iskaz u ukupnoj istoriji jugoslovenske, srpske i vojvođanske skulpture i umetnosti.

Do penzionisanja je bio vanredni profesor Akademije umetnosti u Novom Sadu. Dobitnik je brojnih nagrada u zemlji i inostranstvu. Njegovi radovi nalaze se u brojnim javnim i privatnim kolekcijama u zemlji i svetu.

Jovan Soldatović

(Čerević, 1920 - Novi Sad, 2005)

After graduating from the Reserve officers' school in Maribor, in 1940, he started his studies at the Technical Faculty, Department of Architecture, in Belgrade, where his professors are Nikola Dobrović, Milan Zloković, and many others. He interrupted his studies due to the war, and returned to Novi Sad, where he cooperated with the National Liberation Movement, and he actively participated in the National Liberation War since 1943. He entered the great Yugoslav art scene during the early fifties of the previous century. Still as a graduate student of the Academy of Fine Arts (1949) in Belgrade, and as a participant of the famous Master Workshop of Toma Rosandić, he showed the early creative maturity. Rosandić said that Soldatović was his best student.

He organized his first solo exhibition in the Gallery of the Graphic Collective in Belgrade in 1952. He returned to Novi Sad in 1953, where he participated in the founding of the sculpture department of the Higher Pedagogical School, where he was also the first professor of sculpture. He participated in the founding of the first art studios at the Petrovaradin Fortress. As a scholarship holder of the „Mosha Pijade” fund, in 1965, he spent two months in London and Paris.

The continual development of Soldatović's sculpture meant constantly dealing with the figuration of sculpture. Dedicated to the man and his existence, Soldatović dealt with human figure, trying to accomplish the opus of lyrical-expressionist attitude, the expression „for the glory of man”. The principle of the



vertical, as effectively opposed to the infinite horizontal line of the Vojvodina plain, was effectively expressed in several monumental sculptures. In these works, Soldatović avoids an evocative story and, in a reduced anthropomorphic form, symbolizes defiance, and as he himself said, the „Srem attitude” about the victory of life over all the forces of evil.

During his entire work, which lasted more than half a century, Soldatović, as a highly socially conscious and engaged artist, with his fragile, lyrical expressionism, tried to preserve the dignity of the shaped form, but also its subtle plastic values, protesting with his sculptures against evil - - monuments dedicated to the victims and participants of the National Liberation War, the sculpture *Figures with a Dead Child* (1961) dedicated to the victims

of the atomic cataclysm in Hiroshima, an open-air exhibition at the Petrovaradin Fortress on the occasion of the UN Human Rights Year (1968); the exhibition-performance *If War Comes, People Will Leave* (1972), by placing fragile plaster human figures from the studio on the ruins of the bridge after the bombing in 1999, etc. In any case, this artist turned elongated figures, human and animalistic, into his „trademark”, into a recognizable and unique expression in the overall history of Yugoslav, Serbian and Vojvodinian sculpture and art.

Until his retirement, he was an associate professor at the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad. He has won numerous awards at home and abroad. His works are in numerous public and private collections in the country and the world.

Na naslovnoj strani: DON KIHOT / DON QUIXOTE, cca 1990, bronza / bronze, h 50 cm

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