

**IN HER HANDS
WOMEN SCULPTORS OF SURREALISM**

21 FEBRUARY TO 1 JUNE 2025

The Bucerius Kunst Forum presents *In Her Hands. Women Sculptors of Surrealism*, highlighting the rediscovery of three extraordinary 20th century artists: Sonja Ferlov Mancoba, Maria Martins and Isabelle Waldberg. All three sculptors characterised Surrealism between 1930 and 1960 with different techniques. In the show now planned in Hamburg, sculptures by these three artists will be juxtaposed for the first time and presented in an expansive way.

The Bucerius Kunst Forum is showing three female positions in Surrealist sculpture, thus making a contribution to the reinterpretation of art history, which is supposedly dominated purely by male artists. The show refers to the exhibitions *Lee Miller* and *Ingenious Women* from 2023, which also presented forgotten but important female protagonists of art. Positions that were invisible for a long time. The three female artists exhibited in *In Her Hands* were part of the international art scene from Paris and Copenhagen to New York and Rio de Janeiro and developed the surrealist visual language innovatively, unconventionally and resolutely.

The characteristic organic formal language of the Danish artist Sonja Ferlov Mancoba (1911-1984) was strongly influenced by non-European art, but also by the CoBrA group of artists. She intuitively created semi-abstract creatures, warrior figures and masks in clay and plaster, later also in bronze. The Brazilian sculptor Maria Martins (1894-1973) interwove the myths of Amazonia with the formal language of modernism in her organic, figurative objects. Isabelle Waldberg's (1911-1990) multifaceted oeuvre ranges from filigree linear wooden structures to abstract bronze sculptures and collages. The three sculptors were part of the international avant-garde in Paris before the Second World War; Martins and Waldberg were also central figures in New York during the war years. They belonged to the circle around Marcel Duchamp, Alberto Giacometti, Piet Mondrian and Peggy Guggenheim.

The exhibition design is inspired by the way in which the artists themselves staged their works during their lifetime. The windows are not covered with walls so that the exhibition space is flooded with daylight. It is the first time that this special feature is being explored in the new Bucerius Kunst Forum building, which opened in 2020. Visitors can thus experience a completely new impression of the space. In addition, the entire tour is designed without walls, with curtains acting as room dividers - an element that was used in surrealist exhibitions. The open spaces tell and emphasise the artistic language and dialogue of the sculptures. For the first time, the exhibition places the artistic concerns and the often unconventional formal language of the three sculptors in relation to each other. At the same time, it focuses on the material, which was of great importance to all three in the creative process. Their intensive, sensual and intellectual exploration of the materials is reflected in the design of the lines, volumes, spaces and expressive gestures of their objects. The sculptural ensembles

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allow viewers to immerse themselves directly in the visual worlds of the artists, in which surprising connections to the aesthetics of contemporary forms in pop culture, design and film can be discovered.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue published by Hirmer Verlag. The authors Katharina Neuburger and Renate Wiehager are also the curators of the exhibition.

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