

Untitled

About the Sculpture of Gabriella Fekete

The art of Gabriella Fekete – a sculptor living since 1980 in Duisburg – is akin to the ambitions of all artists that form a connection between past, present and future, plastically rephrasing ancient subject matters. Seeking myths is not typical of the artist, her works do have a mythical atmosphere nevertheless. The recognition of semantic abundance of basic natural forms lead her to a road whose stations are indicated by her sculptures created with consequent simplifications of forms, shaped sensuously.

Her works are objective relics of (ancient) elements recalling the mysterious, lost world of virgin Nature, archaic past and unknown future, forms rich in fantasy, containing emotional and affective subject matters. By virtue of their pure plastic value, they are monumental, suggesting magic force, the creator's messages sent in transubstantiated into natural forms to our age.

Gabriella Fekete was born in Budapest in 1944. First she familiarized herself with the fundamentals of art at a Düsseldorf private school, then she went to Paris, and finally she became a pupil of *Sackenheim, Sieler, Kriecke, Irmin Kamp* at the Graphic, later the Sculptural Department of State Academy of Art. She did her school-leaving exam in Hungary.

Her early works show signs of *Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Ernst Barlach* and *Gerhard Marcks's* influence (*Large Body, 1971, Striving to Rise, 1971*)

After finishing master school, she worked as a grant holder in Paris and Düsseldorf, and after getting rid of external intellectual influences, she did meditative, mature works.

She made her first considerable sculptures between 1971 and 1978. Her deeply humane and ethical works reflect her opinion on human environment pregnant with societal, political and social problems. Connection of mass and personality, loss of individual, alienation, tragic fates, mechanical repetition in everyday life, standardized man, passing, death constitute the fields of her investigation.

Her forms are blocky human figures without faces and arms, broken ones in sitting, standing or lying position. (*Chessmen, 1973-74; Machine, 1974; We, 1975; Anonymous Ones, 1977*), dressed fragments of limbs (*Wound, 1975-76*), human bodies with their physical, sexual or societal vulnerability. Their endless reproducibility induces fear, causes consternation, radiates a tragic atmosphere.

The real content of her sculptures gradually turns into an abstract message, her increasingly closer forms become cultic objects of sacral meaning recalling the ancient past, reminiscent of steles, sarcophagi (*Untitled, 1978*). The sepulchral character is an important feature of these works.

In the period until the beginning of the 1980s, the tendency of reducing forms got stronger and stronger. The means of artistic expression often applied earlier – multiplication of forms, connection of gauze, iron band and other materials to plastic art, monochrome, vivid painting – were omitted, the artist concentrated on pure plastic solutions. One of the most outstanding results of this period, which carries the germs of further development, is the 13-part sculptural composition of concrete made for the school in Salzmänn Street, Duisburg. Every single element of the monumental work was made by plastic reduction of forms of the ABC letters, at the same time recalling forms of (virgin) Nature that are fundamentally different from the geometric surroundings both optically and in their spirit. The sculptures also function as elements of playgrounds: you can sit, stand on or climb them, play hide-and-seek under them. In the course of their use, the rigid material surroundings come to organic life. And in the absence of host of children, they recall spiritual and material surroundings of a mysterious world.

Gabriella Fekete's further creative activity was determined by seeking the primary form. The sculptures of this period were simplified to prismatic, spherical, cylindrical, oval or conical primary signs. The colourful or white, smooth forms were succeeded by sculptures whose surface is rough, coarse, monochrome but rich in tones. It was a new feature that similarly to the forms, the surfaces also became aesthetic qualities (seven-part sculptural compositions in court of the Landfermann Grammar School in Duisburg, 1979; *Untitled*, plaster sculptures between 1982 and 1985)

From the middle of the 80s, compositions of several parts prevailed in her art again, but besides positive forms print-like, smooth formations – negative or anti-plastic works as counterpoles of plastic ones – appeared as particular elements of sculptures. (See her works created at the Győr Symposium.) The commemorative nature was stressed more powerfully still, the abstract forms and the transposed figures make the impression of memories of destroyed or foreign civilizations. The sign shrinks to a trace, radiating mythical disposition, the atmosphere of recollection, peace and solemnity.

The multilayered character reflecting the process of implementation reveals the idea of transitoriness plastically shaped, the aesthetic tension between the form and surface that of inner disposition, force and peace of nature at the same time.

Gabriella Fekete's works have an elementary effect like elementary formations of nature. They are individualized primary forms, sensitive, pure plastic works simplified to the utmost, and of their own excessive shades; unceasing embodiments of eternal contrast of life and death, birth and evanescence. And similarly to primary forms, they demonstrate even untitled the never-ending revival of nature, unrestricted freedom of creative subjectivism and representation.

Júlia N. Mészáros

Published by Új Művészet (New Art Magazin), Budapest, 1990/2.