

MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

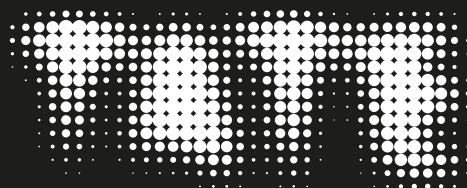
20 SEP 2022 – 16 APR 2023

LARGE PRINT GUIDE



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and quarantined.



CONTENTS

Concourse.....	5
Room 1	9
Room 2	17
Room 3	51
Room 4.....	61
Room 5.....	69



CONCOURSE

Concourse

MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

Curated by Juliet Bingham, Curator, International Art
and Dina Akhmadeeva, Beatriz Cifuentes Feliciano,
Assistant Curators, International Art, Tate Modern

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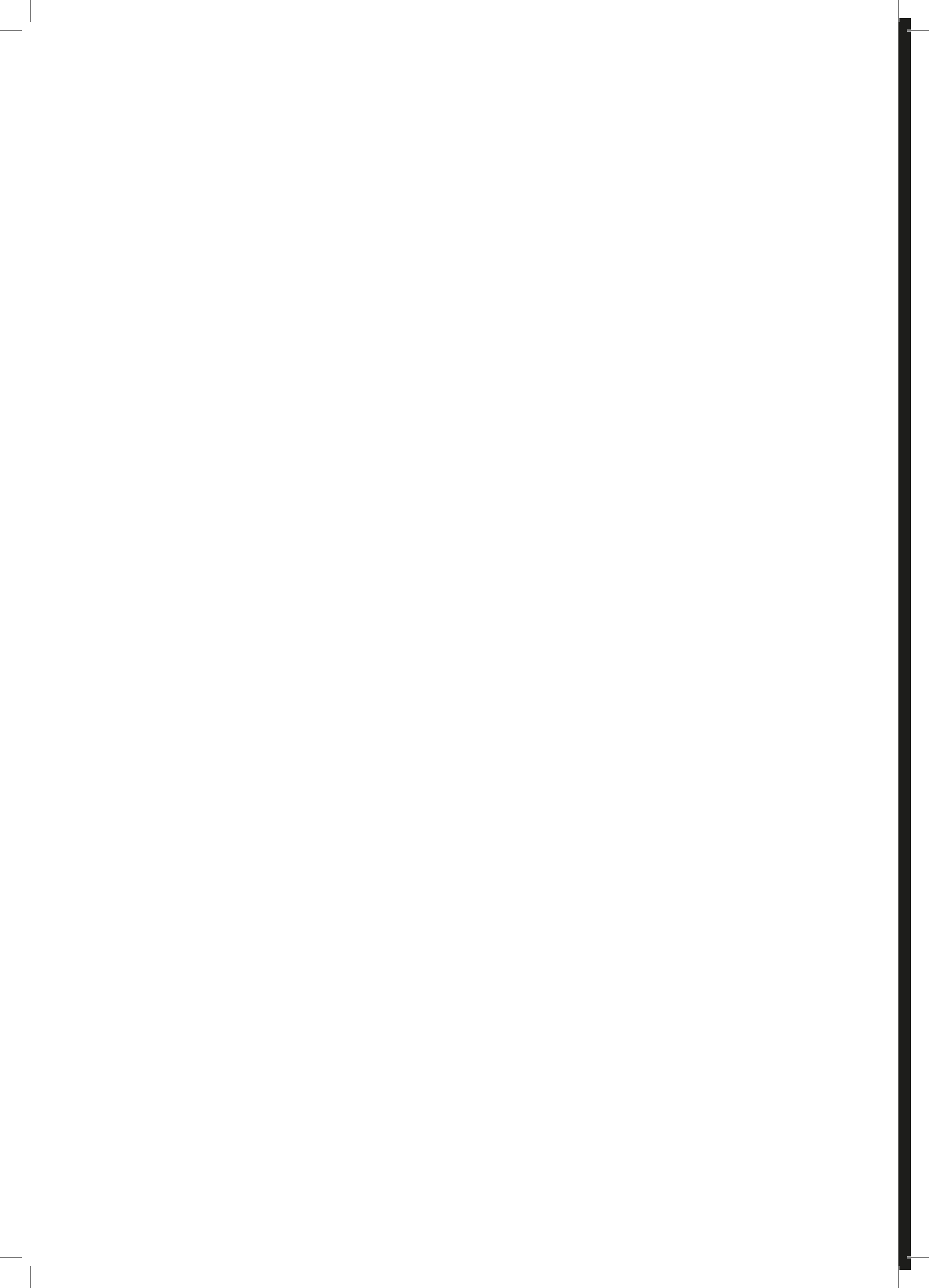
And those who wish to remain anonymous

With additional support from Tate Americas Foundation,
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This exhibition has been made possible by the provision
of insurance through the Government Indemnity Scheme.

Tate would like to thank HM Government for providing Government Indemnity and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England for arranging the indemnity.

The exhibition is accompanied by a new catalogue from Tate Publishing, edited by Juliet Bingham and curator and art historian Gabriela Garlatyová.



ROOM 1

Clockwise

MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ

A tiny void full of a tiny infinite universe.

Maria Bartuszová, early 1980s

Maria Bartuszová (1936–1996) dedicated her art to exploring relationships between people, nature, matter and form. Born in Prague, she spent most of her career in the central European Slovak city of Košice, near the borders of Hungary and Ukraine. She defined the world of sculpture on her own terms, using innovative methods in plaster casting. From raindrops and eggs to the human body, Bartuszová took inspiration from organic forms and cycles in the natural world. She worked inventively and quickly, using the fleeting and liquid process of casting to create simultaneously solid and delicate artworks.

This exhibition spans thirty years of Bartuszová's practice from the early 1960s, when she began her experimentation with casting, to the late 1980s. Bartuszová's abstract white plaster sculptures retain the presence of her body. Her touch left traces, whether pressed by hand, poured and formed

by gravity or under water, or shaped by her breath using her radical technique of casting plaster with inflated balloons.

Bartuszová drew on her personal experience and ideas around spirituality, interconnectedness between people and nature, and the cycles of the seasons. She created a new artistic and sculptural vocabulary focusing on the continuous transformation of forms.

Image credit:

**Maria Bartuszová in her studio with sculptures,
Košice, Slovakia**

1987

© The Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice

Artist's Studio

1975, printed 2022

Photograph, PVC-free vinyl

© Gabriel Kladek

Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice
X79917

Untitled (Drop)

1963–4

Plaster

Bartuszová created drop-like shapes to capture a fleeting moment in solid and tactile form – as if suspending a droplet of rain. This plaster sculpture shows her interest in expressing natural processes as solid shapes. It highlights the tension between the suspended form and the forces of gravity, which could make it fall at any moment.

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Edward and
Agnès Lee Acquisition Fund 2016

T14516

Untitled

1973–5

Plaster

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice

X78332

Endless Egg

1986

Plaster

Bartuszová created this egg-shaped form by stretching the volumes in combination with gravistimulation and pneumatic casting. It is one of a series that she referred to as 'endless eggs'. It is created from individual shells, which she layered to build an arch shape with a hollow interior. The endless eggs are based on the goddess Venus and symbolise fertility and motherhood. Bartuszová wrote: 'I am preparing objects in which I would use the technology and principles of layering and growing, cracking of moulds on the female torso – something like a contemporary Madonna, or the Venus of Willendorf.'

Private collection

X78336

Untitled

1984-6

Plaster

Private collection

X78325

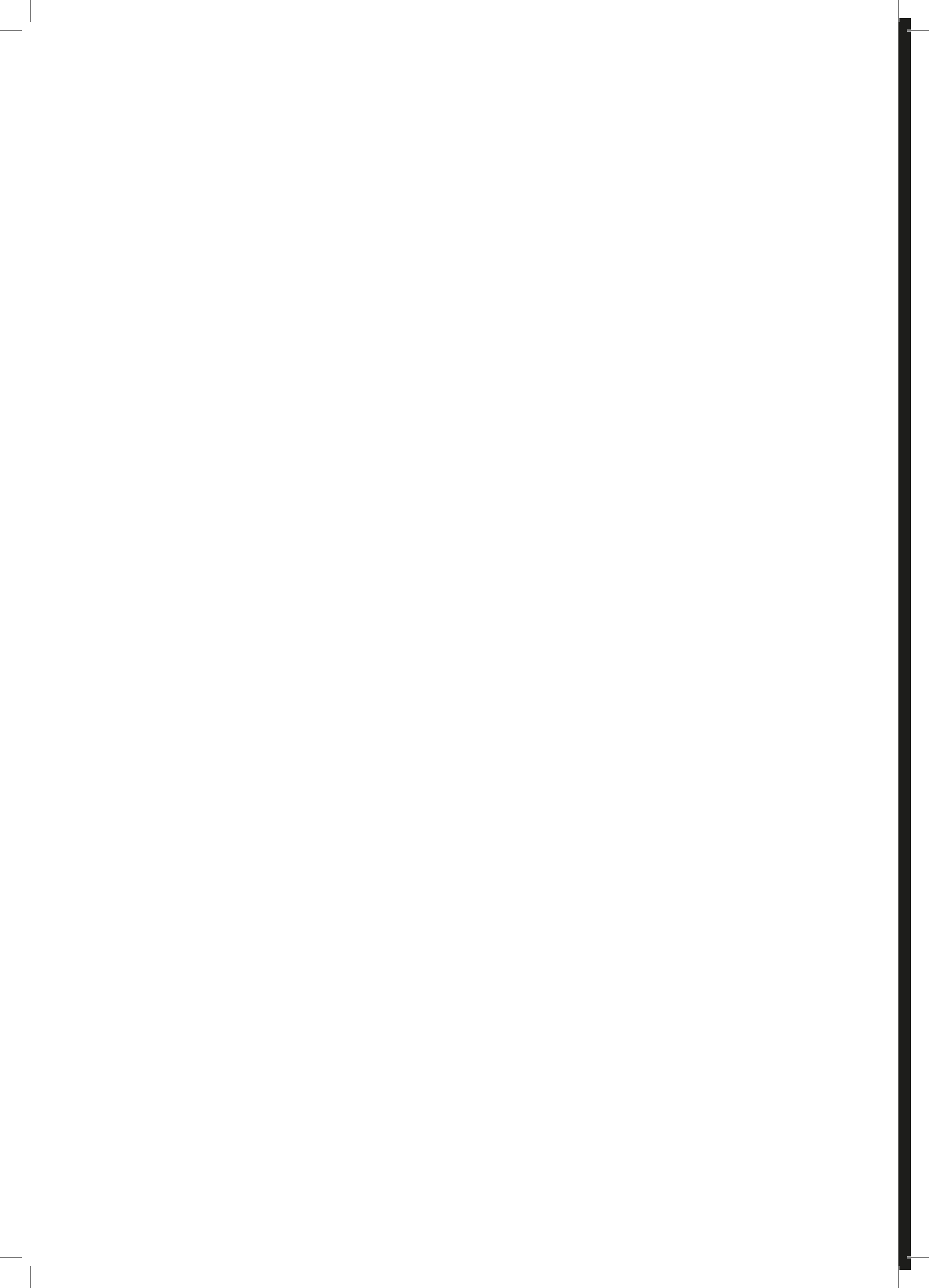
TACTILE MAKING

Maybe because I had so little time besides working on commissions and childcare, maybe because of that I had the idea, while playing with inflatable balls, to blow liquid plaster into a balloon.

Maria Bartuszová, after 1985

In the 1960s and 1970s, Bartuszová repurposed small rubber balloons and condoms to cast her plaster sculptures. She used the gravitational pull on the weight of poured plaster to shape the final pieces, often submerging the forms in water while working. She called this system 'gravistimulated shaping'. The early sculptures made using this method evoke natural and living forms, such as dew drops and wheat grains.

In the 1980s, Bartuszová arrived at a new practice of plaster shaping, which she termed 'pneumatic casting'. She blew air into balloons – at times using large meteorological balloons – and poured plaster over their surface. She combined the effects of gravity, air pressure and touch during the casting process. This allowed her to create empty, negative volumes and ever more fragile, hollow shapes such as shells and eggs. Bartuszová later embraced destruction and impermanence through her creation of large shell-reliefs and ephemeral works in nature.



ROOM 2

Anti-Clockwise

Centre of room

Untitled

1961–2, cast 1964

Aluminium

Bartuszová modelled a small vertically shaped sculpture which she then cast in plaster in a condom. According to notes in her drawings, she worked with the motif of a tree swaying in the wind. She began working on the sculpture in 1961 while pregnant with her first daughter. It is the earliest example of her work to reflect eroticism and sexuality, intimacy and motherhood, all important themes that she would continue to explore in her practice. Bartuszová moved with her husband and daughter to the industrial city of Košice in 1963 and had the work cast in aluminium the following year.

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice

X79517

Centre of room

Folded Relief II

1966

Plaster

This relief highlights the water spring as motif. Bartuszová created many studies of fountains, inspired by water sprouting from the earth and its symbolism with life, fertility, nature and spiritual energy. She created the circular buds in this work by casting a balloon and then pressing to form a cavity. Bartuszová drew upon her own experience as a mother. For her, the voids allude to female reproductive organs and the symbolic exchange between external and internal. In this relief and in later perforated works from the 1980s, Bartuszová understood the perforations and hollows in her sculptures as windows to a personal, female, interior space.

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Edward and Agnès Lee Acquisition Fund 2016

T14518

Centre of room

Untitled

1968

Plaster

Untitled

1973

Plaster

In the mid-1960s, Bartuszová produced a unique series of small plaster sculptures resembling blooming and withered flowers, and fruits. Organic objects also metamorphosed into sex organs, as suggested by **Untitled** 1968–70 and **Untitled** 1968 in the adjacent plinth. Bartuszová further developed references to the cycle of life in sculptures with nest or cell-like structures with truncated offshoots as seen in **Untitled** 1968 in this plinth.

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Edward and Agnès Lee Acquisition Fund 2016
T14520, T14521

TRANSFORMATIONS OF SHAPE

Angular, sharp, inorganic shapes give the impression of coldness; rounded, organic shapes appear warm and, when touching, can create the feeling of a gentle caress – maybe even an erotic embrace.

Maria Bartuszová, 1983

This room brings together the different approaches Bartuszová developed from the 1960s to the 1980s. The full and ample shapes of early works from the 1960s burst with life, sprouting multiple forms. She describes them as 'a drop of water, grain seed, buds of germinating plants... forms evoking cellular division, or cells touching.' The later works include compressed and bound materials, perforated ovals and broken shell-like reliefs.

Beginning in the 1960s, Bartuszová wanted to evoke emotional behaviours through her sculptures. Guided by intuition, play, therapy and meditation, she created multi-part objects to be touched and assembled as a puzzle or 'folder'. They were used innovatively in expressive workshops for blind and partially-sighted children. These mostly small and rounded sculptures are seductive, palpable and tactile, acting as prompts to develop aesthetic imagination.

Bartuszová's primary medium was plaster. At a later point, she cast many works again, either in bronze or a less expensive metal like aluminium. Early bronze casts, such as **Grain**, were small enough to hold in two hands, while assembled plaster 'folders' were cast in aluminium. For a short period, she experimented with a more geometric language combined with organic forms in a series of aluminium reliefs.

Rain

1963, cast 1963

Bronze and stone

In her early work, Bartuszová placed her modelled or cast forms on stone cubes, to either create a display platform or become an extension of the object. She was represented in the first Triennial of Slovak Sculpture in Piešťany in 1967 with the sculptures **Rain** and **Untitled (Drop)**. This important event in Czechoslovak art brought together new movements and concepts in public art. It was one of several exhibitions to focus on contemporary sculpture and broader developments in Czechoslovak art in relation to the wider European art scene.

Collection Marc Selwyn

X72643

Three-Part Sculpture IV, Germination

1975, cast 1976

Aluminium

East Slovak Gallery, Košice

X72602

Alternating Rhythm

1967–9

Aluminium

For a short time Bartuszová was a member of the Concretist Club. The Concretists' work was a version of Czechoslovak minimalism and explored primary structures and shapes. Along with other members of the group, Bartuszová took part in the exhibition **Modern and Naïve Art from Slovakia** at Braith-Mali-Museum in Biberach an der Riss in Germany in 1968. The exhibition poster featured Bartuszová's work and the museum purchased an aluminium relief, similar in form to the work on display here, for its collection. This was the first international museum to collect her work.

Slovak National Gallery

X72517

Untitled (Horizontal Relief)

1968

Aluminium

This is one of a series of aluminium reliefs created between 1967 and 1969 which express Bartuszová's research into geometric abstraction. Bartuszová began to apply geometry in her work even before she joined the Concretist Club. The group were interested in processes in nature, including demonstrations of gravity, pressure, and the elasticity of matter in time and space. Bartuszová's contribution to this progressive collective framework was unique: a 'biomorphic geometry.' She said 'I was a member of the Concretist Club, but I wasn't a typical member. I am definitely influenced by conceptual art – as I am by many other things.'

The Art Collection of the First Slovak Investment Group
X77619

Cosmic Landscape II (Dandelion Seeds in the Air)

1970–2

Aluminium and wood

East Slovak Gallery, Košice
X72518

Untitled

1985

Plaster, string and hessian

Inspired by nature and architecture, Bartuszová produced designs for organically built structures. She wrote: 'Pneumatic membranes (bio-membranes), on which the cohesion of plants is built – as with bones, eggs, tubes, cobwebs. Is the mathematics for bio-membranes the same as for pneumatic membranes? . . . Bionics. Pneuarchitecture.' Here, she used a meteorological balloon to cast a large concave shape, surrounded by open shell forms. It is reminiscent of a wasp's nest and was made using ecological materials that imbue her works with a natural appearance, strength, lightness and biodegradability. Bartuszová considered the nest – or home – as a space that could support creative and spiritual development.

Tate. Presented by the Estate of Maria Bartuszová and
Alison Jacques Gallery 2018

T15215

Endless Egg

1985

Plaster

Untitled

1985

Plaster

Untitled

1985

Plaster

Kontakt Collection, Vienna

X72678, X72670

Private collection

X73515

EMOTION, DESTRUCTION, EXPERIMENTATION

I work vicariously with my hands, with the help of balloons and bent surfaces. Principles: touch, taut-full, taut-hollow, positive, negative, contrast, placing, multiplying of one.

Maria Bartuszová, 1980s

From the 1980s, Bartuszová began using her 'pneumatic shaping' technique: pouring plaster over inflated rubber balloons to produce a cast, before allowing them to burst. The pressure of the burst balloons created disintegrated shell and egg-like forms. Unlike the full volume of her earlier sculptures, here an outer shell frames an empty core, signalling a place of refuge and rebirth. Bartuszová placed these thin egg-shaped shells inside one another, layering them to create what she referred to as 'endless eggs'. They suggest living organisms and express spiritual growth, time and eternity. Works which expose the hollow interiors of the shells, such as the egg reliefs, evoke fragility and vulnerability.

Bartuszová developed these ideas fully after moving to a house in Košice with a studio and a large garden on a hillside. The concept of creating art open to nature probably emerged with this new space. Bartuszová could freely and more generously experiment with plaster casting and use the surrounding garden to install her objects such as **Tree**.

She said, 'I would also like to realise more things directly outside – to connect, to merge my work in the work of nature organically.' For Bartuszová the studio was a spiritual and contemplative retreat, and the garden was a sanctuary. She continued to live with her daughters and worked in their family home until the end of her life.

Tree, site-specific installation in the artist's garden in Košice, Slovakia

1987, printed 2022

Photograph, PVC - free vinyl

From the mid-1980s onwards, Bartuszová created ephemeral, site-specific works using shell and egg-like forms in Košice, Prague, and Klatovy–Klenová. This image shows plaster objects which Bartuszová placed in a plum tree in her garden, as if nests. She saw the tree as a symbol of life, grounded and protective, while giving way to dreams and fantasies, commenting: 'I am thinking of all the trees of the world, flying birds, their nests with eggs, abandoned nests. And, in that moment, I, too, become a tree, a bird, an egg in a nest, and an abandoned nest.'

© Gabriel Kladek

Z74343

Egg, but not Columbus's

1987

Plaster

The title of this work refers to a supposed challenge set by Christopher Columbus who tasked his critics with trying to balance an egg on its end. Proving impossible, Columbus solves the puzzle by gently cracking the egg to flatten its base. To Bartuszová, this showed both the strength of nature and the destructive behaviour of humans. She understood the egg motif, whether whole or cracked, as a metaphor for life.

Slovak National Gallery

X72528

Untitled

1986

Plaster and string

'Since graduating, I have been working to resolve the technical difficulties of my practice. Although I was able to make gradual improvements, it was only in 1985 that I found thicker and larger rubber materials – balloons and rubber yardage that enabled me to make objects on a bigger scale.' To create large-scale reliefs, Bartuszová laid rubber sheets horizontally, over which she poured prepared plaster. She sometimes placed objects such as branches or stones into the flat surfaces, or opened up the surface with a slit, or left an imprint as if a trace of her body. In this relief, the opening creates a relationship between negative and positive, contrasts which she explored in her later works.

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice, Courtesy of Alison Jacques, London
X73529

Centre of room

Untitled

1973–4

Plaster

Bartuszová referred to her works as 'shapes' or 'forms', modelled and created through casting. Her sculptures have a physical form that more closely resembles a living organism, rather than a synthetic shape. This work was created not long after the birth of Bartuszová's second daughter in 1971. It incorporates growing, soaring and sprouting forms, palpable and palpitating volumes and multiplication. From the beginning, her work explored natural processes and cycles including germination, birth, growth, ripening, and decomposition.

Collection Edward Lee

X72664

Centre of room

Four-Part Sculpture III, Germination

1966, cast 1983

Plaster

Bartuszová began working on models for multi-part sculptures in the 1960s. This assembled work has a compressed nest-like base from which sprouting buds and fruit emerge. It is a pivotal work for Bartuszová. After making it, she focused on exploring shapes found in nature. She modelled volumes and rounded forms, with shapes that play on the motifs of cells, fruits and crustaceans. As with this work, their soft, pliable curves resemble parts of the human body.

Private collection, San Francisco

X72651

In the mid-1960s, Bartuszová made sculptures composed of multiple parts, which could be taken apart and intuitively reassembled. Over the next decade she used gravistimulated shaping to continue experimenting with tactile forms. She created 'folded' plaster and metal sculptures of three or more parts, interlocking aluminium and bronze shapes, and forms suggestive of enlarged wheat grains. Bartuszová's aim was for these haptic works to activate the senses. She wrote, 'Some sculptures could serve as didactic tools, for example, a sculpture of a drop of water for understanding aerodynamics and gravitation or as toy puzzles for the development of haptic orientation.'

Back row, left to right

Folded Figure VII, Horizontal, Haptic

1974, cast 1975

Bronze

Folded Figure

1965

Plaster

Folded Figure II (Haptic)

1967

Aluminium

Two-Part Sculpture I

1966

Plaster

Untitled

1970–2

Plaster

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice. X72604

Collection of Amy Gold and Brett Gorvy. X78344

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice. X79123, X73499

Collection of Alexander V. Petalas. X73545

Front row, left to right

Folded Figure VII

1967–8

Aluminium

Untitled

1973

Plaster

Four-Part Sculpture VII

1975, cast 1976

Aluminium

Untitled

1970

Plaster

Private collection, courtesy of Acquavella Galleries. X73530

Courtesy of Allison Jacques. X73548

East Slovak Gallery, Košice. X72605

Alex and Gabriela Daviddoff Collection. X72593

Untitled (Grain)

1965–7

Plaster

Grain

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice. X72657

Private collection. X73544

In 1976 and 1983 art historian Gabriel Kladek organised and delivered a series of workshops for blind and partially-sighted children. A key element was the use of Bartuszová's hand-sized and enlarged sculptures. The sculptures could be handled and several of them taken apart and reassembled. Kladek photographed the workshops, capturing the young participants' joyful exploration of the sculptures. The workshops encouraged the children to experience different shapes and textures through touch, differentiating between geometric and organic forms. Prioritising movement, the body, touch, action and active engagement with sculpture, the use of these sculptures highlights the artist's forward-thinking, participatory approach.

1st Sculpture Symposium for blind and partially-sighted children at the Elementary School for Partially Sighted Children, in cooperation with Gabriel Kladek, 1976 Levoča, Slovakia

1976, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

2nd Sculpture Symposium for blind and partially-sighted children at the Elementary School for Partially Sighted Children, in cooperation with Gabriel Kladek, 1983 Levoča, Slovakia

1983, printed 2022

Photographs, gelatin silver print on paper

© Gabriel Kladek. Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice. Z76579. Z76587, Z74342, Z76577–78, Z76580–87

ROOM 2 CENTRAL PLINTHS

Anti-Clockwise

Untitled

c.1966

Plaster

iSelf Collection. X73542

Two-Part Sculpture I

1966, cast 1967

Bronze

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice. X72649

Untitled (Relief)

c.1966

Plaster

Collection of Amy Gold and Brett Gorvy. X78345

Folded Relief II

1966

Plaster

This relief highlights the water spring as motif. Bartuszová created many studies of fountains, inspired by water sprouting from the earth and its symbolism with life, fertility, nature and spiritual energy. She created the circular buds in this work by casting a balloon and then pressing to form a cavity. Bartuszová drew upon her own experience as a mother. For her, the voids allude to female reproductive organs and the symbolic exchange between external and internal. In this relief and in later perforated works from the 1980s, Bartuszová understood the perforations and hollows in her sculptures as windows to a personal, female, interior space.

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Edward and Agnès Lee Acquisition Fund 2016. T14518

Bartuszová modelled a small vertically shaped sculpture which she then cast in plaster in a condom. According to notes in her drawings, she worked with the motif of a tree swaying in the wind. She began working on the sculpture in 1961 while pregnant with her first daughter. It is the earliest example of her work to reflect eroticism and sexuality, intimacy and motherhood, all important themes that she would continue to explore in her practice. Bartuszová moved with her husband and daughter to the industrial city of Košice in 1963 and had the work cast in aluminium the following year.

Untitled

1961–2, cast 1964

Aluminium

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice.

X79517

Untitled

1968

Plaster

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Edward and Agnès Lee Acquisition Fund 2016.

T14520

Untitled

1968–9

Plaster

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice.

X73502

Untitled

1973

Plaster

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Edward and Agnès Lee Acquisition Fund 2016.

T14521

Untitled

1971

Plaster

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Edward and Agnès Lee Acquisition Fund 2016.

T14519

Untitled

1972

Plaster

Courtesy of Alison Jacques.

X73504

Untitled

1968–70

Plaster

Robert Runták Collection.

X72654

In the mid-1960s, Bartuszová produced a unique series of small plaster sculptures resembling blooming and withered flowers, and fruits. Organic objects also metamorphosed into sex organs, as suggested by **Untitled** 1968–70 and **Untitled** 1968 in the adjacent plinth. Bartuszová further developed references to the cycle of life in sculptures with nest or cell-like structures with truncated offshoots as seen in **Untitled** 1968 in this plinth.

Untitled

1968

Plaster

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice.

X78932

Folded Figure, Horizontal, Haptic

1974, cast 1975

Aluminium

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice.

X72603

Untitled

1972–4

Plaster

Private collection.

X73546

Two-Part Sculpture VII

1968, cast 1968

Aluminium

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice.

X72653

Bartuszová began working on models for multi-part sculptures in the 1960s. This assembled work has a compressed nest-like base from which sprouting buds and fruit emerge. It is a pivotal work for Bartuszová. After making it, she focused on exploring shapes found in nature. She modelled volumes and rounded forms, with shapes that play on the motifs of cells, fruits and crustaceans. As with this work, their soft, pliable curves resemble parts of the human body.

Untitled

1973, cast 1973

Bronze

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice.

X72599

Three-Part Sculpture II, Grip

1969, cast 1970

Bronze

East Slovak Gallery, Košice.

X72658

Untitled

1973–4

Plaster

Collection Edward Lee.

X72664

Bartuszová referred to her works as 'shapes' or 'forms', modelled and created through casting. Her sculptures have a physical form that more closely resembles a living organism, rather than a synthetic shape. In this work, we see growing, soaring and sprouting forms, palpable and palpitating volumes and multiplication. From the beginning, her work explored natural processes and cycles including germination, birth, growth, ripening, and decomposition.

Folded Figure XI, Germination

1974, cast 1975

Aluminium

East Slovak Gallery, Košice.

X72666

Folded Figure

c.1965

Plaster

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Edward and Agnès Lee Acquisition Fund 2016.

T14517

Untitled

1970

Plaster

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice, Courtesy of Alison Jacques, London.

X73503

Untitled

1974

Plaster

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice.

X72523

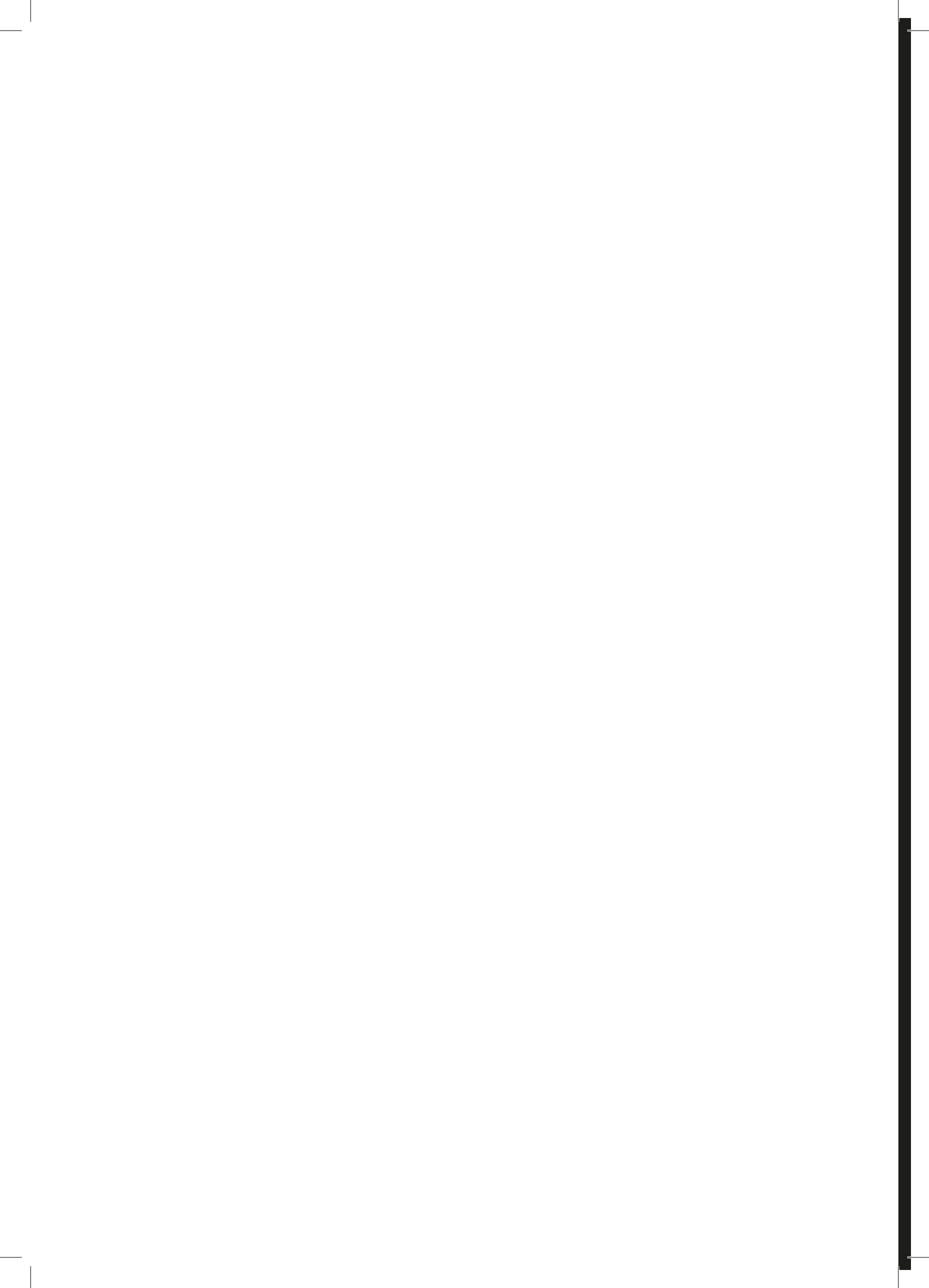
Four-Part Sculpture III, Germination

1966, cast 1983

Plaster

Private collection, San Francisco.

X72651



ROOM 3

Anti-Clockwise

INFINITE UNIVERSE

Branches, balloons, stones as a 'pillar', (drops), 'layering', winter, melting, spring, and germinating on the top. Stone. Annotation on a drawing by Maria Bartuszová, 1983–5

Bartuszová, as with many Czechoslovak artists in the 1970s living under a totalitarian regime, was drawn towards spirituality. Her library contained books on Chinese and Japanese art and culture, east Asian philosophy including Taoism and Buddhism, and **samizdats** (a form of self-publishing used to circulate censored material in the Soviet-controlled Eastern Bloc countries) on Zen Buddhism. She took an interest in the relationship between scientific theories and ancient traditions, reading literature on psychoanalysis, social psychology and living systems.

From the end of the 1970s, the reflection of natural processes in Bartuszová's work gradually became more personal and more focused on the questions of existence, in part relating to challenges in her marriage. Nature gave Bartuszová a setting for therapeutic and meditative contemplation. She found this in movement, picking up pebbles and tree

branches, feeling the rain, wind and snow, or observing nature – as she documented in drawings and photographs. This inspired her to create the plaster and stone objects and reliefs for the larger cycle of works named **Melting Snow**. She inserted living and inanimate natural substances, such as stones and tree branches, into the solidifying mass of plaster. Certain works from this period take the shape of tied-up, bound and pressed forms. For Bartuszová, this symbolised both the bonds and constraints of human relationships.

Bartuszová began to use tension and pressure in her work in the late 1960s. The sculptures in this vitrine show her continuing this exploration during the 1970s. A series of tied and constrained objects suggest the body as fragments. Plaster forms are contrasted with wood, bound with a rubber band, or show the imprint of compression with strips of elastic from clothing.

Untitled

1973

Plaster and rubber

Untitled

1972

Plaster

Untitled

1970

Plaster

Untitled

1972–4

Plaster and wood

Nuyten Dime Collection, Courtesy of Alison Jacques, London.
X72597

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice, Courtesy of Alison
Jacques, London. X84374

Kontakt Collection, Vienna. X72660

Collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III, Courtesy of
Alison Jacques, London. X78347

Untitled

1983, 1984, 1982 and 1985

Stone and plaster

Bartuszová was inspired by her close observations of nature. During the 1980s, she formed sculptures by allowing spherical masses of plaster to flow around pieces of stone, or by pressing stones into plaster. In **Untitled** 1984, plaster egg-shaped forms appear to grow from the horizontal stone panel. Bartuszová conceived this as a living sculpture, combining the attributes of the egg, eggshell and nest.

Courtesy of Tom and Alice Tisch, New York. X78356

Naila Collection, Courtesy of Alison Jacques, London. X78334

Collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III, Courtesy of Alison Jacques, London. X78348

Private collection, Courtesy of Acquavella Galleries. X84474

Untitled

1987–8

Plaster, hemp cord and wood

This installation was created for the largest lifetime solo exhibition of Bartuszová's works in the gallery of the Slovak Union of Visual Artists in Košice in 1988. She created and displayed it according to the dimensions of the large floor to ceiling window that looked out from the gallery to the old town. Bartuszová installed the exhibition herself, placing the large relief **Melting Snow I** in dialogue with this installation and the bound and tied eggs seen through the work on the platform in Room 4.

Collection of Amy Gold and Brett Gorvy

X72559

Melting Snow I

1985

Plaster and wood

This relief features an embedded branch. Bartuszová placed it on the right edge according to her understanding of the principles of ikebana, the Japanese art based on harmony and appreciation of nature. This period of her practice was influenced by Taoism and Zen Buddhism, which stimulated her to look for the unique and the infinite in nature. Here the plaster mass refers to the process of freezing and melting snow.

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice, Courtesy of Alison Jacques, London

X72611

Untitled, site-specific installation

1987, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Site-specific installation with plaster sculpture on the riverside

1985, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Art historian and collaborator Gabriel Kladek often photographed Bartuszová's works in nature. For one photoshoot, Kladek temporarily placed a plaster arch to link rocks by the River Hornád. The plaster sculpture in the nearby photograph was taken by Kladek's wife Viera Kladeková, a close friend of Bartuszová.

© Courtesy Gabriel Kladek. Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice. Z74346

© Courtesy Viera Kladeková. Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice. X79904

Winter Nature Studies

1980–5, printed 2022

Photographs, gelatin silver print on paper

As a child, Bartuszová had been inspired by walks along the River Vltava which flows through Prague. In the 1980s, she photographed the flowing River Hornád and its frozen banks on her walks in Košice. The photographs act as sketches, capturing a temporary moment, which she then reflected in her plaster reliefs and stone sculptures. The works materialise natural processes through sculptural mass.

Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice
Z76491, Z76500, X79901

ROOM 4

Anti-Clockwise

RELATIONSHIPS

The ropes, strings, and hoops that sometimes bind the rounded shapes could be symbolic of human relationships or the constraints that limit the possibilities of living things – the diseases and stresses that undermine what is alive and already restricted by its lifespan.

Maria Bartuszová, 1980s

Every living organism forms a relationship with its environment. Bartuszová believed that personal and familial relationships were interconnected with nature, art and culture. She integrated social and ecological themes in her art with knowledge of science and philosophy. She expressed these relationships through sculpture as a trace of a moment, captured in matter, in a tactile format. Her work is not a rational reduction of natural forms. It is a realisation of her thinking through sensual shapes and extended research through sculptural practice.

Bartuszová's work from the 1980s continues with the themes of binding and pressure. It incorporates acrylic, string, bronze, rubber and wood to form contrasts between

hard and soft, dominant and submissive. Only a handful of exhibitions took place during Bartuszová's lifetime. Her first solo exhibition in 1983 included bronze and aluminium casts from the 1960s and 1970s but not the plaster originals. After the breakdown of her marriage in 1984 she directed her efforts and energy to her next solo exhibition in 1988. During this particularly active period she created some of her most poignant and technically complex works in plaster. These included bound and endless eggs, eggshell objects and reliefs, large minimalist reliefs and site-specific installations.

Untitled

1985–7

Plaster and string

Untitled II

1985–7

Plaster, string and stones

Bartuszová tied egg and torso forms together with string to represent her perception of relationships, as both entanglements and imprisonments but also of belonging and strong mutual bonds. She installed her bound eggs clustered together on stone bases, or displayed her plaster works on tables, directly on the floor, into sand, on the earth outside, or suspended in space.

Collection of Amy Gold and Brett Gorvy. X78326

Collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III, Courtesy of Alison Jacques, London. X78349

Rebound Torso

1984, cast 1984

Bronze

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice, Courtesy of Alison Jacques, London

X79124

Plinth left to right

Untitled

1986

Plaster, string and wire

Untitled

1987

Plaster, acrylic sheet and string

Bartuszová's series of tied and constrained objects suggest the fragmented human, but never directly represent the body. In **Rebound Torso**, strings appear to cut into flesh, constraining it. In **Untitled** 1987 several small sculptural bodies are held together by string around a rectangular acrylic plate, the edges of which cut into them. The shapes of

the bound torsos point to associations with the human body, and its parts.

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice, Courtesy of Alison Jacques, London. X72619
Kontakt Collection, Vienna. X72558

Rebound Torso

1984, cast 1996
Bronze

Untitled

1986
Plaster and string

Untitled

1984
Plaster and string

Untitled

1983
Plaster, rubber, wood and string

Untitled

1986

Plaster

Private collection, London. X73547

Courtesy of Alison Jacques. X84376

Kontakt Collection, Vienna. X72668, X72524

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice. X72620

Untitled

1986

Plaster

This plaster relief seems to bear the imprint of a body that has touched the soft plaster surface. Bartuszová wrote: 'the touch becomes an imprint immediately'. Bartuszová made this relief in a horizontal position by pouring plaster over rubber sheeting. She may have made the impressions by laying stones into the surface, or imprinting with her palms, elbows or knees. The work evokes empty sheets, an illusion of a curtain, or a nest.

Kontakt Collection, Vienna

X72529

Untitled

1987–8

Plaster, acrylic sheet and string

Collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III, Courtesy of
Alison Jacques, London

X78353

Untitled

1987

Plaster, acrylic sheet and string

Kontakt Collection, Vienna

X72560

ROOM 5

Anti-Clockwise

SCULPTURES FOR PUBLIC SPACES

Influences (on creative work): Feelings of anxiety in totalitarianism, and the Cold War tensions. The ban on abstract art in totalitarianism increased its importance.

Maria Bartuszová, 1968

Bartuszová and her husband Juraj Bartusz, also a sculptor, moved to Košice with their daughter in 1963, after finishing their studies at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague. The city was rapidly developing as a cultural and industrial centre, with new work and housing opportunities. As part of the Communist programme of cultural modernisation in the city, new mass housing projects and public sites included commissions for public artworks.

From the outset, Bartuszová was keen not only to exhibit her work but to secure public commissions. In 1964 she joined the artist's union and, as a member, was able to work as a professional artist. Although artists were dependent on the totalitarian state, Bartuszová worked on commissions even if they did not have an ideological purpose. She made significant commitments to public projects as a counterpoint

to her studio practice. Throughout her career, she took on official state-funded commissions for buildings, monuments, playgrounds, fountains and sculptures in public spaces in Slovakia, working in collaboration with stonemasons and specialist craftspeople. These projects provided a vital source of income but also the opportunity to realise her ideas on a monumental scale.

**Diagonal sculpture–Melting Snow, courtyard of the
Technical University student home, Jedlíkova street, Košice**

1984–9, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice.
X79911

**Stone from High Tatras and bronze fountain for the Dargov
shopping centre on Štúrova Street in Košice**

1986, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Bartuszová completed a number of public commissions for fountains. Here, she recast a soft and flowing plaster form in bronze and combined it with coarse stone transported from the High Tatra Mountains. She intended to achieve forms similar to those created by the force of nature, such as the waters of a mountain stream.

Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice
X79902

A look into the studio: a plaster model of the fountain for the Dargov shopping centre on Štúrova Street in Košice

1986, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

© Courtesy Gabriel Kladek

X79912

Stone and bronze fountain for the Dargov shopping centre on Štúrova Street in Košice

1986, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice

X79905

Model for fountain outside the Dragov shopping centre, Košice

Installed 1984

Plaster and Stone

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice

X72609

**'Metamorphosis, Two-Part Sculpture', crematorium, in
Košice, Slovakia**

1982, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

**Maria Bartuszová and assistants setting up the sculpture
'Metamorphosis, Two-Part Sculpture' in front of the
crematorium, in Košice, Slovakia**

1982, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Courtesy Alexander Jiroušek. Reproduced from the Archive
of Maria Bartuszová, Košice. Z76492

© Courtesy Gabriel Kladek. Reproduced from the Archive of
Maria Bartuszová, Košice. X79915

In 1979, as part of the design for a new Košice Crematorium, Bartuszová was commissioned to create a sculpture for the terrace at its entrance. The spherical shape is cast in artificial stone and divided horizontally. Its parts combine to form a whole, in a similar way to her small haptic 'folders' and jigsaws. Its form also echoes her earlier sculptures that reference a drop, a grain, a cell, and an egg. The work curves in the middle and contains a hollow dip, as if a landscape.

Maria Bartuszová in her studio with plaster model of the sculpture 'Metamorphosis, Two-Part Sculpture' for the new crematorium, in Košice, Slovakia

1981, printed 2022

Photographs, gelatin silver print on paper

© Courtesy Gabriel Kladek. Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice. X79920, X79921

Three models for 'Metamorphosis, Two Part-Sculpture'

1979–81

Plaster

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice
X80117, X80120, X80123

Maria Bartuszová and unknown workers from the Eastern Slovak Steelworks factory during the installation of the relief in the entrance area of the administrative building of the steel company Eastern Slovak Steelworks in Košice

1980, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Bartuszová created monumental aluminium wall reliefs for the Slovak Paper Mill and the Eastern Slovak Steelworks. They drew on the geometric language she was experimenting with around the time of her brief association with the Concretist Club in 1969.

© Courtesy Gabriel Kladek. Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice
X79918

Maria Bartuszová and Juraj Bartusz with Maria's aluminium reliefs in the garden by the studio in Vnútorň Červený Breh in Košice, Slovakia

c.1972, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Courtesy Zdeněk Smieško
Z76487

Relief on the façade of the Lipa department store, Košice

1977, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Courtesy Alexander Jiroušek. Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice

X79916

Maria Bartuszová and unknown workers from the Eastern Slovak Steelworks factory during the installation of the relief in the entrance area of the administrative building of the steel company Eastern Slovak Steelworks in Košice

1980, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Bartuszová created monumental aluminium wall reliefs for the Slovak Paper Mill and the Eastern Slovak Steelworks. They drew on the geometric language she was experimenting with around the time of her brief association with the Concretist Club in 1969.

© Courtesy Gabriel Kladek. Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice

X79918

This spiral-like design for a children's climbing frame and slide was completed in 1970. Bartuszová had started to work on models of playground climbing frames and slides in 1963, hoping to secure commissions. Projects for children's playgrounds formed part of the newly emergent urbanism and educational system of the Czechoslovak socialist regime of the 1960s and 1970s. They were installed in housing estates, nurseries and primary schools. These commissions offered Bartuszová a way to experiment in the public realm. These models for large-scale futuristic environments – which suggest the organs of the inner and outer ear, ovaries, or a snail shell – remain unrealised.

Model, Children's Climbing Frame

1964

Plaster and clay

Model, Children's Climbing Frame

1964–5

Plaster and wire

Maria Bartuszová next to the slide at the kindergarten on Sládkovičova Street in Revúca, Slovakia

1970, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

The Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice

X72638, X72640

Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice

X79907

**Stone sculpture for the exterior of the Elementary School,
Tatranská Lomnica, Slovakia**

1976–8, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice
Z76486

**Fountain Sculpture: Rain, 'Institute for Physically Disabled
Children', atrium, Opatovská Cesta, Košice**

1967–71, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Bartuszová developed forms and themes in the studio to bring into public spaces. This bronze fountain took its elongated droplet form from her work **Rain** 1963 (seen in Room 2). The artist made a brief note in her journal suggesting one possible interpretation of the work, underscoring the importance she placed on emotive expression. When she asked for the children's response to the work, they replied that the fountain resembled tears.

Courtesy Alexander Jiroušek. Reproduced from the Archive
of Maria Bartuszová, Košice
Z74336

Maria Bartuszová with her sculpture 'Grain' at the Sculpture Symposium in Vyšné Ružbachy, Slovakia

1977, printed 2022

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

During the 1960s and 1970s, Bartuszová worked with cut stone, especially when creating fountains and sculptures for public spaces. This sculpture is an enlarged stone version of the haptic grains which she started making in the mid-1960s. It suggests the organic and erotic form of lips and vulva, cut in travertine (a type of limestone). She thought of these sculptures as elements from the natural environment planted into urban spaces.

Courtesy Juryi Petrosian. Reproduced from the Archive of Maria Bartuszová, Košice

Z76485

