

PRESS RELEASE

MARIA BARTUSZOVÁ 6 APRIL – 21 MAY PRIVATE VIEW TUESDAY 5 APRIL

'The works of Maria Bartuszová – sculptures created by using rubberized materials and plaster to form unique casts, or by using water and plaster to minimize gravity – trigger extraordinary and moving impressions. These biomorphic sculptures, in which branches sometimes pass through plaster, are striking in their beauty, their seeming perfection, even, and also, in their vulnerability, precariousness, and fragility.' –Christine Macel. "Maria Bartuszová: Her times, her age" *Maria Bartuszová: Provisional Forms*, Museum of Modern Art Warsaw: Chicago University Press, 2015, p.145

Alison Jacques Gallery is delighted to present the first UK solo show of Slovak artist Maria Bartuszová (1936 – 1996), in collaboration with Gabriela Garlatyová, curator of the Estate of Maria Bartuszová, Košice.

The works selected for the show span Bartuszová's entire career dating from the early 1960s through to 1996. The majority of Bartuszová's works were made in plaster, a material that possesses an inherent temporal beauty. Inspired by nature many of her works appear to take shape as the result of gravity, compressing and expanding to simultaneously reference movement and hesitation. The artist's work was produced in a Czechoslovak environment removed from contact with European events, yet despite this isolation she collected the monographs of Brancusi, Fontana, Hepworth, Moore and Noguchi which inspired her practice alongside a variety of other sources such as architectural designs and scientific and technical photographs.

Bartuszová's themes are intuitive, mental and spiritual concepts, which overlap in communication in the course of creative time and thus create a living organism of her oeuvre. They include technological procedures of 'gravistimulated casting' of plaster in elastic forms, which are also conceptual constructs of her haptic and organic sculptures of the 1960s and 1970s. From the late 1960s Bartuszová produced sculptures that could be taken apart and re-assembled intuitively (such as *Folded Figure I*, 1965-90) and in 1976 she ran workshops for blind and visually-impaired children, creating works that enabled participants to become familiar with different shapes, textures and forms. In the 1980s her sculptures focused on pure, oblong forms, eggs and shells that were later altered (broken, crushed or creased). The aggressive and powerful gestures of imprinting or tearing appeared in many of the works produced from the 1980s onwards as Bartuszová began to work with the technique of 'pneumatic shaping'. In this process the artist created casts with elastic rubber balloons, which she then covered in plaster, causing the balloons to burst under pressure and leave only the negative space of the destroyed forms. Two cube-like structures and the rounded composition of '*Perforated Torso*' (both exhibited) illustrate the result of this process. This exhibition will also feature two unique works in which small egg-like formations bound with string appear to emerge out of wall mounted perspex orbs. Bartuszová's interest in birth is illustrated in these works, as she references not only origin in the germination of a seed but also the simple idea of how we are naturally bound to each other. The artist explains 'For me, full round shapes can serve as a symbol of what is alive, soft, adaptable, as well as vulnerable and at risk.' (Quotation from Garlatyová, *Gabriela. Maria Bartuszová: Provisional Forms*, Museum of Modern Art Warsaw: Chicago University Press, 2015)

Maria Bartuszová (b. 1936, Prague, Czechoslovakia; d. 1996, Kosice, Slovakia) graduated from Academy of Arts, Prague, Department of Ceramics in 1961. Her work was exhibited during her lifetime in former Czechoslovakia and recently has been featured in many international exhibitions. Among others these include *Documenta 12* curated by Ruth Noack in 2007, *Les Promesses du passé, 1955-2010*, Centre Georges Pompidou in 2010 and the retrospective *Maria Bartuszová. Provisional Forms* at Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw in 2014. Work by Bartuszová has been prominently featured in two recent exhibitions at Alison Jacques Gallery; *Matter & Memory* in 2014 and *Organic Sculpture* in 2015. Bartuszová's work is in numerous museum collections including Tate, London, Centre du Pompidou, Paris and Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava.

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