

## Matter and Spirit in the Work of the Sculptor Silvia Radu

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Silvia Radu – *Sculptură, pictură, desen*. Cu texte de: Doina Mândru, Dan Hăulică, Mircea Oliv, Pavel Țușară, Sorin Dumitrescu (Silvia Radu – *Sculptures, Paintings, Drawings*. Texts by Doina Mândru, Dan Hăulică, Mircea Oliv, Pavel Țușară, Sorin Dumitrescu), edited by Centrul Cultural Palatele Brâncovenesti, București, 2015, 223 pages



The art album, *Silvia Radu – Sculptură, pictură, desen* (*Silvia Radu – Sculptures, Paintings, Drawings*) starts with a suggestive bow to the artist's lifestyle: "To you, God!" By means of the texts authored by the art critics Doina Mândru, Dan Hăulică, Mircea Oliv, Pavel Țușară and Sorin Dumitrescu, in the album we are presented the artistic development of the sculptor Silvia Radu, born on June 30, 1935 in Pătroaia village, Dâmbovița county.

Doina Mândru (pp. 9-13) presents to us the biography of the sculptor Silvia Radu, a personality with a vast cultural background and wide range of knowledge who benefited from the formation of distinguished professors and the company of extraordinary colleagues. At the National Academy of Fine Arts "N. Grigorescu" from Bucharest where she graduated from in 1960, had Ion Lucian Murnu as professor, and Vasile Gorduz, Peter Iacobi, George Apostu as colleagues. The artistic path she chose was guided by post-Brâncușian sculptors; her works include monument sculptures and ceramics, both impregnated by the lay character specific to the period in question.

Later on, when the artist gets close to Orthodoxy, her conception on sculpture completely changes as a result of her close friendship with the painter Horia Bernea and her relation with father Sofian Boghiu. Along with her husband, the sculptor Vasile Gorduz, they become founders of a church in Vama Veche in which they make icons in relief following the specificity of Byzantine art; the icons are extremely minute and testify to an outstanding

expressivity of fine arts. The album continues with works from Silvia Radu's early career, all marked by thorough knowledge of the art of sculpture: *Fată (Girl)*, *Arc de triumf (Triumphal Arch)*, *Steaguri (Flags)*, *Meșterul Manole (Manole the Craftsman)* (pp. 16-19), *Monumentul eroilor martiri din cele două războaie mondiale (Monument to the Martyr Heroes from the Two World Wars)* (pp. 22-24), *Statuia lui Neptun (Neptun's Statue)*, *Țesătoarele (The Loom Workers)* (pp. 26-27), *Printre flori și fructe (Among Flowers and Fruits) (detalii/ detail, pp. 28-29)*, *Fată (A Girl)* (in three variants, bronze and ceramics, pp. 30-31), *Băiatul cu cal (The Boy and His Horse)* (p. 33).

The presentation of Silvia Radu's work as ceramic artist follows (pp. 34-43). Dan Hăulică speaks about the sound made by the vases the artist shaped, about their joyful white colour that awakens resonance. Here we encounter ceramic works of a deep expression and plasticity which transmit the same sensation of exquisite knowledge of the art of form and colour: *Cariatidele mici (Small Caryatides)*, *Teodosia (Theodosia)* (a portrait of the artist's mother), *Sfeșnice (Candlesticks)*, *Vase (Pottery)*, *Figuri cu văl (Veiled Figures)*, *Fată cu flori (Girl with Flowers)* (pp. 36-37).

Starting with page 47, we are presented reproductions of a series of plaster works then coloured: *Cristina și portretul ei (Cristina and Her Portrait)*, *Principesa Margareta (Princess Margaret)* George Manu, Valeriu Gafencu, Maria Berza, Apollo (pp. 47-48). *Buna Vestire (The Annunciation)* and *Vestitorul (Deliverer of Good News)* are two works that allow us to understand the artist's close relation with Orthodoxy. The representation of man's face as reflection of God's face shows in the works on pages 52-53.

Another facet of the complex artistic personality of lady Silvia Radu, the drawing, is accounted for on pages 64-75. Her sketches and portraits are proof of the best conscience and artistic science of black and white.

Silvia Radu's paintings (pp. 78-105), achieved at Vama Veche, are landscapes of mountains, gardens near Bucharest and, by few artistic means and colours, express a particular artistic intelligence in fine arts. The spirit of Orthodoxy is equally present in Silvia Radu's painting.

The art critic Oliv Mircea makes a presentation of the "Angelic Body" on page 106; he depicts it as temple of the spirit that makes room for Silvia Radu's sculptural creation: *Serafim cu aripi albe (White-Winged Seraph)* (p. 107), *Îngeri (Angels)* (pp. 108-115). What the sculptural work loses in terms of physical volume, it gains in spirituality.

The art critic Dan Hăulică makes a presentation (pp. 121-141) on angels, in general and on Silvia Radu's *Angels*, in particular, drawing on the artist's 1989 exhibit at Dalles Hall in Bucharest, as if he spoke about an Old Testament. After 1989, Silvia Radu's creation seems to be touched by more light and becomes a "New Testament". It is followed by an appraisal of her sculptural work present throughout the country and the leitmotif in Hăulică's text is "The Blue Angel". Silvia Radu's work springs from humbleness,

composed attitude and Orthodox spirit. With few artistic means, the achievement is exquisite in fine arts. Dan Hăulică's extremely pertinent comments on Silvia Radu's works end with the chapter *Resurecții mediteraniene – Tentația arheologicului (Mediterranean Resurrections – The Temptation of the Archaeological)* (pp. 137-141).

The pertinent analysis of Silvia Radu's work, be they sculptures, paintings, graphics is continued by Oliv Mircea in his contribution entitled *Împăcarea cea mare (The Greatest Reconciliation)* (pp. 142-143).

In the study *A treia cale sau Inocența Sfântului Gheorghe (The Third Path or the Innocence of Saint George)* (pp. 144-147), the art critic Pavel Șușari account for Silvia Radu's biography and artistic work. The stress then falls on the presentation, plastic analysis and commentary of the Saint George monument located in Saint George square of Timișoara. The critic deals with the volumetric conception, its sources of inspiration and especially the final result – Saint George's statue.

The text-reproduction sequence continues from pages 148-161, namely, the image in circular relief of father Stăniloae (pp. 148-149) and the following reliefs: *Mântuitorul pe tron (The Saviour on the Throne)*, *Răstignirea (The Crucifixion)*, *Sfântul Nectarie (Saint Nectaire)*, *Înger (Angel)*, *Sfântul Mina (Saint Menas)*, *Sfinții Împărați Constantin Elena (Saints Constantine and Helen)*, *Sfântul Petru și Pavel (Saints Peter and Paul)* (pp. 150-151). *The Saviour on the Throne* and not a detail of the *Saviour's* face (pp. 152-153), detail and complete composition of the work *Saints Peter and Paul* (pp. 154-155), plaster reliefs of *Saints Peter and Paul* (p. 156) then coloured and of *Saints Constantine and Helen* (p. 157), etc.

The painter and academy member Sorin Dumitrescu makes a short description of the liturgical reliefs cast in bronze or galvanised in silver by the artist Silvia Radu (p. 162). On pages 163-187 there are presented the reproductions of several liturgical reliefs cast in bronze (*Înger/ Angel*, *Răstignirea/ Crucifixion*, *Mântuitorul/ The Saviour*, *Sfântul Ilie/ Saint Elijah*, etc. (pp. 163-165); liturgical icons and icons that show holy feasts, reliefs galvanised in silver (pp. 166-167); *Maica Domnului cu Pruncul/ Mother of God Holding Christ as Child* (pp. 168-169); the icon of a mighty *Jesus Christ Emperor* (p. 171); the detail in the technique of galvanised relief of *The Holy Trinity* (p. 172), *Cap de înger/ Head of an Angel* (p. 173), *Sfântul Nectarie/ Saint Nectaire* (detail and complete work, pp. 174-175), *Sfântul Gheorghe și Sfântul Nectarie/ Saint George and Saint Nectaire* (p. 179), *Răstignirea/ The Crucifixion* (p. 180), *Schimbarea la față/ The Transfiguration* (p. 181), *Sfântul Andrei/ Saint Andrew* (p. 182), relief cast in bronze on *The Formation of Romanian Feudal States/ Formarea statelor feudale românești* (p. 183), *Răstignirea/ The Crucifixion* (p. 184), *Adormirea Maicii Domnului/ The Dormition of the Mother of God* (p. 185)).

On pages 186-187 we can see two works cast in bronze, namely: *Înger purtător de Evanghelii (Angel Carrying the Gospels)* and *Micul Sfinx (The Little Sphynx)*.

On page 188, the art critic Pavel Țușara theoretically prefaces several reproductions showing the *Saint George* monument in various stages of the work; details, sketches, research material. In all these images, as well as in the ones of liturgical reliefs, all works created after 1990, the spirit of Orthodoxy is present and defining in Silvia Radu's artistic creation.

Sorin Dumitrescu makes comments on several busts of the Royal House of Romania (p. 204). *Portretul Majestății Regelui Mihai (The Portrait of His Majesty, King Michael I of Romania)*, shaped in wax, prepared for bronze casting, can be found on page 205, followed by detail reproductions of the same portrait (pp. 206-215).

Pages 217-223 insert photographs-photos of Silvia Radu, her family, important moments during her own exhibits, friends, her portrait as a young artist made by the sculptor Gheorghe Anghel and cast in bronze, workshop images, together with her husband, Vasile Gorduz, portraits of her confessors (of father Sofian Boghiu, for instance).

The album *Silvia Radu – Sculptură, Pictură, Desen (Silvia Radu – Sculptures, Paintings, Drawings)* is a seminal contribution to the study of contemporary Romanian sculpture of religious inspiration and stands out due to its complete presentation of the artist's work in excellent graphic conditions, being carried out in an outstanding manner.

Translated by Ana – Magdalena Petraru, PhD