

VIŠNJA MARKOVINOVIĆ, RETROSPECTIVE / *Homage to the artist*



Višnja Markovinović – Retrospective /Homage to the artist (detail from the catalog), 2022

28.1.



Višnja markovinović, Retrospective, catalog of the exhibition, 2022

VIŠNJA MARKOVINOVIĆ, RETROSPECTIVE - essay

Višnja Slavica Gabout

The retrospective of Višnja Markovinović, the doyen of Croatian ceramics, is a small tribute to this distinguished artist and an expression of respect for her rich ceramic creativity, in which she expressed herself mainly in a sculptural manner. Since she has always been interested in the highest sculptural values in ceramics, she treated the clay mass as a plastic category, modeling it to create a contemporary sculpture. Always knowing how to affirm, in a highly refined way, all the visual-tactile characteristics of the ceramic medium, but also expertly responding to all the challenges of the technical and technological procedures of its processing.

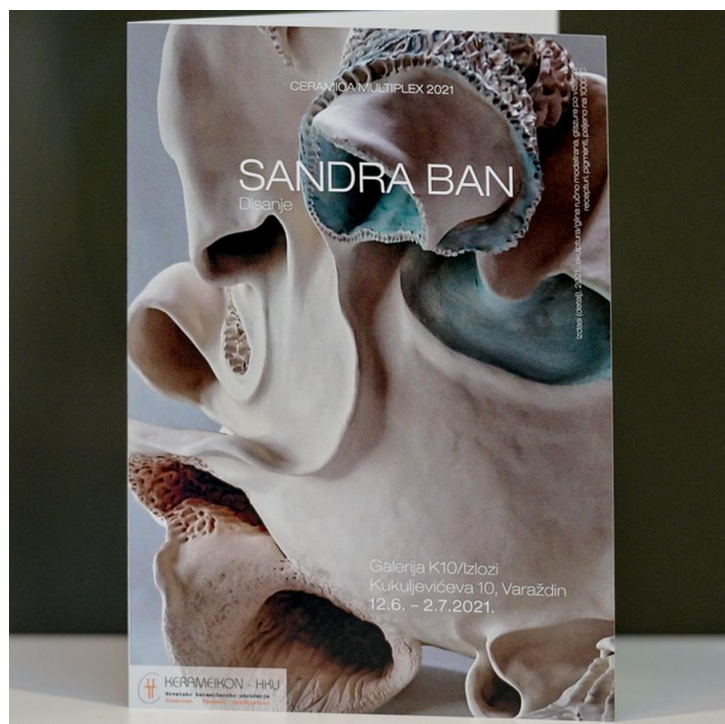
For her retrospective of ceramic sculptures, the works created from 1980 to 2020 were selected, because in that period her most important cycles of ceramic sculptures were created, and it can be said the most of her paradigmatic sculptural works, through which her entire artistic development can be viewed and traced. These works are mostly of a contemporary expression, innovative and unique, in which can be seen not only her creative spark, but also her excellent knowledge of the craft. They reveal that all the time she followed contemporary trends and was familiar with achievements both in the fields of contemporary ceramics and contemporary art in general. In spite of that, she was not inclined to copying, quotations and influences, always remaining herself, true to her nerve and her style. However, what left a significant impact on her artistic creation and was reflected in her work was her education at the respectable, but short-lived (1949-1955) Academy of Applied Arts in Zagreb, and after that the

experience of her 16-year stay and work in London. When it was founded, the Academy of Applied Arts in Zagreb introduced the modern Bauhaus model into its educational model: individual work in workshops and creative experimentation, as well as the principle of multidisciplinary study based on the unity of theoretical and practical teaching, with an emphasis on professional subjects, which at the time provided top modern education in the broad field of fine and applied arts. Thus, schooling in Zagreb, in the atmosphere of European educational trends, and after that staying in London - in the melting pot of contemporary art of the sixties and seventies and focal point of events in the international art scene, gave Višnja Markovinović an open, cosmopolitan view, as well as a contemporary perception of art and culture. She said about it: "For me, the English and American art scene presented in London was a new, exciting, original environment. The new collided here with the old, encouraging artists to search for their own style, their own way, their own thinking. The London art scene, all in artistic search, was enormously stimulating for me and my own researches." All these creative incentives and London researches, as well as contacts with pop art, hyperrealism, the art of Moore, Blake and Oldenburg, but also with the lively London ceramic scene, were later the main impetus for Višnja's work, being the source of inspiration for her intriguing cycles of ceramic sculptures.

Although Višnja Markovinović started making ceramics long before 1960 (it should be noted that while she was still the student at the Academy of Applied Arts, she attended the Ceramics course, and after graduating she continued making ceramics – first in Zagreb and later in London), the public could meet her ceramic works only when two her solo exhibitions were organized in Zagreb, in 1984 and in 1985. By then, however, she already had many years of work with ceramics behind her, so was able, in the eighties of the 20th century, to establish the basics of her own work system with ceramic sculptures, and she stuck to it throughout her creative years to come (as the art critic Elena Cvetkova noticed). In her sculptures her art expression went through changes, as in all creative artists art, in accordance with the development of her sculptural discourse, so Višnja Markovinović's style changed from figurative and magical realism to geometric and organic abstraction. In the last years she preferred and mostly created assemblages, installations, recycling art and light objects, where the concept prevailed over the story, and the sign, the symbol and the metaphor stood instead of representation, recognition and mimesis. All the changes in her style and the transformations of her sculptural forms have a solid internal logic, articulated by the logic and stylistics of her expression, which covers a range from mimetic figuration and narration (sometimes veiled in metaphors and fantasy), through flat stylization and geometric structure, to the abstraction that in her sculptural forms can be seen as moving away from the recognizable and representational. Two dominant motifs run through all her cycles and thematic units: the human (female) figure, which can be "Moore-like", metaphorical, heroic, allegorical, hybrid and linearly stylized. On the other hand, there are pure plastic/sculptural forms, which are abstract, tubular, round or associative - and sometimes interestingly "softened". Beyond all that, there is also a smaller cycle of masks.

In her sculptural cycles she treats the volume in several characteristic ways, depending on the current inspiration: one time the volume is closed, intense, compact and tectonic, the other time open synthesis and reduction rules in it, the other time motion and narration. And sometimes the author surprises us with a refined balance of dynamic and static in the volume itself. In all her work Višnja Markovinović often returned to many of her themes and motifs, repeating them, redefining and reinterpreting again and again over the years. The same motif, however, is different each time, because each time it was viewed from a different angle and a different perspective, from a different time, and with a new experience, because always she pushed the boundaries of her expression, adding contemporary elements to her visual vocabulary.

The entire creation of Višnja Markovinović has always had a continuous line of development, constantly being creatively upgraded. She was always researching, setting new goals for herself, which led her to new forms, approaches, procedures and topics throughout her artistic work. With each new cycle, until the end of her life, she opened new chapters in her art, so she remained youthfully active and creative until her late years.



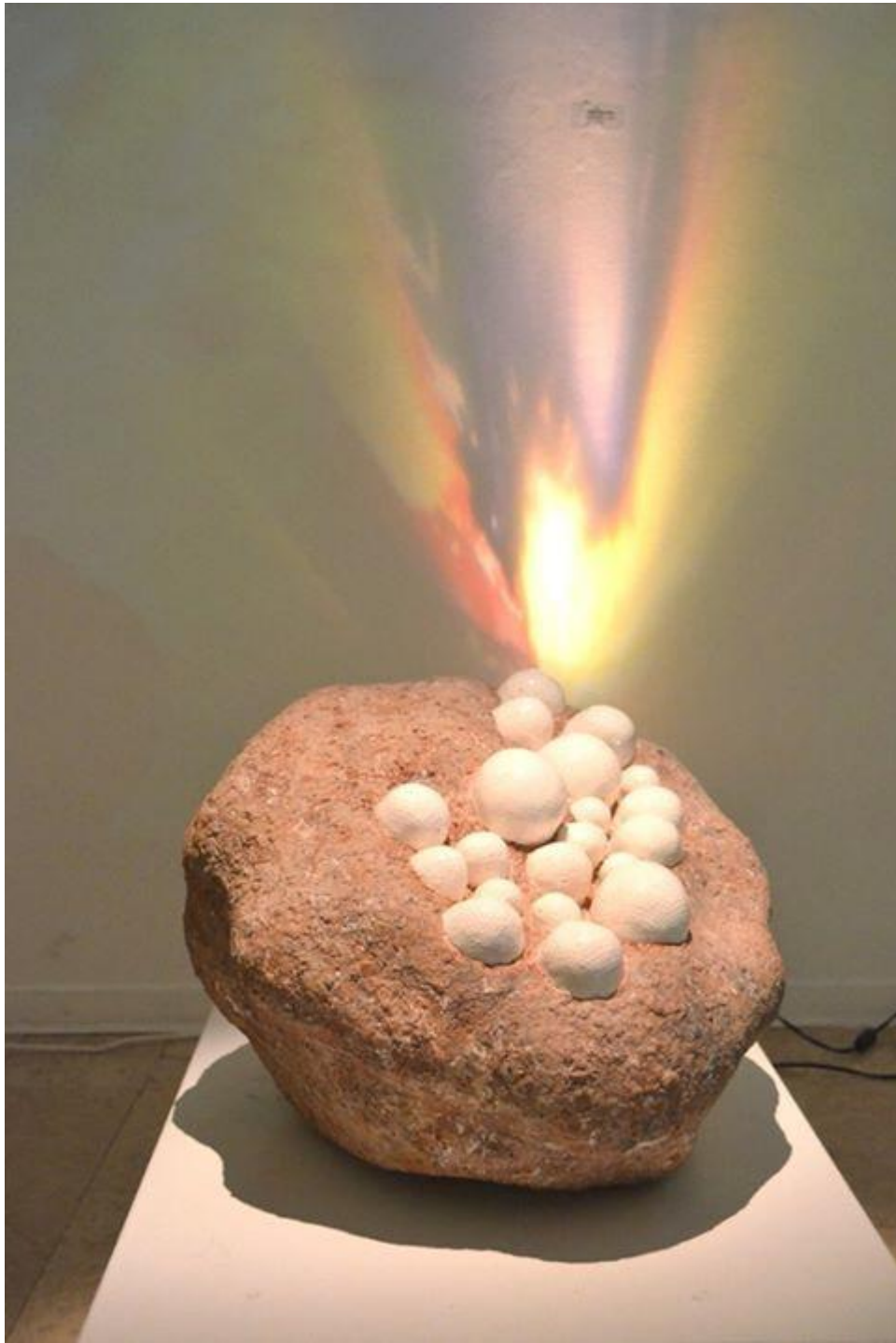
Sandra Ban solo exhibition catalog, KERAMEIKON – Gallery K10, Varaždin, Croatia, 2021



Sandra Ban solo exhibition in KERAMEIKON - Gallery K10, Varaždin, Croatia, 2021 /catalog and layout



Magical Botanical Garden, group exhibition; exhibition layout , Zagreb, Croatia, 2019



Magical Botanical Garden, part of the exhibition layout, Zagreb, Croatia, 2019



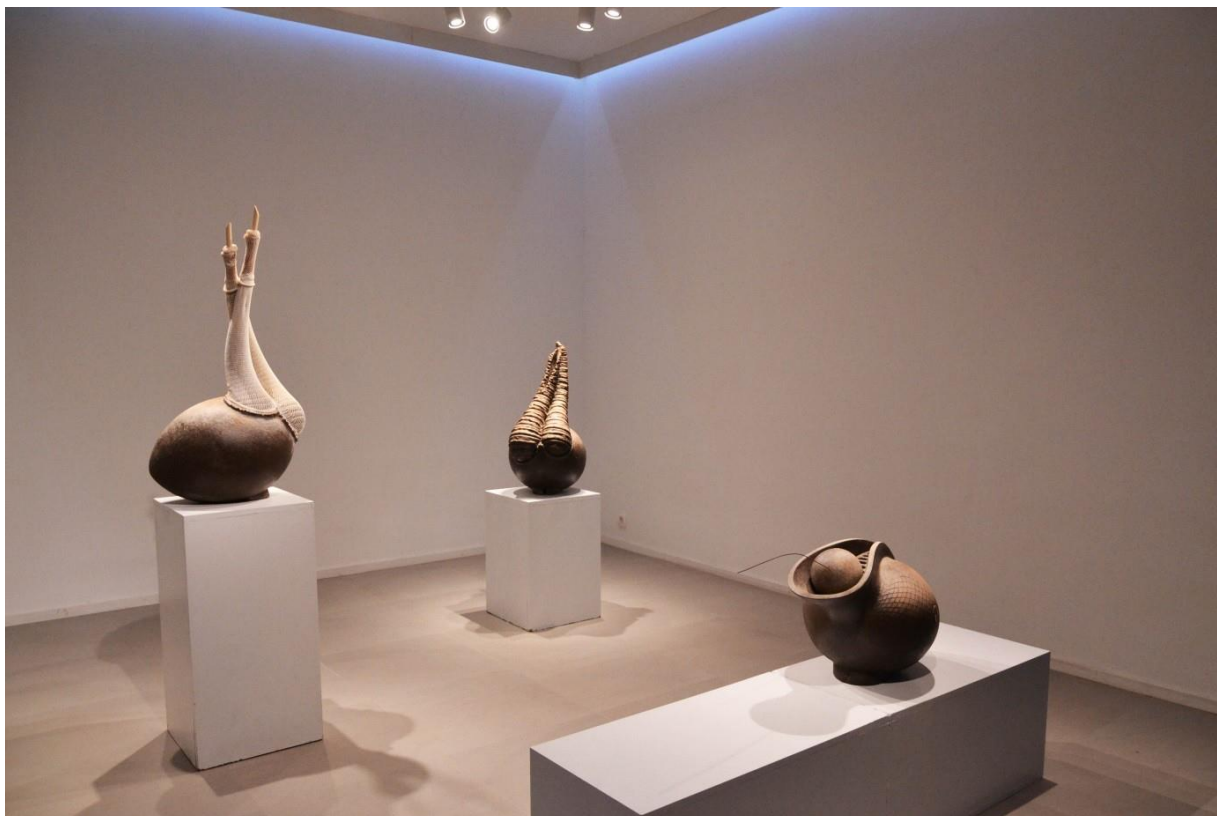
Magical Botanical Garden, part of the exhibition layout, Zagreb, Croatia, 2019



Magical Botanical Garden, exhibition layout, Zagreb, Croatia, 2019



Magical Botanical Garden, part of the exhibition layout (3), Zagreb, Croatia, 2019



Lobby of Silence, Mladen Ivančić solo exhibition; exhibition layout, Crikvenica, Croatia, 2019



Lobby of Silence, Mladen Ivančić solo exhibition; exhibition layout, Crikvanica, Croatia, 2019



Lobby of Silence, Mladen Ivančić solo exhibition; opening of the exhibition, Crikvenica, Croatia, 2019