

Esej

**KOSTA ANGELI RADOVANI**

Redoviti član Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti

## **Pismo prvom kiparu**

Essay

**KOSTA ANGELI RADOVANI**

Fellow of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts

## **A Letter to the First Sculptor**

Esej prominentnog hrvatskog kipara Koste Angelija Radovanija (1916. – 2002.) u obliku pisma imaginarnom prapovijesnom Kiparu. Iznoseći svoja stvaralačka istraživanja, sumnje, nedoumice, neshvaćanja i shvaćanja, autor objašnjava traženja “svoga puta” kako ne bi bio samo suvremenik već kipar za “sva vremena”. Esej je emitirao Radio Zagreb 1979. godine.

Ključne riječi: pismo; prvi kipar

An essay by prominent Croatian sculptor Kosta Angeli Radovani (1916 - 2002) in the form of a letter to an imaginary, prehistoric Sculptor. In discussing his creative research, doubts, quandaries, understandings and misunderstandings, the author explains his search for “his own path”, in order to be not only a modern sculptor, but a sculptor for “the ages”. The essay was read in a broadcast of Radio Zagreb in 1979.

Keywords: letter; the First Sculptor

Poštovani gospodine,

danas mi je jasno koliko sam puta htio izmoliti od vas da me primite u radionicu kao svoga učenika. Diplomirao sam prije četrdesetak godina, ali nije mi neprilično priznati da vrijeme moga rada, vrijeme moga kipa, vidim pred sobom otvoreno – pun nesigurnosti – a žedan pouzdanih spoznaja. Star sam i ja, pa se nadam da ćete s razumijevanjem pomoći svome potomku i baštiniku. Vjerujte, moj odnos prema vama nije bizaran.

Svaki je moj razgovor sa samim sobom bio ujedno i razgovor s vama. No, potreba (i) takvog sporazumijevanja bila je naročito izazivana odnosom mojih suvremenika prema mojem radu. Nalazio sam kod vas savjet i utjehu. Priznajem da zbog tih odmjeravanja svoje istine s istinom drugih nisam smogao nužnu hrabrost da vam se ranije obratim.

Nema nikakve sumnje da potječem izravno od vas. No, vaši su potomci, isto tako, i oni koji su svojim mišljenjem remetili naše smireno zajedništvo. Nasljeđa, dakle, nisu jednaka i ne dovode do istih, odvaganih zaključaka. Lakše ćemo se složiti nas dvojica – nego ja s njima. Nemojte me odbiti kao samozvanog ili prestarog učenika. Obećajem da ću biti smjeran i željan učenja. U vašoj radionici neću biti brbljivac ni “jedini” pravi kipar na svijetu. Dapače, vaš će mi primjer podariti neiskusnost potrebnu za bolja djela.

## II.

Još kao gimnazijalac morao sam pretrpjeti slatku netočnost “Jutarnjeg lista” – broj 8027, godište 1934. – prvi u redu nesporazuma, slučajnih ili namjernih, koji su zapetljali naš odnos, naravno, samo na mojoj strani. Novinar Žarko Harambašić, koji me “otkrio”, kako se to kaže u likovnoj publicistici, odgovoran je za tu prvu netočnost. Ja vas nisam

Dear sir,

Today it is clear to me how many times I have wanted to ask you to accept me into your workshop as a student. I graduated forty-odd years ago, but I am not ashamed to admit that I see the time of my work, my sculpture, open before me – full of uncertainties – and thirsty for reliable insight. I too am old, and so I hope that you will assist your descendent and heir with understanding. Trust me when I say that my attitude towards you is not bizarre.

Every conversation I have had with myself has also been a conversation with you. However, the (additional) need for such understanding was especially brought out by the attitude of my contemporaries towards my work. In you, I found advice and solace. I admit that, because of such a measuring of my truth with the truth of others, I was unable to gather the courage to speak to you earlier.

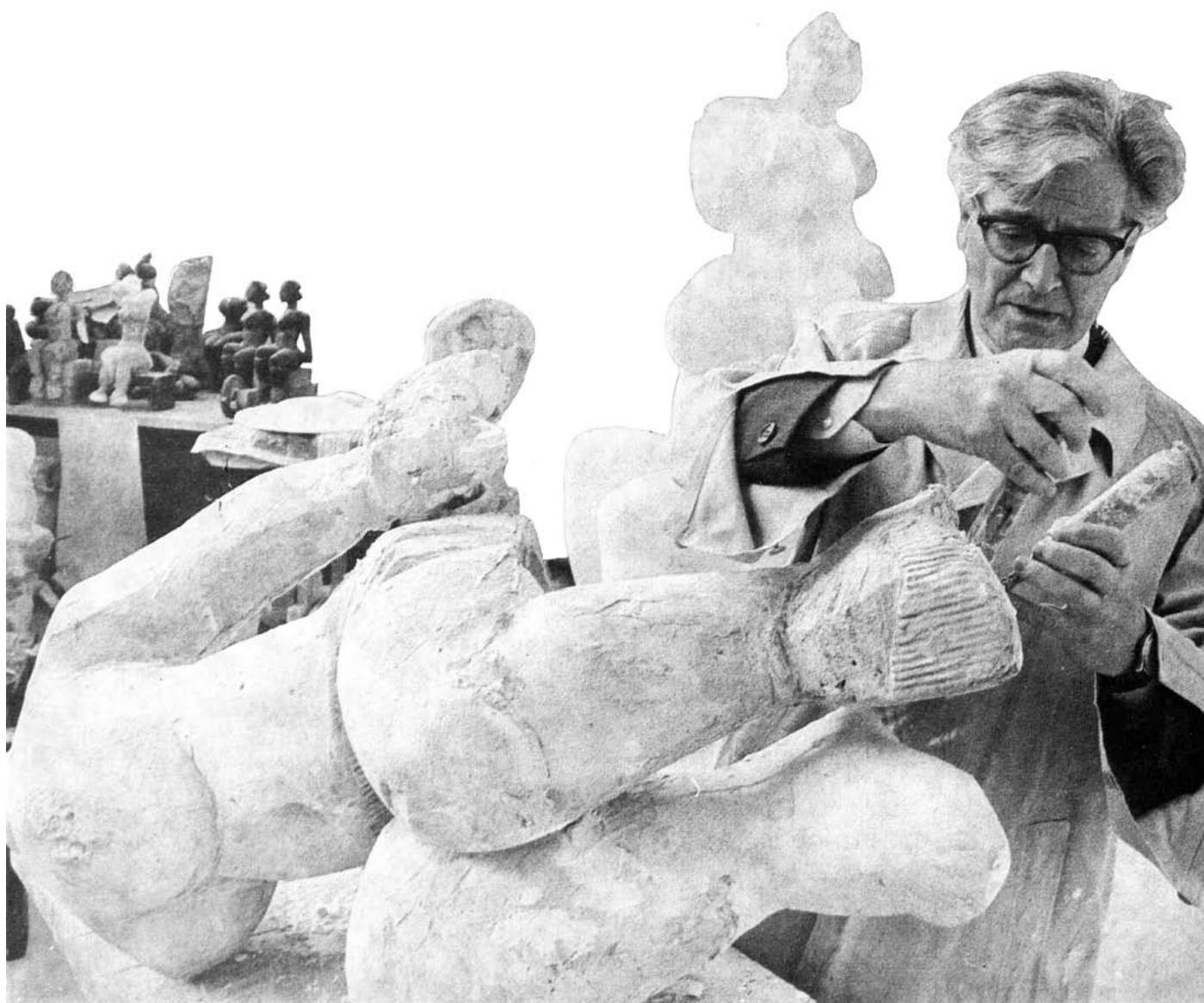
There is no doubt that I am your direct descendent. However, those whose opinions have disturbed our calm communion are also your descendants. Inheritances, therefore, are not equal and do not lead to the same, weighted conclusions. You and I will get along more easily than I will with them. Do not reject me as a student who is self-proclaimed or too old. I promise to be focused and willing to learn. In your workshop, I will be neither a chatterbox nor the “only” true sculptor in the world. On the contrary, your example will grant me the inexperience necessary for better works.

## II

As a student in gymnasium, I had to suffer the sweet inaccuracy of “Jutarnji list” - issue 8027, from 1934 - the first in a series of misunderstandings, accidental or intentional, that complicated our rela-

Kosta Angeli Radovani u ateljeu, katalog izložbe,  
Galerija Sebastian, Dubrovnik, 1977.

Kosta Angeli Radovani in his atelier, exhibition catalogue,  
Sebastian Gallery, Dubrovnik, 1977.



Kosta Angeli Radovani: Pismo prvom kiparu / A Letter to the First Sculptor

zaboravljao, ali on jest. Citiram ga: “... učenik Košta Angeli Radovani izjavio je našem suradniku da su njegovi ideali Leonardo i Michelangelo.” Molim vas da mi vjerujete, moja je prva ispovijest približna ili krivotvorena. Mogu vam to dokazati fotografijama mojih tadašnjih učeničkih “radova”, mahom iz pečene zemlje, kojima biste bili posebno zadovoljni. Oni su svojim oblikom nesumnjivo “poslije” obojice, poslije vas i Michelangela, ali su – između vas dvojice – bliži vama nego renesansi. Vaš je “početnički” ukus očigledniji.

Moj je otac zaslužan za to rano buđenje. Kao moderni slikar tražio je samo suvremeno. Secesiju. On, slikar-otac, nije uopće mario za “baštinu”, za “povijesnu tezu”, a bio je kao moj prvi uzor i učitelj potpuno ravnodušan prema mojem pubertetu, u vrijeme kad sam se posebno za vas vezivao. Kao karikaturist vjerovao je samo trenutku. Ipak, prve moje sumnje u takav pojam vremena, ili u moguću istovjetnost ljudi, bivših i današnjih, nametnule su mi njegove karikature, zapravo moje usporedbe tih karikatura sa starim slikama što su visjele na zidu u mojem domu: portreti njegovih i mojih predaka. Bilo je to – čovječanstvo. Nema razlika između života i pamćenja, premda vi stojite na samom početku sjećanja. Osim toga, uz obalu, dok sam posjećivao rođake u Splitu, Orebiću, Dubrovniku i po Boki, u meni se i drugim putem sve više počelo buditi zanimanje za vašu radionicu. Miho iz Bara i ciborij u Sv. Tripunu tjeroali su mi krv u glavu i širili moju znatiželju preko trogirskog portala do Grapčeve spilje. O tom sam pisao u “Jadranskoj straži”. Ljubo Karaman, njegov odnos prema rustici, postao mi je tada vrlo dragim štivom, pa je u to moje gimnazijsko doba isključeno da bih zanemarivao početak ljudske vrste zbog snažnijih renesansnih ili antičkih utjecaja! Ja jesam po školama klasičar, ali za moju je mladost bila veća tajna sfinga na Peristilu od zagonetnih osmijeha lombardijskog sfumata; vaša sjekira od korintskog kapitela.

Moja tetka Augusta živjela je u Milanu. Otkako sam je drugi put posjetio, godine 1926., pinakoteka

tionship — of course, from my side only. Journalist Žarko Harambašić, who “discovered” me, as it is said in fine arts journalism, was responsible for this first inaccuracy. I did not forget about you, but he did. I quote: “... student Kosta Angeli Radovani told our correspondent that his idols were Leonardo and Michelangelo”. I beg of you to believe that my first confession was either approximate or a forgery. I can prove it to you with photographs of my student “works” of the time, mostly in terra cotta, with which you would be especially satisfied. Their form is doubtlessly “after” the both of you - both you and Michelangelo - but, between the two of you, much closer to you than to the Renaissance. Your “beginner’s” taste is more apparent.

My father was responsible for this early awakening. As a modern painter, he sought only the modern. Art Nouveau. He, the painter-father, cared not for “heritage”, for “the historical thesis”, and as my first exemplar he was entirely indifferent towards my puberty, in a time when I became especially tied to you. As a caricaturist, he trusted only the moment. Despite this, my first doubts in the concept of time, or in the possible equality of people in both the past and present, were imposed upon me by his caricatures, or rather by my comparison of his caricatures to the old paintings that hung on the walls of my home: portraits of his and my ancestors. This was humanity. There is no difference between life and memory, despite your position at the very beginnings of memory. Aside from this, along the coast, while I was visiting relatives in Split, Orebić, Dubrovnik and along the Bay of Kotor, something else led to the further awakening of my interest in your workshop. Mihoje Brajkov and the Ciborium of St. Tryphon forced the blood into my brain and expanded my curiosity through the portal of the Cathedral of St. Lawrence in Trogir to the Grapčeva Cave on Hvar. I wrote about this in “*Jadranska straža*”. Ljubo Karaman became very dear reading material to me at the time because of his attitude towards rusticity, and so during my

Brera postala je moje kućno dobro, ali takvo je dobro bio i tvoj muzej – tada u Akademijinoj zgradi na Zrinjevcu. Tada sam još mislio da vam je muzej jedino obitavalište. Pročitao sam Aletscha, Burckhardta, Gobineaua i “Trilogiju” Merežkovskog. Drevna Kreta, Lilith, uzbudili su me mnogo snažnije nego “Sumrak bogova”, Leonardo i Julijan Apostata. Tad mi sve to i nije bilo važno, niti sam slutio da ću ikada imati razloga da se s toliko pažnje vratim u šarenilo svoje lude mladosti i da zaželim ponovno doći do vas – ne u knjigama, nego rukama.

Očito sam morao mnogo toga upoznati i naučiti da dođem do sebe kipara, ali i da zaboravim dio toga da bih dopro do vas. U šestom i sedmom razredu gimnazije upoznao sam modernu, seljačku klasiku Aristida Maillola, nešto u muzejima i galerijama kad bih putovao tetki, nešto iz očevih knjiga. Mislim da je on snažno poticao moje zanimanje za radionicu praotaca.

Ne nisam ćaknut. Ovim dopisivanjem s vama nastojim provjeriti gdje sam između vas i današnjice: na sredini mog “životnog puta” naglo su nestale renesansne optužbe, ali su naišle nove, suprotne. Ni pet, ni šest, rekoše mi da sam kipar-pračovjek.

### III.

I ako mi je u blagom predratnom sljepilu podmetnut Michelangelo, danas mu želim oduzeti značenje netočnog uzora i reći *urbi et orbi* kako su me, s tim što su me približili njemu, a udaljili od vas, pokušali okrasti za nekoliko milenija prošlosti. Jesmo li se razumjeli? Oni krivo misle da Michelangelo nije tvoj potomak i baštinik. Naravno, ni ja ga ne mogu isključiti iz reda u oporuci, kojom si svojim potomcima – i njemu, i meni – odredio mjesta. Pomoć koju tražim od tebe nije, dakle, potekla iz koristoljublja, vjeruj mi... ni iz taštine da budem prvi u nasljeđu.

Ja sam prosječno obrazovan čovjek, nisam vegetarijanac, što nisi bio ni ti, ali ne jedem iz cipe-

years at gymnasium my potential disregarding of the beginnings of mankind due to a strong ancient or Renaissance influence was already made impossible! I am a classicist by education, but the sphinx on Split's Peristil was a greater mystery to me in my youth than the mysterious smiles of Lombardic sfumata; your axe made of a Corinthian capital.

My aunt Augusta lived in Milan. Since the second time I visited her, in the year of 1926, the Pinacoteca di Brera became my domestic treasure trove, but your museum was such a treasure trove as well, then housed in the Academy building at Zrinjevac in Zagreb. At the time, I still believed that the museum was your only place of residence. I read Aletsch, Burchkardt, Gobineau and Merezhkovsky's "Trilogy". Ancient Crete and Lilith excited me much more strongly than "The Twilight of the Gods", Leonardo and Julian the Apostate. At the time, none of this was important to me, nor was I aware that I would ever have a reason to return to the colourfulness of my crazy youth with such care, and that I would wish to return to you - not through books, but with my hands.

Apparently I had to encounter and learn much to uncover myself as a sculptor, just as I had to forget a part of this to reach you. In sixth and seventh class of gymnasium, I encountered the modern, country classicism of Aristide Maillol, partly in museums and galleries when I would visit my aunt, partly from my father's books. I believe that he strongly influenced my interest in the workshop of the first sculptor.

No, I am not mad. Through this correspondence with you, I aim to verify where I stand between you and modern day: at the halfway point of my "life path", Renaissance accusations suddenly disappeared, but were replaced with new, opposing ones. They told me - no more, no less - that I was a "caveman-sculptor".

### III.

le nego sa žlicom iz tanjura, a samo povremeno iz ruke, premda to branim svojoj djeci. Ti nisi čitao Hegela, točnije, Kadijevićev citat Hegela u predgovoru nekoj boljoj izložbi: "... ono što je duhovno, ne pretvara se u nešto unutarnje pa da u toj individualiziranoj subjektivnosti dođe do izražaja, već se potpuno udružuje i miri sa spoljnom stranom čulne pojave, koja je isto tako opravdana." Neka ti ne smeta što se u tvoje vrijeme nije govorilo o univerzumu, o svijetu, kao o "spoljnoj čulnoj pojavi", pa te najprije molim da učvrstiš moje vjerovanje da su riječ i rasprave naknadna pojava! Za mene je bitno važno da „unutarnje” bude i "spoljna strana", zapravo da Michelangelo, a kroz njega Antika, pa i ti, budete i dalje dno moje svijesti, bez potrebe da me Hegel u to uvjerava. Zajednički vidljiv svijet vezuje nas s nama samima ali i s drugima. On je kao i navika u svojem ponavljanju, neprekidno nov i to kroz stoljeća, pa može ostati mojim, a i našim stalnim sadržajem – kraj unutrašnjeg motiva koji se izvija također iz njega.

Nemoj reći da ne razumiješ što govorim. Ono što je izvan nas, za sve je izvan nas, vidljivo i postojeće. Za tebe, za mene, za nas, za sve nas – jednako. Ako se ja kao kipar bavim tim zajedničkim vidljivim svijetom, onda sam zajedno s drugima na toj liniji kontakata, a ne na nekoj drugoj unutrašnjoj, koju mi "netko", "oni", nabijaju kao svoj superiorni, subjektivni dogmatizam. Takva kolonizacija moga svijeta, svijeta konkretnosti, luđim priviđenjima, može biti neželjena – te meni, i još nekome, ostati sastavnim dijelom "tuđega". Trudio sam se da shvatim i tuđe.

#### IV.

Moram priznati da mi je na studiju bilo vrlo teško s modernom umjetnošću – s njezinom avangardom pogotovo. Teško, a vrlo lako od onog časa kad sam razumio da ne moram iz svega rasti, odnosno, da postojim prije izbora. Istraživao sam, volio, odabirao bliže, penjao se po sukladnim stepenicama!

And if Michelangelo was foisted upon me in mild, pre-war blindness, today I want to relieve him of his significance as a false exemplar and state, *urbi et orbi*, how they, by bringing me closer to him and distancing me from you, tried to steal a few millennia of the past from me. Do we understand each other? They wrongly think that Michelangelo is neither your descendent nor your heir. Of course, I also cannot exclude him from the rank in your will, which you used to determine the place of your descendants - he and I together. Believe you me, the aid I seek of you did not, therefore, arise out of self interest... Nor did it arise from the vain wish to be your first heir.

I am a man of average education. I am not vegetarian – just as you were not – and I do not eat from a shoe, but rather off a plate using a spoon, and only occasionally from my hand (although I have forbidden my children from doing this). You have not read Hegel, or more exactly, Kadijević's quote of Hegel's in the foreword of some exhibition of better quality: "...what is spiritual does not transform into something internal only to subsequently come to expression within that same individualised subjectivity – instead it unites completely and reconciles itself with the external side of the sensory experience, which is also justified." It is important to me that the "internal" be also the "external side", or rather that Michelangelo, and through him antiquity, and you as well, continue to be the base of my awareness, without the need for Hegel to convince me of it. A communally visible world connects us with ourselves, but also with others. It is also like a habit in its repetition, ceaselessly new throughout the centuries, and so it can remain both my and our constant content - the end of an internal motif that also unfolds from it.

Do not tell me that you do not understand what I am saying. What is outside of us, is outside of all of us, visible and existant. For you, for me, for us, for all of us, equally so. If I, as a sculptor, deal in this communally visible world, then I am together



Žena na kocki, bronca, katalog izložbe u  
Galeriji Sebastian, Dubrovnik, 1977.

Woman on a cube, bronze, exhibition catalogue,  
Sebastian Gallery, Dubrovnik, 1977.

Još sam kao gimnazijalac, režući krumpir, ispitivao našeg zajedničkog srodnika Jeana-Hansa Arpa, s namjerom da tako uđem u svoju “nutrinu” i tamo nađem ono što nisam “očima opipao “. Međutim, on me drugačije oplodio, ne privukavši me svojim vanjskim oblikom. On me upozorio da je gomolj opća masa svega – lica, leđa, koljena, svega. Pokušao sam otkriti tajnu njegove vizije, a dobio sam jasniju i krupniju oblinu od one koju sam promatrao na “modelu”. Detalji su se naprosto pretapali u njegov loptasti volumen, pa je njegova apstrakcija postala vrlo konkretni držač najstvarnije sagledanog lica.

Da kažem i to: zbog toga sam na akademiji volio Piera della Francescu, njegovu “Madonnu dell’uovo”, madonu s jajetom. Nećeš mi vjerovati, Piero je među mojim kućnim bogovima imao isto mjesto kao i ti, kao tvoj potomak, a moj predak. Tada i danas!

O mojim teškoćama s konstruktivistima neću ti pisati. Ostavili su ipak u meni dubok trag (kubizam i industrijski instrumentarij) pogotovo otkad se domogoh pojma “corporis humani fabrica”. Činilo mi se da sam ispod onog što sam gledao ponovno otkrio neki opći, kiparski, “unutrašnji” sadržaj, jer nisam shvaćao razliku među vama; razliku između tebe, njih i Piera. Naravno, u tom su razdoblju tvoji likovni principi bili osobito naglašeni, tako da su se u nekoj posebnoj vrsti konkretnosti čak i poklapali s “metafizikom” istraživanja. Avangarda i nosi u sebi karakter onoga što su u meni “humanisti” progonili. I ona vraća zrelu, prezrelu stvaralačku degeneraciju bliže izvoru – tebi – i predlaže ponovnu elementarizaciju izražajnog sredstva u želji da se pomladi. Ionako nema definitivne umjetnosti.

Poznavao sam Prampollinija, Reggianija i Munarija u jeku fašizma, a nadrealizam sam kupovao kao strip. Vedete lista “Settebella”, Mosca i Marcieri bijahu moji kavanski drugovi i prijatelji. Kavana se zvala “San Rafaele”... Milano, dva koraka iza Galerije! Nisam, dakle, mimoilazio razumijevanje tuđeg stvaranja, ali nisam trpio ni od nerazumijevanja za svoj rad. Živio sam u društvu s raznim umjetnicima,

with others on that line of contact, not on some other internal one that “someone”, “they” impose upon me as their own superior, subjective dogma. Such a colonisation of my world, a world of concreteness, in madder hallucinations, could be unwanted — and remain to me and someone else a component part of the “Other”. I have also made an effort to comprehend the Other.

#### IV.

I must admit that I had serious difficulties with modern art during my studies — especially with the avant-garde. Difficult, but very easy from the moment in which I understood that I did not have to grow out of everything, or rather that I existed before the choice. I researched, loved, chose more closely, climbed up the appropriate stairs! When I was still in gymnasium, cutting potatoes, I interrogated our mutual relative Jean-Hans Arp, and in doing so intended to enter my own “insides” and find there what I had not “touched with my eyes”. However, he fertilised me in a different way, not attracting me with his external appearance. He warned me that the tuber is a mass of everything — faces, backs, knees, everything. I tried to uncover the secret of his vision, and I received a clearer and bulkier roundness from that I had seen upon the “model”. The details simply blended into his ovoid volume, and so his abstraction became a very real handle for a face that had been most realistically comprehended.

I must say this, as well: because of this, during my time at the academy, I loved Piero Della Francesca, his “Madonna dell’Uovo”, the Madonna with an Egg. You will not believe me when I say it, but Piero, among my personal gods, held the same place as you did, as your heir and my ancestor. Then and today!

I shall not write you about my difficulties with constructivism. They have left, however, a deep



ali tek kad sam se vratio kući u Zagreb, nakon studija, osjetio sam da me razlike između umjetnika vode u geto!

## V.

Valja priznati da se tada, tokom Drugog svjetskog rata, a i kasnije u Zagrebu, događalo nešto čudnovato. Stalno ista, tipično naša, samouvjerenost i isključivost.

Eto, moj slučajni, rani susret s avangardom odvajao me od mojih novih zagrebačkih sudaca i drugova – “slučajni”, jer tetka Augusta nije morala živjeti u Milanu, ona nije morala poznavati Mimmo Camin, buduću suprugu mojeg erezijarha arhitekta Agnoldomenica Picaea i tako dalje, i tako dalje. Moja se neposredna milanska prošlost Zagrepčanima učinila stranom, dalekom: upravo “tvojom”! Kad je do njih stigla svjetska avangarda pedesetih godina – ja sam već nastojao oko antitetičnog, sljedećeg koraka. Naravno, nije mi uspio, ali su razlike u informacijama djelovale kao apsurdna vremenska inverzija. Osamljenost, pa i taj nesporazum, bijahu dakle, vrlo ozbiljni i istovremeno vrlo neozbiljni. Ti si mi opet žustro pomogao da ne shvatim bit naših razlika, da nastavim. Smatralo se i tada, i poslije, i danas, u svim trendovima, da preskačem bitno, i realističko, i mistično, i avangardno! Smatram me prizemljenim čovjekom bez nutrine, ideala i velikih ideja. Moji kipovi žena, koji su ih prisjećali tvojih idola, bijahu krunskim svjedocima. U optužnici je isprva stajalo “apologija ružnog”, a poslije “tradicionalizam”. Vezaše me za sve i svakoga samo ne za ono u čemu sam do grla živio! Neki bi kritičari i tebi prišili muzejsku inspiraciju. Oni ne gledaju oko sebe nego u sebe.

Uz to domaća, zagrebačka teorija hipnotički vjeruje u geografiju. Od nezaboravnog “Z. Hć-a” naovamo, više od mojih veza s tobom, na udaru je moj (talijanski) studij, više od mojih (mediteranskih) predaka, brđana i mornara. Sve je to “blizu”, pa su

mark in me (cubism and industrial instrumentation), especially since I encountered the concept “corporis humani fabrica”. It seemed to me that I had rediscovered some general, sculptor’s “internal” content underneath what I was looking at, because I did not understand the difference between you all; the difference between you, them, and Piero. Of course, your artistic principles in this period were especially accentuated, so that in some special form of concreteness they even corresponded with the “metaphysics” of research. The avant-garde also carries within itself the character of what the “humanists” had hunted in me. It too brings ripe, overripe creative degeneration closer to its source - to you - and suggests a re-elementarisation of the means of expression in the aim of making it younger. Definitive art does not exist at any rate.

I knew Prampollini, Reggiani and Munari in the wake of fascism, and I bought surrealism like a comic book. The newspaper “Settebella”, Mosca and Marciari kept my company in the cafés. The café was called “San Rafaele”... Milan, two steps behind the Gallery! I did not, therefore, miss out on an understanding of others’ creations, but I did not suffer from misunderstandings of my own. I lived in the company of various artists, but only when I returned home to Zagreb, after my studies, did I feel that the differences between artists was leading me into the ghetto!

## V.

I must confess that, then, during the Second World War, and even later in Zagreb, something miraculous was happening. A constant, typically Croatian self-confidence and exclusivity.

And so, my coincidental, early meeting with the avant-garde separated me from my new judges and comrades in Zagreb — “coincidental”, because Aunt Augusta did not have to live in Milan, she did not have to know Mirna Camin, the future wife of

pri promjeni pretposljednje intelektualne mode bez neodlučnosti zaboravili na tebe i počeli me ponovno povezivati s antikom, renesansom i barokom. Kombinaciji nije nedostajala preglednost i jasnoća. Bila je funkcionalna kao tragovi zločinca u krimićima! Odrekoše se svakog zajedništva, i s tobom i sa mnom – apsolutno današnji, i-po-tome-sami-na-svijetu, ograničeni doktrinom. Najprije nas izjednačavahu zbog ružnoće mog “debelog” kiparstva, a onda me zbog istog mesa okrstiše “klasičnim” (za njih neiskrenim, umjetnim odnosom prema suvremenom i očitom, uopće prema prirodi). Ne znam, slijediš li logiku tih metonimija. Ona je nekako u opreci između modelirane forme i građene, naturalizma i apstrakcije. A u tom si im okviru pogotovo nejasan: oni kažu i za tvoje radno sredstvo da je “apstraktno”.

Naprосто nisu mogli progutati činjenicu da je i figuralno suvremeno (likovno moćno). Suvremeno kiparstvo nije jedino ono nefiguralno, apstraktno, unutrašnje.

## VI.

Govorim kao i ti: “Vjerujem u nogu.” Još u prvoj polovici godine 1955. – znači li tebi išta naš kalendar? – skrivao sam se iza slavnihi usta u “Književnim novinama” da pustim u promet svoju lozinku. Svejedno, jer ne znam jesam li je održao. Tvoj je njih savršen: ti ćeš po mirisu osjetiti što sam, vepar ili jelen – materijalist ili metafizičar.

Ne, ja ni tebe ne pitam, koje je moje mjesto u našoj umjetnosti. Suvremena teorija, naime oni, misle “iz problema”, a ja hodam Ilicom. Susrećem ono što si i ti susretao. Ako ništa, mi se kao muškarci shvaćamo. I, to će me učvrstiti u životu, usudio bih se reći, više od njihovih filozofskih ekspertiza o tome kamo ide današnji svijet. Tvoja je povlastica očito bila u tome što si me učio boljem gledanju. Ne razlikovah moj univerzitet od tvoje spilje! Izbočenost materijala, steatit, kosti, dijelovi koji su ispred dru-

my heresiarch, architect Agnoldomenico Pica, and so on and so forth. My immediate, Milanese past made Zagrebians foreign to me, distant: “your” people! When world currents of the avant-garde reached them in the 1950’s, I was already attempting to take the antithetical, next step. Of course, I did not succeed, but the differences in information acted as an absurd inversion in time. Loneliness followed by this misunderstanding were, therefore, very serious and simultaneously very frivolous. Once again, you helped me intensely to not comprehend the essence of our differences, to continue. It was considered at the time, as it was both later and today in all trends, that I was skipping over the important, and realistic, and mystical, and avant-garde! They considered me a grounded man without an inside, ideals or big ideas. My sculptures of women, which reminded them of your idols, were the key witnesses. The list of charges first read “an apology to the ugly”, and later “traditionalism”. They tied me with everything and everyone except for that which I was up to my neck in! Some critics would even consider *you* to have been inspired by the museum. They look not around themselves, but into themselves.

Besides this, the domestic, Zagrebian theory hypnotically believes in geography. From the unforgettable “Z. Hć” onward, my (Italian) studies came under attack, more so than my connections with you, more so than my (Mediterranean) ancestors, mountain folk and sailors. All of this is “close”, and so upon changing the second most recent intellectual style, they decisively forgot about you and again began to connect me with antiquity, the Renaissance and Baroque. This combination was not lacking in visibility and clarity. It served a purpose, like the evidence of a crime in a mystery! They forsook every connection, both with you and with me – absolutely current, and-thus-alone-in-the-world, limited by doctrine. First they equated us for the ugliness of my “fat” sculptures, and then because of the same meat christened me “classical” (which



Djevojka, bronca, katalog izložbe,  
Galerija Sebastian, Dubrovnik, 1977.

Girl, bronze, exhibition catalogue,  
Sebastian Gallery, Dubrovnik, 1977.

to them meant a dishonest, artificial relationship towards the modern and obvious, and none whatsoever to nature). I do not know if you follow the logic of these metonymies. They are somehow in opposition between modeled forms and constructed ones, between naturalism and abstraction. And within this framework, you are especially unclear to them: they also call your means of creation “abstract”.

They simply could not swallow the fact that the figural is also modern (artistically powerful). Modern sculpture is not unique in being non-figural, abstract, interior.

## VI.

Like you, I say: “I believe in the foot”. In the first half of 1955 – does our calendar mean anything to you? – I hid behind famous lips in “*Književne novine*” (Literary News) to put my password into function. All the same, because I do not know if I have preserved it. Your sense of smell is perfect: you will be able to tell what I am, a boar or a deer – a materialist or a metaphysicist.

No, I will not ask even you what my place is in our art scene. Modern theory, “they”, think by starting “from the problem”, and I walk down Ilica street. I meet the same thing that you met. If nothing else, as men we understand. And, that will ground me in life, I dare say, more than their philosophical expertise on the direction in which the modern world is headed. Your privilege, apparently, was in your teaching me how to observe better. I do not differentiate between my university and your cave! The protuberance of materials, soapstone, bone, parts of which are in front of others, a stomach, breasts, a head, a mass, a space, smooth transitions – all of this excludes the effects of human wildness towards nature, naturalism. You are “my” man because you are “our” permanent foundation, an energetic ceiling, *a metaphor of living certainty* to



Djevojka, bronca,  
katalog izložbe,  
Galerija Sebastian,  
Dubrovnik, 1977.

Girl, bronze,  
exhibition catalogue,  
Sebastian Gallery,  
Dubrovnik, 1977.

gih, trbuh, dojke, glava, masa, prostor, prijelazi u oblo – sve to isključuje efekte ljudske podivjalosti pred prirodom, naturalizam. Ti si “moj” čovjek jer si “naš” stalni temelj, energetski plafon, *metafora životne nesumnjivosti* na koju sam navikao. Ni ti, ni ja nismo iz inkubatora, industrijski ljudi, nego ljudski ljudi! Nismo građani, ali umijemo graditi.

Reci, zašto su tvoji kipovi prije “Venera” predstavljali krdo veprova? Prije stvaranja postoji dakle crni vepar. Vidiš, ima u tome nečeg što se bitno ne razlikuje svojom “uzvišenošću” od mojeg “plitkog” dvoboja s poznatim. Želja za sigurnim sadržajem nije starinski posao okrenut pretpovijesnom, nije samo pritisak navika, on je i današnja potreba. Napadoše, opet, mjesto moga sunčevog rječnika, “tebe u meni”, gorilu u otmjenoj inženjerskoj današnjici! Može li se živjeti bez pamćenja svih prošlosti – od danas unatrag do tebe?

Tako mi je ta čudna zamka s vremenom postala šašava i neozbiljna. Do besvijesti sam ponavljao portret, portret. Ono što postoji. Nema avangardnog nosa!

A, što je faraonski nos izvan egipatske koncepcije kipa? “Nos”, baš i samo nos, nos kakav nalazim i na Boženinu licu, koje čak ima onu put što ne prima drugačije svjetlo od pješčara iz Sahare. Priznajem pomoć svih kipara svijeta koji su se našli pred Boženama svoga vremena, ako ni zbog čega drugog, a ono zato da ih ne ponavljam. I to je ludo, ta tašta misao o sebi neponovljivom, i to kroz novi nos, bez nosa, nosa po prvi put! Stvar je to i talenta. “Ponavljanje” je dalo i Giotto i Rodina. Nisam nikad izricao te sudove s drugim smislom. Upravo je za osudu mišljenje da se nepriznavanjem pravila stječu nova, epohalna pravila.

Imam još toliko toga naučiti i u tvojoj radionici. Ja te pitam kao profesora – postoji li svijet “očitog” i, odijeljeno, svijet ideja? Oblikuje li zemlju prvo i drugo, ili jedno bez drugoga? Što je novo, a što staro? S Lipschitzom sam u ponedjeljak 7. maja 1962. godine dogovorio, u njegovoj radionici uz rijeku Hudson, da je nosu mjesto na sredini lica.

which I have become accustomed. Neither you nor I were born out of an incubator, industrial people – we are human people! We are not city-dwellers, but we know how to build.

Tell me - why did your sculptures before “Venus” represent a herd of wild boar? Before creation, therefore, there exists a black boar. You see, there is something within this that does not differ significantly from my “shallow” duel with the well-known in terms of its “sublimity”. The desire for safe content is not an old task turned prehistoric, it is not merely the pressure of habit, it is a modern-day need. They attacked, again, the place of my lexicon of the sun, “you within me”, a gorilla in the refined modern-day life of engineering. Can one survive without the memory of all pasts – from today all the way back to you?

And so, this strange trap of time became silly and frivolous to me. I repeated “portrait, portrait” until I was blue in the face. The existent. There is no avant-garde nose!

But, what is the Pharaoh’s nose outside of the Egyptian concept of the statue? “A nose”, simply and only a nose, the kind of nose I also find on Božena’s face, which even has that kind of tone that rejects all light different from that of Saharan sandstone. I accept the help of all the world’s sculptors who have found themselves before the Boženas of their time, if for no other reason than that I may not repeat their work. This is also madness, such a vain thought about oneself as unrepeatable, through a new nose, without a nose, a nose for the first time! This is also a matter of talent. “Repetition” made Giotto and Rodin. I have never read these judgments in a different sense. The opinion that the rejection of rules leads to the attainment of new, epochal rules is what should be condemned.

There is so much more for me to learn in your workshop, as well. I ask you as I ask a professor – does the world of the “apparent” exist separately from the world of ideas? Does the earth shape one

## VII.

Nisam nikad osporavao apstrakciju, dapače, i nedavno sam u jednom intervjuu naglasio da je apstrakcija znatan doprinos jasnijem kiparskom jeziku. Najviše sam naučio od svoga apstraktnog “suparnika”. Vidiš našu bijedu: mi smo navikli da se i za dane sukobljujemo jer su takva koji put i naša trajanja. Prosudujemo djelo više s tematskog stajališta nego s kiparskog, pa će tebi sasvim izbjeci smisao što s tim želim reći kad ističem da sam zakleti protivnik kiparstva ideja, kao kipar očitog, vidljivog, ili vrlo, vrlo netočnog pojma u umjetnosti: mimezisa.

Za mene između tvog kipa i apstrakcije nema razlike. Vi ste moji simultani svjetovi. Kad pokrijem “opisne” zone, recimo dojke tvoje životne družice (koju Vladimir Nazor zove “ceckom”, zbog njenih prostranih i prostornih dojki), ti vrli moji carinici i prometnici ne umiju reći je li to zadnjica, obraz ili Jean Hans Arp!

Ti i ne znaš da postoji patentirano pravo na specifični repertoar oblika te stereometrijske i steatopigijske sferičnosti. Mi mislimo, nas dvojica, da površina sadrži, a oni misle da površina razlikuje, opisuje. Identitet i generalije “svetih oblutaka” doista ovise o tebi nepoznatim “sadržajima”, filozofskim, lirskim, epskim, tendencioznim “i-tako-dalje-idejama” i licencama. Ti nisi ni zamislio prevlast teme jer se ona nije odvojila ni izdvojila iz tebe kao provokantni, šokantni dio ideje, koncepta, smisla iznad konstitutivnog, kiparskog.

Možda su današnji ljudi izgubili osjećaj za neke realitete, za nogu, nosove, za formu, pa ovo moje obraćanje tebi, Kromanjonče, treba shvatiti kao želju za sporazumijevanjem izvan domene ideja (tehničkih, industrijskih, propagandističkih) s čovjekom sličnih “nižih” potreba. Ta, nama je priznavanje očitog zajedničko. Mi “vjerujemo u nogu”, ili da ostanemo u mojoj glosi s tom zajedničkom devizom, “mi vjerujemo u nosove”, premda se ti baš nisi iskazao o njima.

and the other, or one without the other? What is new, and what is old? On Monday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1962, I agreed with Lipschitz in his workshop beside the Hudson River that the nose’s place is in the middle of the face.

## VII.

I never disputed abstraction, quite the opposite, and I recently emphasized in an interview that abstraction has made significant contributions to a clearer language of sculpture. I have learned the most from my abstract “rival”. You see our misery: we are used to arguing for days because, occasionally, this is how long we last. We judge a work more from a thematic position than from that of a sculptor, and so you will entirely miss the point of what I am trying to say when I emphasize that I am a sworn opponent of the sculpture of ideas, as a sculptor of the apparent, the visible, or a very, very inaccurate concept in art: mimesis.

To me, there is no difference between your sculpture and abstraction. You are my simultaneous worlds. When I cover the “descriptive” zones, for example, the breasts of your life partner (whom Vladimir Nazor calls “Cecka” due to her spacious and spatial breasts), my virtuous customs agents and traffic police do not know enough to say whether it is a buttock, a cheek or Jean Hans Arp!

You also do not know that there exists a patented right to a specific repertoire of shapes and stereometric and steatopygic sphericity. We believe, we two, that the surface contains, and they believe that the surface differentiates, describes. The identity and generalia of “holy stones” are truly dependent on “content” unknown to you, philosophical, lyrical, epic, tendentious “and-so-on ideas” and licences. You could not even conceive of the predominance of this topic, since it has been neither separated nor singled out from you as a provocative, shocking part of the idea, concept,

Istjerivanje đavla “s nosom” ili bez njega, i kao simbol za poricanje očitog, nije duga vijeka. Kolektivno podržavanje proizvoljnog lomi sliku svijeta, njegovu spoznaju. Ta “sotonska” sloboda interpretacije, ili izuma, umjesto slike svijeta, njegove spoznaje – nudi lom. Strašne su i dosadno prazne te “pojedinačne” srži, ta “lična” otkrića!

## VIII.

Govorio sam o svom većem interesu za Musée de l’Homme, nego za Louvre, o svojem tamnom trokutu, nekako duboko na globusu između crvenih Kmera, crne Afrike i Yukatana: a uopće, što sam više svojim kipom upozoravao da nisam Fidijin “mali”, da nisam potomak Flavijevaca, više su me gurali u zablude koje se vide jedino s vlastite stolice. A, zamisli moju umišljenost, bio sam počašćen što me Željko Sabol u “Oku”, zove “najstarijim zemljinim sinom”!

Oto Bihalji Merin otvorio je raspravu o mojoj vremenskoj polivalenciji još 1961. u svojim “Adventure of Modern Art” (Abrams, New York), a nije mi to osporavao ni šest godina ranije svojom tvrdnjom da poznajem križaljku “onog što je bilo u onom što je danas”. U mome ćeš atelijeru naći poznatu faunu: Vere, Mace i moje portrete, Filjake, Pučare, Milene, sve! Opet odvrtnje moje inspiracije prema tebi kao kabinetu voštanih figura. Moja je demodirana akademija – ulica, a ne paleontološko-renesansna vitrina! Tako mi Belzebuba, bio bih ponosan da su mi preci iz tvog legla priznali smisao bizonskog artefaksa, ali ipak je previše da me s time časte moji školovani suvremenici. Zašto bi opip značio samo prošlost? Kiparstvo nije stvar palca: niže spoznaje vanjskog reljefa stvari.

Bojim se da me nećeš primiti na nauk zbog moje brbljivosti, koja tebe nije odlikovala. Shvati da sam i ja radnik sit nagodbenih problematika, koji želi stvoriti poput tebe djelo kao čudo evidencije, a ne domišljanja.

the reason above the constitutive, above that relating to sculpture.

Perhaps modern-day people have lost their sense for some realities, for the foot, for noses, for form, and so my consulting you, my dear Cro-Magnon, should be perceived as a wish to meet an understanding outside the domain of the idea (technical, industrial, propagandic) with a man of similar, “lower” needs. We share our acknowledgement of the apparent. We “believe in the foot”, or, to stand by my gloss with a communal slogan, “we believe in noses” – although you never really did make any statements about them.

Exorcising the devil “with a nose” or without one, as a symbol of denial of the obvious, is not long lasting. The collective support of the arbitrary fractures the picture of the world, of its insight. This “satanic” freedom of interpretation, or invention, in place of a picture of the world, its insight – offers a fracture. These “individual” essences, these “personal” discoveries are frightening and boringly empty.

## VIII.

I have spoken about my greater interest for the Musée de l’Homme than for the Louvre, about my dark triangle, somewhere deep in the globe between the Red Khmer, black Africa and the Yucatan: however much I used my sculptures to warn that I was not Fidia’s “boy”, that I was not a descendent of the Flavians, the more they pushed me into delusions that can be seen only from one’s own seat. And, imagine my arrogance, I was honored that Željko Sabol, in “Oku,” called me “the earth’s oldest son!”

Oto Bihalji Merin opened a discussion on my temporal polyvalence in 1961 in his “Adventure of Modern Art” (Abrams, New York), while he did not even raise the question six years earlier in his claim that I knew the crossword of “that what was

## IX.

Ja ne sudjelujem u današnjim “otkrićima”, ne cijenim jedino “buntovnike”, koji vide ono što ja ne vidim. Što mi ne vidimo.

Tebe poznajem samo desetke i desetke stoljeća, a ne znam poznajem li te dovoljno. Učim kod tebe, i sve se pitam ako je stalno i ljudsko ono što je razlog buni, kako možeš ti – kao naše i moje polazište – biti uteg i smetnja napretku? Iz moje perspektive pokušavam nešto poput rekonstrukcije čovjekove, a zapravo sam uspio osjetiti kako je moj odnos prema vremenu onakav kakav je (valjda) bio i tvoj; neotuđiv dio naše ljudske i kiparske autentičnosti.

Očito, ima ljudi koji ne mogu odmjeriti svoj raspon. Kako bi inače sebe mogli osjećati – kao ideju, kao vlast. Oni to ne rade razborito. Budućnost ih neće ubrati kao napredak. Dobri ljudi ne žele i ne mogu živjeti bez tebe i tvoje baštine. Ali ponavljam, moja je nježnost prema tvom kiparstvu i potreba zaštite od velikih mislilaca, tih “površnih kiparskih šaljivčina”.

within that what is today”. In my atelier, you will find familiar fauna: Veras, Macas, my portraits, the Filjaks, the Pučars, Milenas, all of them! Again, an unscrewing of my inspiration towards you as towards a cabinet of wax figures. My demodé academy – the street, not a paleontological, Renaissance display cabinet! Beelzebub help me, I would be proud if my ancestors from your litter recognised the sense of the bison’s craftsman, but it is unfortunately too much to expect for my schooled contemporaries to honour me with this. Why should the sense of touch mean only the past? Sculpture is not in the thumb: it is not perception of the external relief of things.

I fear that you will not accept me for apprenticeship because of my talkativeness, a trait that did not define you. Understand that I, too, am a worker tired of the problematics of compromise, who, like you, wishes to create works as a miracle of evidence, and not inventiveness.



Djevojka na suncu, bronca, katalog izložbe, Galerija Sebastian, Dubrovnik, 1975

Girl in the sunshine, bronze, exhibition catalogue, Sebastian Gallery, Dubrovnik, 1975.



Idem svojim putem: ne razobličujem vizijama samouništenja ona ljudska zajedništva, koja postoje otkad je svijeta i vijeka. I, postojat će. Žao mi je što ima toliko bližnjih, koji zakidaju drugome sreću i rad svojim dogmama. Svaki od svakoga zahtijeva i očekuje drugo od onoga što on uistinu jest! Mi danas i ne volimo razumno kiparstvo, nego pretjerano i ne-kiparstvo. Prošlost društva, njegova zora, bijaše modernija! Ti, kipar ... a mi vlasnici riječi! Svaki daje ono što ima, ono što je lakše “naučiti”.

Ja želim biti kipar, kipar za svakoga i za sva vremena, a ne samo nečiji suvremenik. Neću završiti pismo drugarskim pozdravom, ali i mogao bih. Stoj mi dobro!

Tvoj Kosto

## IX.

I do not take part in today’s “discoveries”, I do not value only the work of “rebels” who see what I do not see. What we do not see.

I have only known you for tens and tens of centuries, and I am not sure I know you well enough. I learn from you, and I ask myself – if the constant, human eye is that what causes rebellion, how can you – as our and my starting point – be a weight on and an impediment to progress? From my perspective, I am attempting something like the reconstruction of man, and I have actually succeeded in sensing how my relationship towards time is the way yours was (probably); an inalienable part of our authenticity as humans and sculptors.

Obviously, there are people who cannot measure their range. How else could they perceive themselves – as an idea, as power. They do not do this rationally. The future will not choose them as progress. Good people do not want to live, and cannot live, without you and your heritage. But, I repeat, my tenderness towards your sculpture is also a need for protection from great thinkers, those “superficial sculptor-jokers”.

I am going my own way: I do not misshape that human community which has existed as long as the world and the ages, and shall continue to exist, with visions of self-destruction. I am sorry that there are so many of my fellow men whose dogma robs others of their happiness and work. Each person demands and expects from everyone else something other than what he really is! Today, we do not like rational sculpture, instead we prefer exaggerated sculpture and non-sculpture. Society’s past, its very dawning, was more modern! You, a sculptor... and we, the owners of words! Each gives what he has, what is easier to “learn”.

I want to be a sculptor, a sculptor for everyone and for all time, and not only someone’s contemporary. I shall not end this letter with a comradely salutation, although I could. Be well!

Yours, Kosto