



Plastered Dreams

Beate Schubert-Huck

ABSTRACTS IN PLASTER

There is something singularly fascinating about the work of German artist Beate Schubert, and those better off for it are not just the retailers but the paying customers as well.

The name of Beate Schubert's company, Mimesis Atelier has a double barrelled English translation. Mimesis, a Greek term, means the artistic imitation of nature and reality. Atelier is French for the workroom or locality of an artist in which one finds not only such necessities as light and equipment with which to work, but the atmosphere which provides the vital and intangible thrust of inspiration. "Mimesis Atelier is a synonym for the ways and methods of my creative thinking and doing", says Beate.

Beate's labour bears its fruit in such tangible creations form dismembered plaster bodies praying for salvation; a violinist frozen in time as if he had just bowed a middle C seconds before being caught in the act; and an optician, bent over his work bench, vest pockets open and sagging from the weight of his tool; to a man reading, legs crossed, trousers creased and baggy, shoes old but comfortable looking – all too oddly realistic as if the human spirit were trying to escape from within its plaster skin. Beate begun her creative career making pottery, then went to Munich to study interior architecture where she developed a love for building architectural models.

Though she continued with her pottery, her

interest in sculpting plaster soon took precedent, particularly after making a bust of a friend. The awakening possibilities of working in plaster had dawned.

Her first commission was of a policemen for a Berlin pub; her second of Elvis Presley for a disco. In the meantime, between commercial commissions, she experimented with figures "related not to realism" but with expressions and feelings such as angst, security and relaxation. Following her first exhibition in Munich, in the offices of her brother, local retailers soon caught on to her ideas. A patisserie put a plaster customer at one table to make the room to look



less empty for those looking through the shop window. A shoe shop used one of Beate's figures in its show room while large stores used a Mick Jagger look-alike in its record department. And after several smaller exhibitions of her work, her list of clients soon took shape. She has modelled realistic figures for store windows, department store interiors, shopping malls, restaurants, various commercial companies, private gardens, living rooms and even museums.

Within the display industry, Beate's name and work soon became a subject of conversation. Before long, she had received commissions for some 150 figures. Her life-like, realistic models have also found homes in an IBM showroom, a hairdresser, sweet shop, computer centre, optician, employment agency and town museum. For the latter, she made models of a 19th century street musician and an old gentleman making spectacles. Her inspiration for body form and expression she says, comes mainly from her friends as well as professional models.

Following the successful showing at Euroshop '87. "I have the impression that retailers are becoming interested in the more abstract figures particularly from Italy and the Netherlands. I believe there is definitely a place in retailing for non-realistic figures, clearly noticeable in the development of window and instore displays especially in the bigger cities." Most of Beate's retail models have been and are realistic and it's only been in the last 18 months that she has turned her talented hands to the creation of abstract figures. For the better part of five years, she has been constructing figures from plaster, old metal and sundry materials – "spontaneously found" – mostly in their original colours.

"I don't believe" she says "that there are any other people in Munich or Germany, who do the same work I do. If there are any in the USA, then I'm not aware of them. Until now, I have not been copied by anyone. My figures help retailers to sell their products, as my models are quite individualistically designed and build for the specific needs of a store or product and have a particular quality all their own. This is something which is not possible with mass-produced figures."

While her realistic figures are still wowing clients from all walks of commercial life in Europe, there has been a significant departure from space and reality towards the more abstract – a relationship of one figure to the another leading to new spatial dimensions, fields of tension arising from the dissipation of the male form. Not only can it be attractive, but it can also involve the spectator in whom the figure gains its reality. Beate believes there is more harmony between the abstract figure and the product – the latter becoming more noticeable as part of the store's merchandise offer and therefore more eye-catching to the customer, particularly as Beate can alter the figure's proportions, attitudes and even the raw materials which often include rust iron. Interest is also heightened through the use and application of colours and emulsions of synthetic, resin, varnish and Indian ink plus "tusche" – bright, shining transparent paint used by the Chinese for their own very fine paintings. One can literally mix one colour into another from brown and blue to gold and red. These abstract characters she says can effect a "determined reaction" from the customer to the environment and galvanise him or her into impulse purchases. Not only do these forms become eye-catchers, but shopper-stoppers as well, for it is unlikely that shoppers would have been previously confronted by such unusual and stunning display apparitions. The use of such artistic display works "require of the customer, a new way of thinking, away from the usual means of foreground display attractions of easily intelligible concepts, to the high demands of individuality and exclusivity."

Jane Davies

Plastered Dreams

Preface 2005

Eighteen years have passed since "Retail Attraction" dedicated the above three paged, well illustrated article to Beate Schubert's work. Since her "significant departure from space and reality towards the more abstract", observed by Jane Davies in 1987, Beate has travelled a thousand creative oceans. In 1987 she queried "if there were any people in the USA doing the same work she does". Shortly after she became acquainted with the work of American artists Duane Hanson and George Segal and was also attracted by Rodin and Andy Warhol. They all left their footprints in the further development of her art. She totally absorbed and interpreted their philosophy. Beate is a born artists. She does not employ the intellectual mind to her work. Her strength comes from deep within and through her expressive hands she directs her feelings of the aesthetics in proportions, colours and emotion. The essence of Beate's creativity is in her ability to control the peculiarity of the applied material and make it correspond to her intentions.

Mimesis Atelier produced approximately five hundred life sized figures and over a thousand other objects. The production, distribution and delivery of these mainly large but fragile works was not only physically demanding but required a great deal of organisational, administrative and accounting skill. The artist herself never complained about the work load. To reach new shores no way was too long, no weight too heavy. In 1988 she had the opportunity to join the arts centre "Botanikum" established a few years before. This was housed in a former nursery

whose hothouses were converted by the owner, to artists studios. She found in the light, space and the company of other artists, inspiration to explore new borders.

As a member of various artists associations she became actively involved in the art scene of Munich, which was one of the most lively in Germany. She started to contribute regularly to exhibitions like the annual Great Art Exhibition in "Haus der Kunst" and many other art associations in Munich and nearby counties. Through these exhibitions she had the opportunity to react directly to the rapid changes in the politics, society and culture of Germany and Europe during last centuries "wild nineties".

It is not an artists prime mission to give answers. In medieval times an artists mission was to illustrate the answers given by church and state. The scientific-technological age brought some adjustment to this mission. Modern art is not only allowed to ask questions, modern art is obliged to question the outcome of this new age. Some of the sculptures in this catalogue refer to the tensions between the rapid development of modern societies and their conditions of life. Others depict situations taken from Greek mythology and plays of classic, as well as of modern writers. But all have something in common with the artists conviction that our world could be a better place if we respect the diversity of nature and human existence as well as human rights and values.

The tools Beate has at her disposal to touch our subconscious and to convey her message are manifold: the human body, its posture, size and age, the faces and its expression, the suppressed and openly shown feelings.

As a trained interior architect she uses the environment of her figures as an open space for projections of actuality.

When her work attracted attention from the public and the media, the order books were full. Life offered her a new chance: to build her own studio on a plot of land she inherited in Ottobrunn, a garden town in the high-tech belt surrounding the city of Munich. The light flooded new studio, she designed and build in 1993 in collaboration with the newly qualified architect Peter Haimerl, won international recognition and awards. It was the perfect place not only for her work but for a permanent exhibition of her mainly white or sandy sculptures as well as for training and courses in sculpturing. Over the years she trained some fifty students from the High School for Design and gave courses to hundreds of scholars.



Many of the works in this catalogue were produced in the new studio of Mimesis Atelier in Ottobrunn up to 2003.



On the first of January 2002 Beate travelled to Cape Town, South Africa and accompanied her friend on a tour of the Western Cape. They were hosted by good old friends in Stellenbosch and it was here that she got the opportunity to discover, not only the beauty of the Western Cape, but to catch a glimpse of South African reality. For an artist tension between beauty and reality is the challenge. This is what divides an artist from a layman. As a natural born artist Beate took up the challenge and after visiting Barrydale, a small town, more than two hundred kilometres away from Cape Town, she found herself deciding to settle with her friend and later husband in this calm, remote village, reacting to the people, landscape, light, climate, vegetation and history of the Little Karoo. Since September 2003 contact details are as indicated below.

Burkhardt J. Huck

Works on permanent display

"Tabula Rasa – End Game", "Talking Silence I" and "Fast Food" (see this catalogue) at Schweisfurth Foundation in Glonn near Munich, Germany;

"The Day of Independence", "Narciss and Echo", "Talking Silence II" and "Tall Ladies" (see this catalogue) at Landratsamt Munich;

At the Bavarian Army Museum in Ingolstadt one can find a troop of twenty soldiers from World War I and in the Museum of the City of Munich a street musician;

A politician, a chemist and a computer-kid are on display at European Patent Offices, Den Haag, Netherlands;

A Marilyn Monroe look alike poses at Erotic Museum, Berlin;

Paul Mitterhofer, inventor of the first typewriter Christopher Latham Sholes and his daughter Lilly as the worlds full employed secretary are exhibited just as a secretary styled in fashion of the fifties at the International Typewriter Museum in Partschins, Southern Tyrol, Italy;

Other sculptures can be found in public parks, company museums and exhibition venues in Germany and surrounding countries as well as in Chicago, USA and Tblissi, capital of Georgia. Twelve figures are at present on tour in Kaufhof's department stores all around Germany until 2007.

Gypsum

Gypsum is a calcium sulphate containing water. The hardness of gypsum ranges from 1,5 to 2. The chemical composition is $\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$. It is a soft material which can easily be scratched with fingernails. Gypsum can be heated between 110 and 320° Celsius. At 110° it is converted to the hemihydrat $\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot \frac{1}{2} \text{H}_2\text{O}$. This variety of gypsum is used to receive a higher stability. If the water is added it can absorb water again and becomes hard like stone in few hours.

The ancient Egyptians were the first to use gypsum for modelling sculptures or moulding of faces or body parts. Greeks and Romans discovered the characteristics of gypsum in 500 BC and used it to produce casts. It has been and is still mainly used in the building sector. Since plasters of Paris were invented in 1851 orthopaedic surgeons use its ability to dry up and harden quickly for medical purposes.

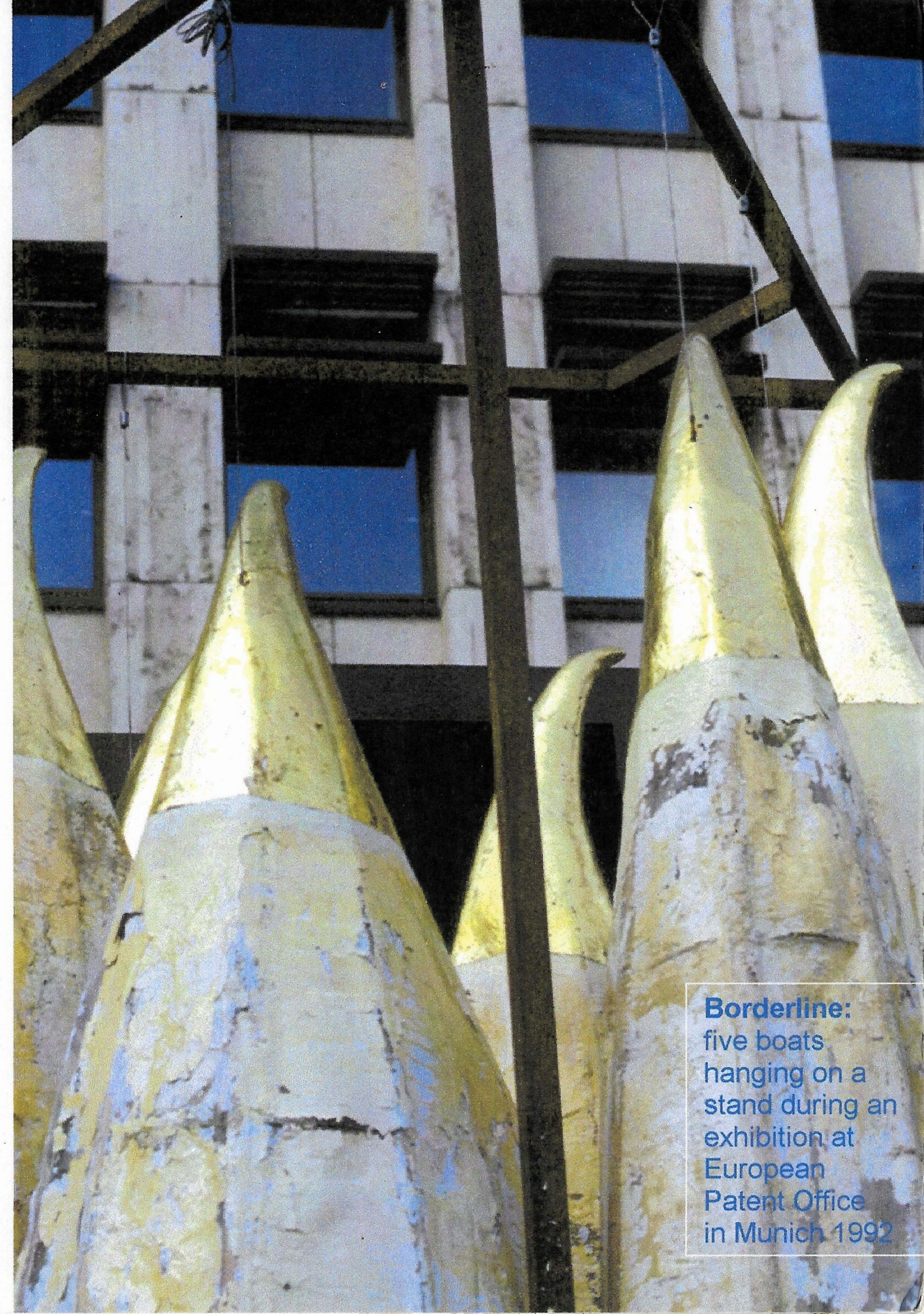
In fine arts gypsum is predominantly used for casting and sculpturing. Moulds produced with plasters of Paris can be filled with wet gypsum of different quality. Mimesis Atelier prefers plasters of Paris and gypsum powder which is reinforced by special ingredients.

Contact details

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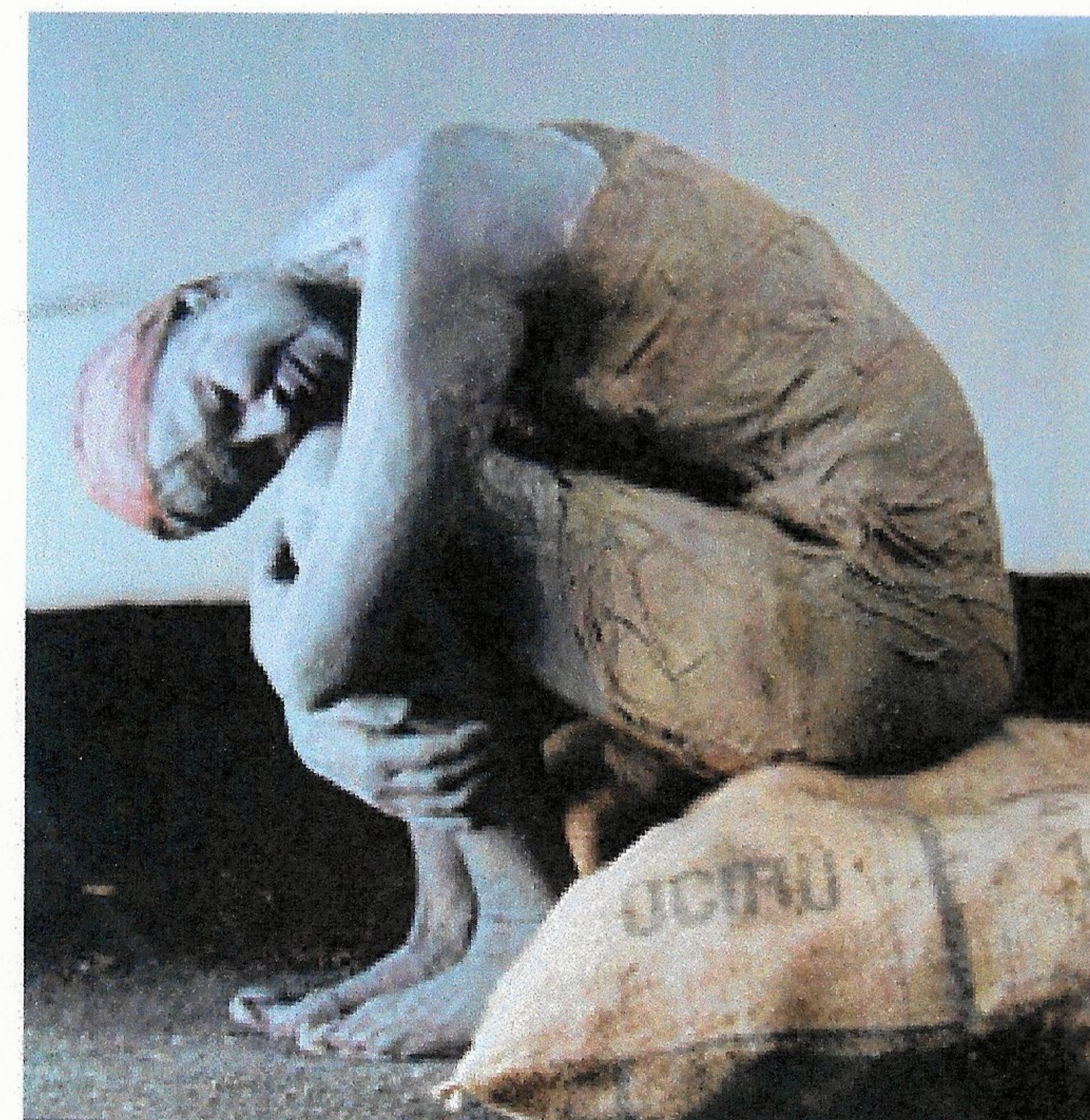
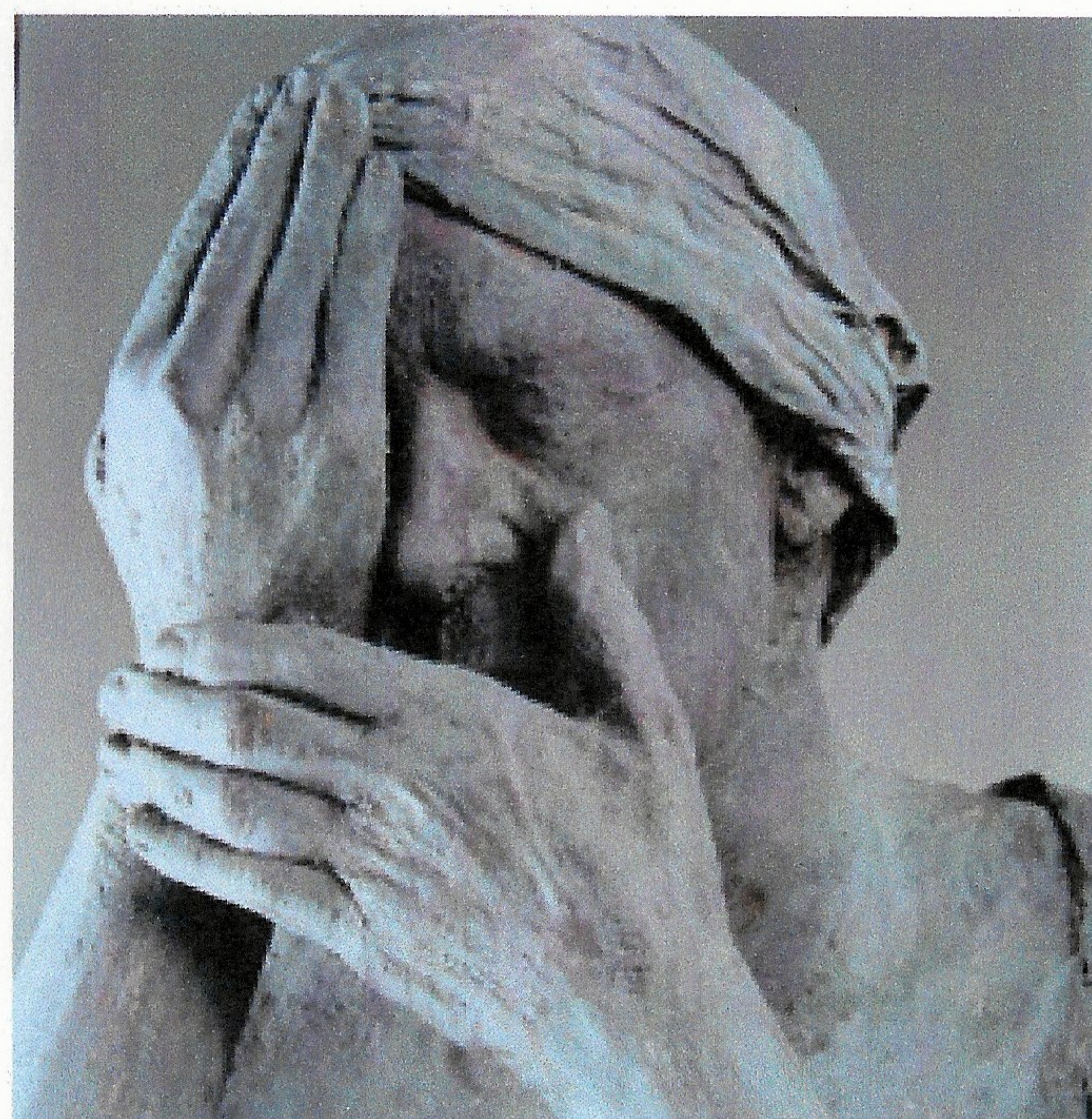
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Borderline:
five boats
hanging on a
stand during an
exhibition at
European
Patent Office
in Munich 1992

Four women mourning for Mother Earth broken up and wasted.





Tabula Rasa End Game

This work depicts a situation similar to Samuel Becket's "Ende Game". What is left after life are remnants of computers, which have given up their ghosts. Three farm women are racking computers scrap instead of grain.



immer mehr, immer billiger, immer dicker? Ist das alles? Mehr nicht? Hauptsache satt! Tote Nahrung!



Tiere produziert wie Industriegüter
Animals produced like industrial goods



Fast Food

**"The white man will starve
sitting in front of full plates"**

This Indian prophecy finds fulfilment in our times as fast food restaurants. Schweisfurth Foundation, an organisation promoting ecological agriculture, commissioned this installation for her pavillon at World Exposition 2000 in Hannover, Germany. Since the exposition ended in autumn 2000 it has been on display at the foundation's headquarters in an estate in the outskirts of Munich, comprising training and conference facilities, a model farm, a micro brewery as well as an restaurant surrounded by extensive gardens.





This work was contributed to the exhibiton "City of dreams - city of realities" in Munich 1995.

The three women are symbolizing the suffering of elder people living isolated in the high-riser flats of Munich City

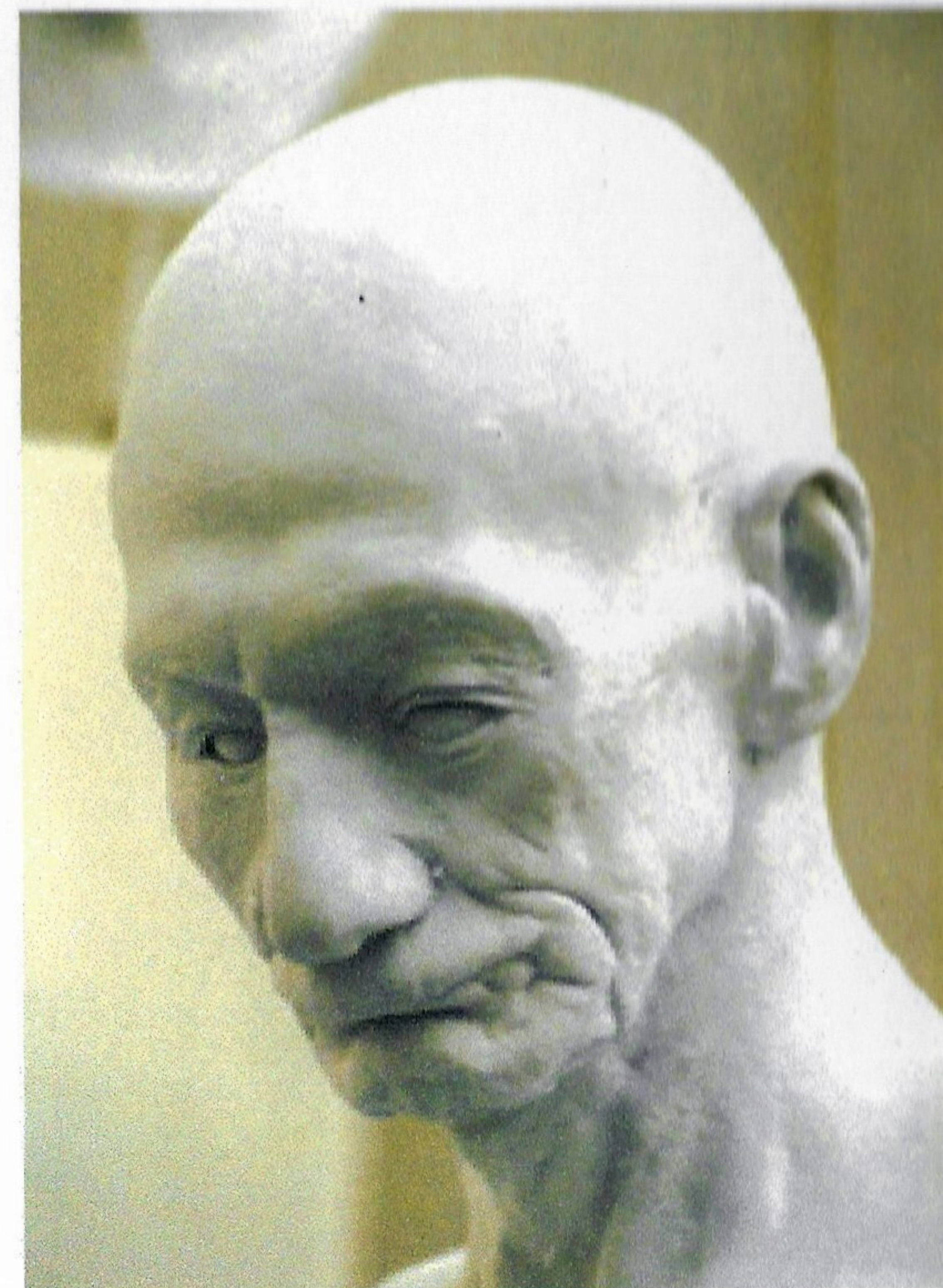
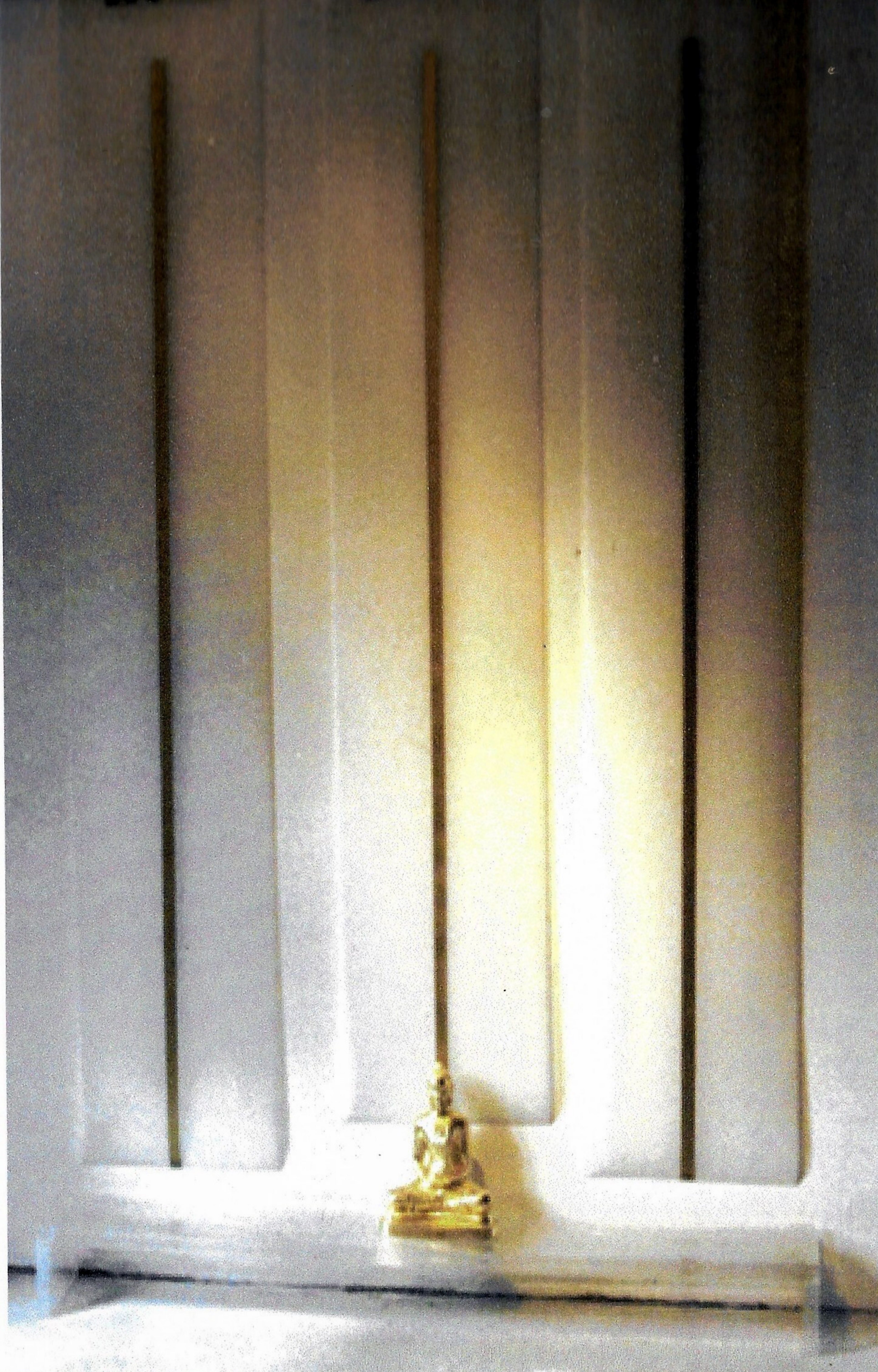
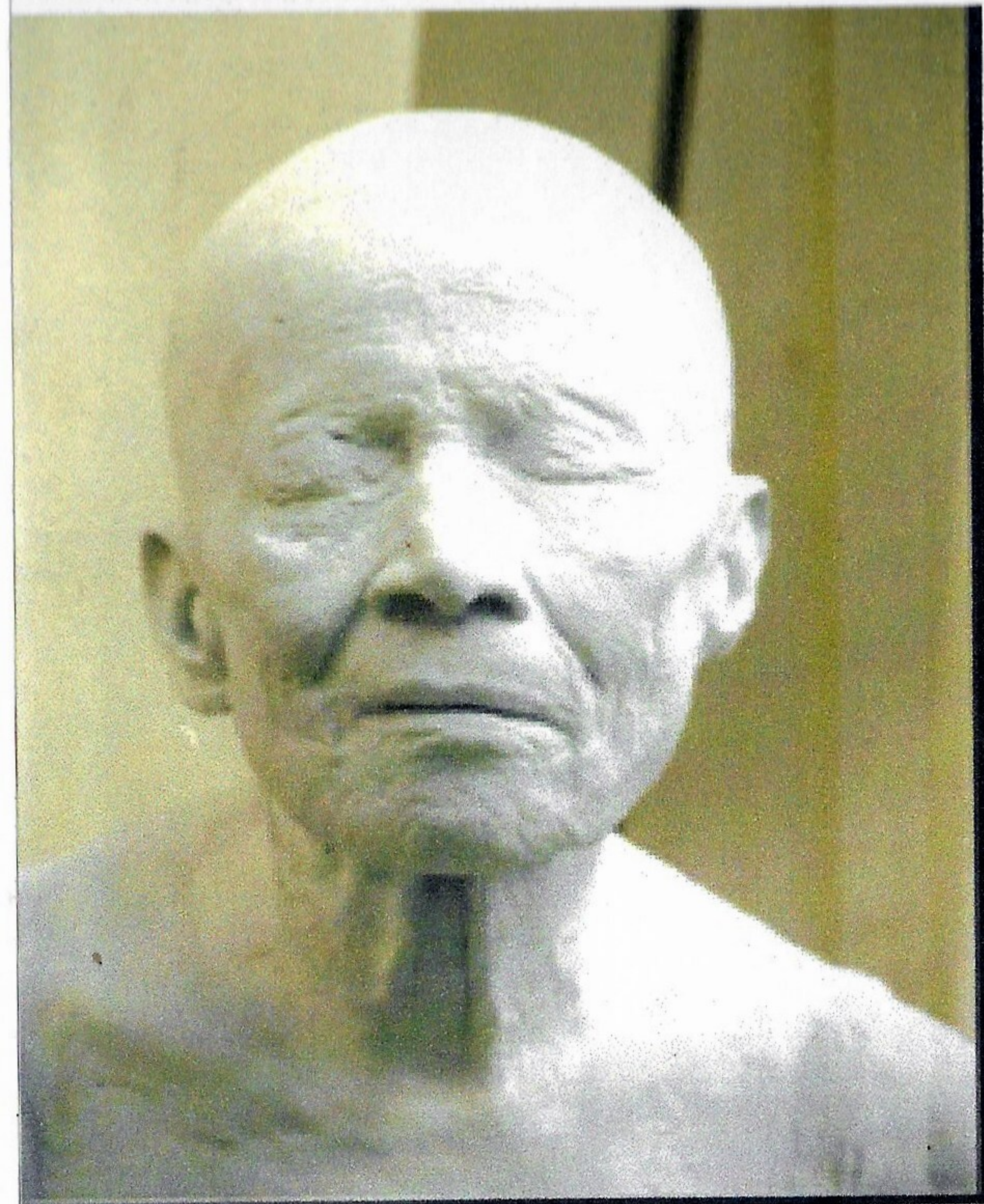


Talking Silence II

Nirvana



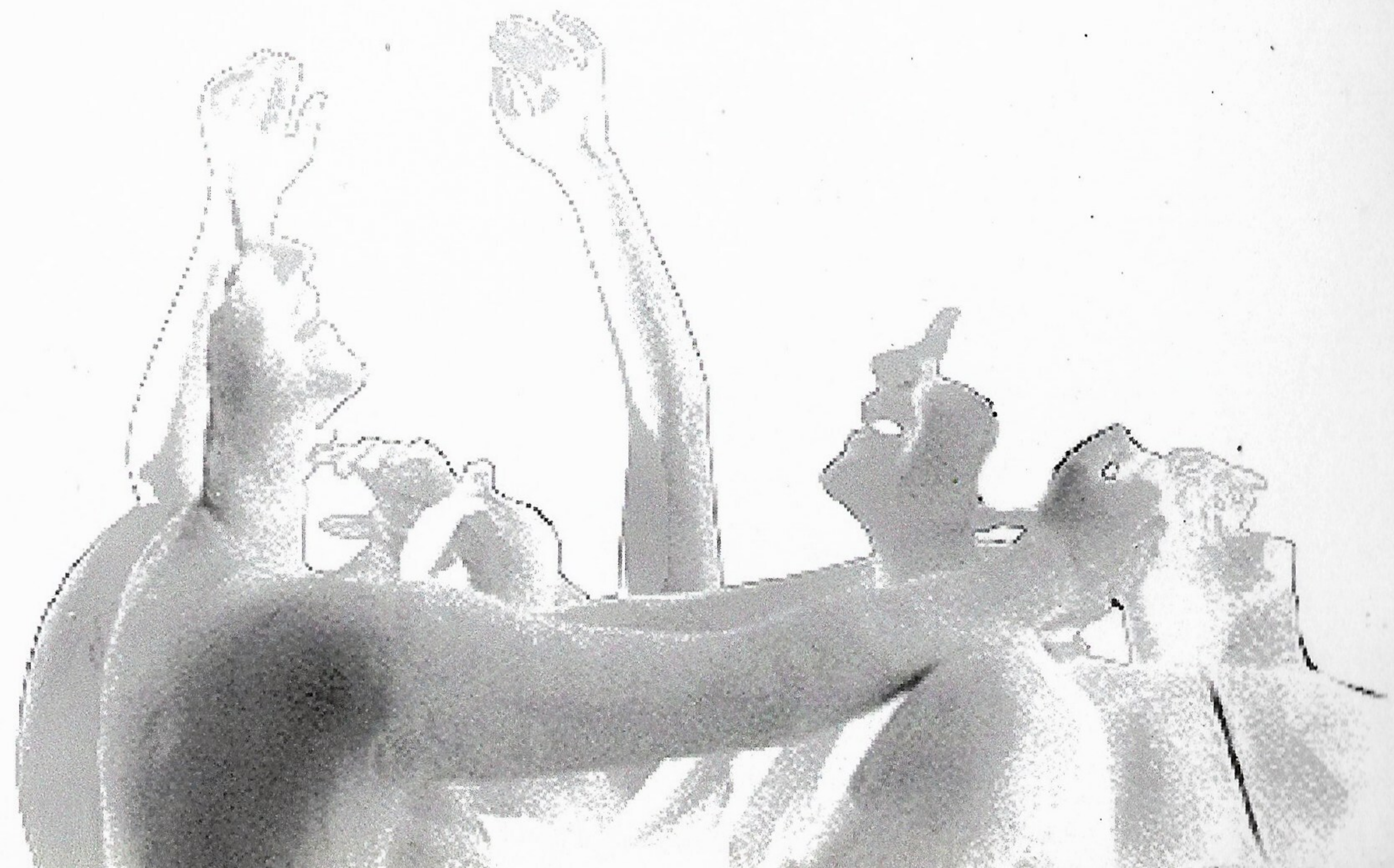
When Beate travelled through Sri Lanka in 1998 she was impressed by the old pensioners living in a nearby hostel. The peace and equanimity in these people's faces, their shrunken but upright bodies are visible in the sculptures she cast in Munich from the moulds she made in Sri Lanka.



Tall Ladies

One of her early works, the two and a half meter tall ladies deal with the subject of the emancipation of women and it's consequences for men.

The supernatural bodies of the women's group represent their new status. But this status is frightening men. Here illustrated by the figure in the foreground withdrawing to an embryonic position and covering his eyes with his hands.



**Freedom is the source
and goal of my work.**

**Freedom of art is
the art of freedom.**

**Freedom is the breath
of thinking, feeling, being.**

**Freedom is liberation
from traditions and a
way into the future.**

**Freedom is opening and
openness, idea and reality
as well as the tension
between them.**

**Freedom is pausing
in contemplation,
being still.**

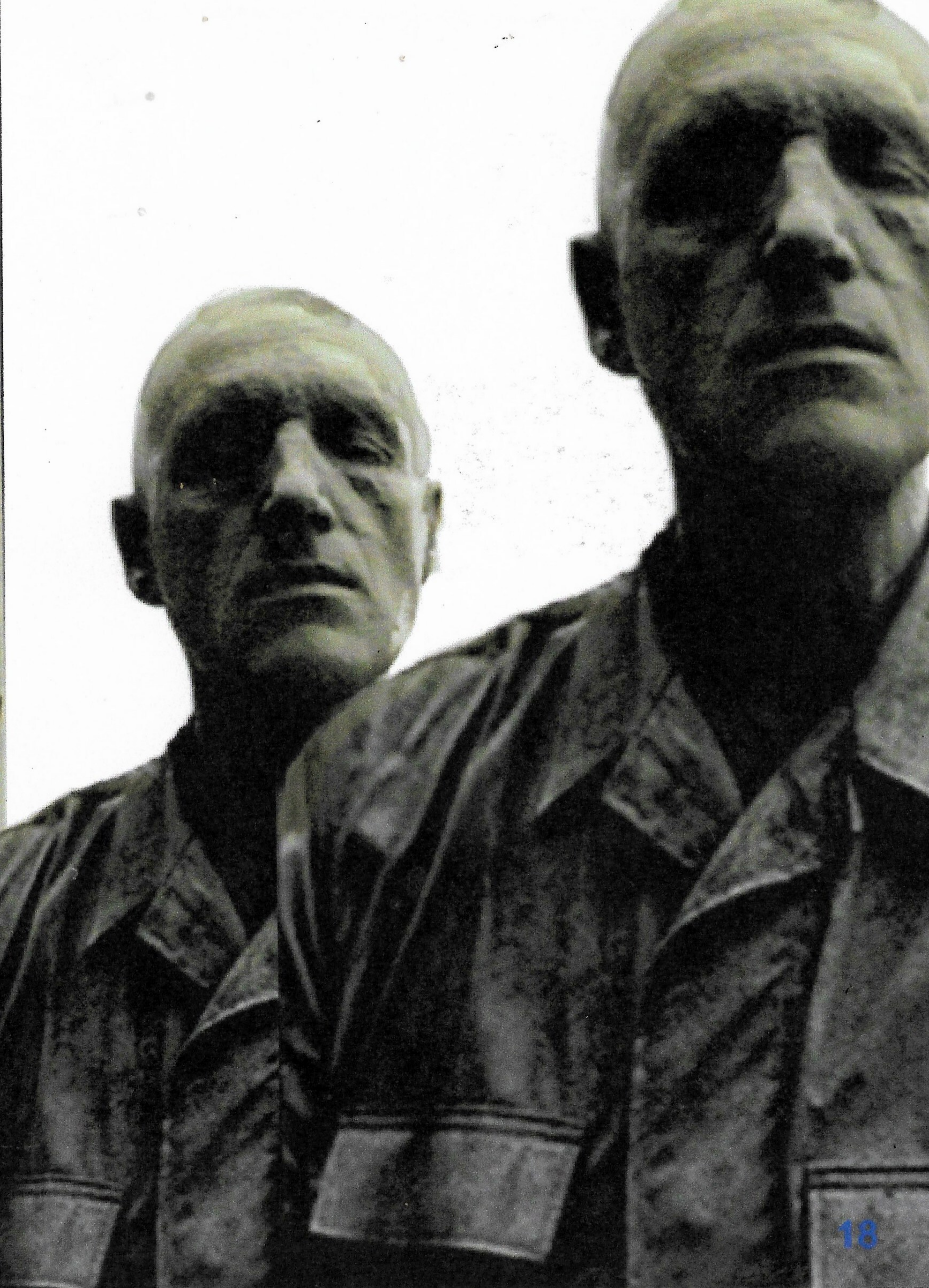


Sarajevo

Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, was besieged by Serbian troops from 1992 to 1995. Snipers shooting from surrounding hills killed people leaving their homes to fetch water or food. This group remembers how daily life was in these war years. Three women in despair in front of a soldier in combat dress, carrying a dead bride in his arms.

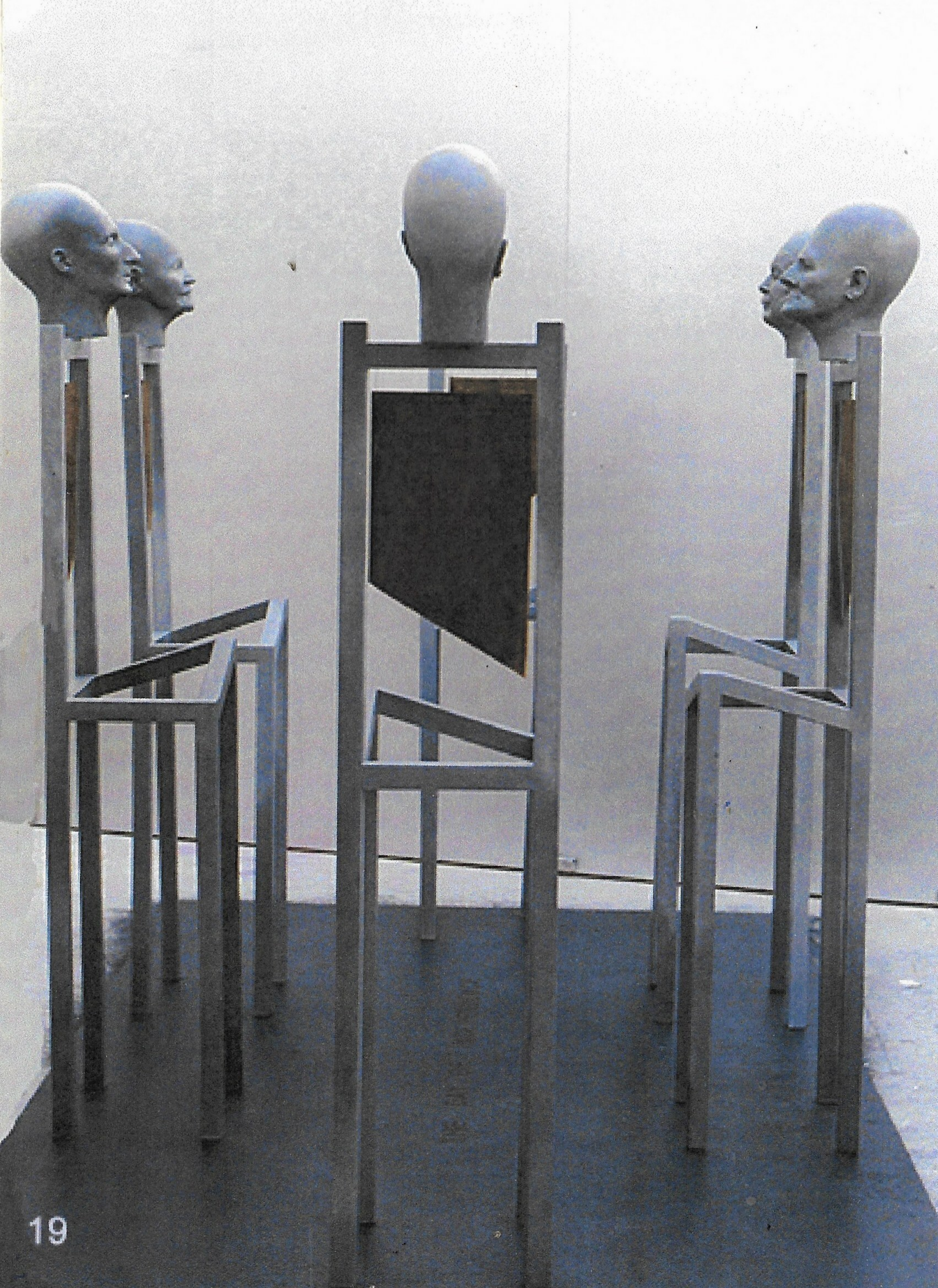
There is no indication as to which side the soldier belongs. Even the women's local dress does not indicate a special region. This is a portable memorial to war in former Yugoslavia. It was often used during war times to demonstrate against this war, which occurred not far away from Munich.

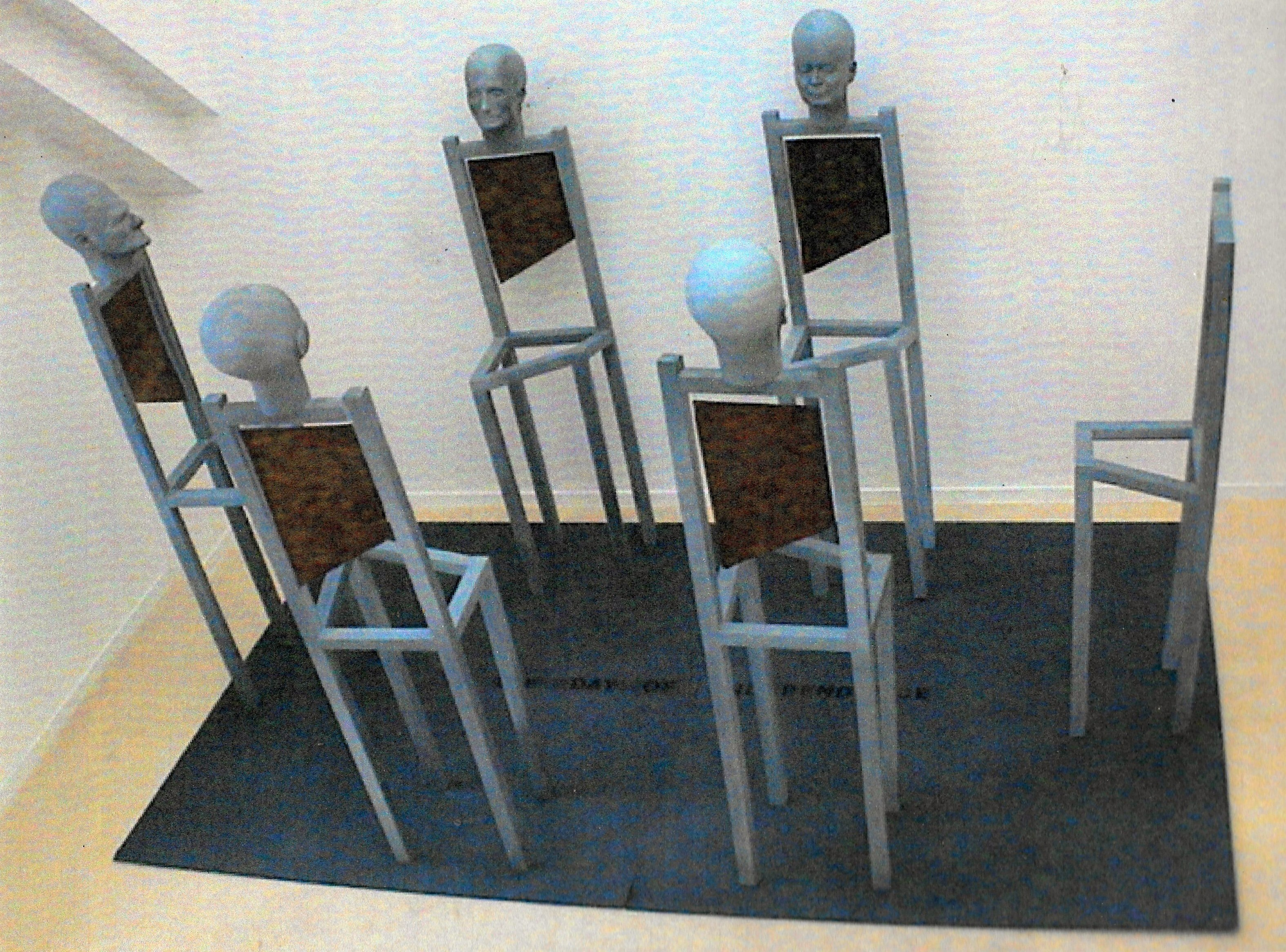




The Day of Independence

One of Beate's most discussed sculptures is this intriguing piece of art. The title indicates a big change. The day of independence has come but on whom we are dependend afterwards? This group of guillotine shaped chairs carrying the heads of men raises mroe than one question i.e. why is the sixth chair empty? Who are the heads? Board members? Family members? Is it somehow related to the French Revolution?

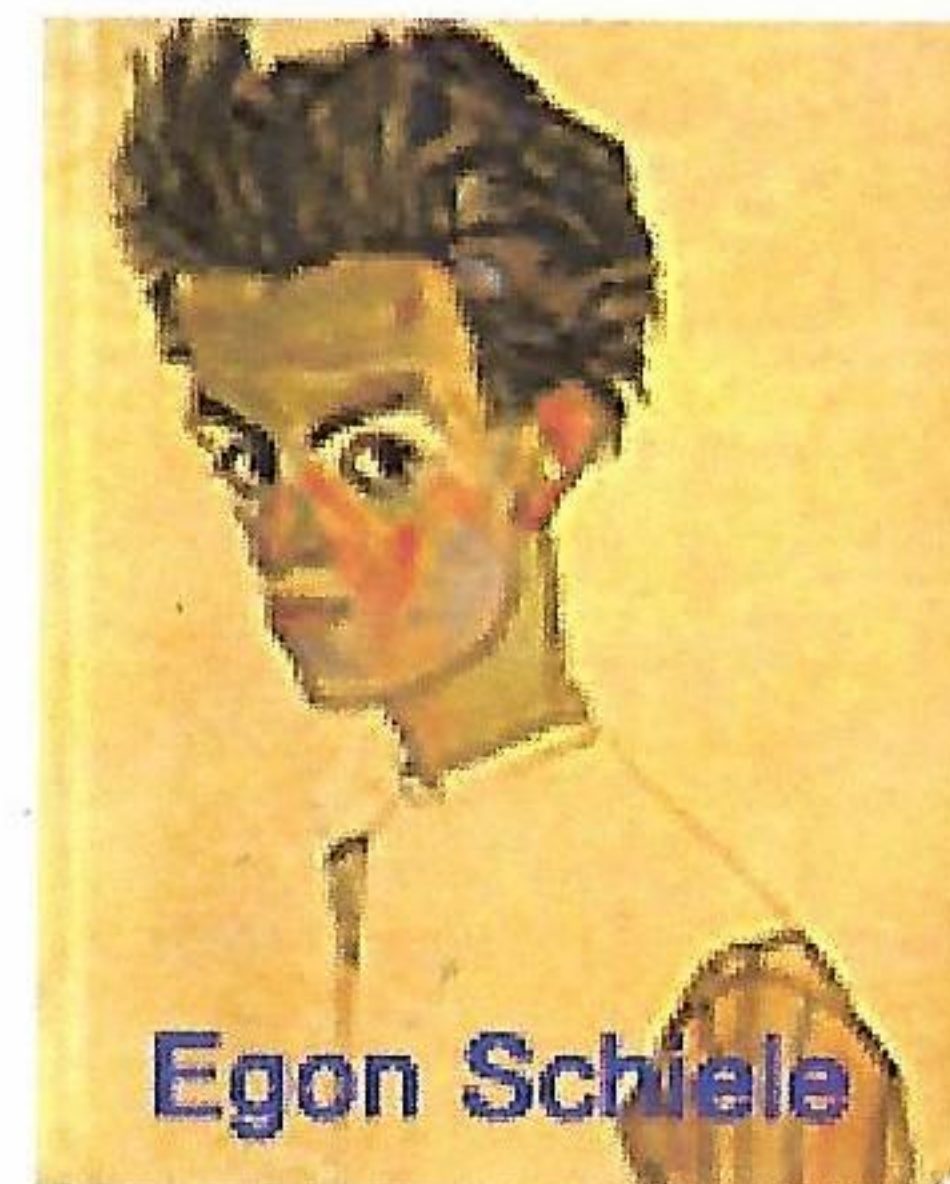




Narciss and Echo

A self portrait of Austrian artist Egon Schiele inspired Beate to take up the idea of the ancient Greek myth of Narciss.

The nymph Echo fell in love with Narciss but he did not respond to her feelings. The Gods Nemesis and Aphrodite decided to punish him. When Narciss drunk water at a source he fell in love with his own reflected image. This impossible love sapped his strenght and he died. The Gods transformed him into a flower which was named after him. After his death the nymph Echo faded away until nothing was left of her but a reverberation.



Egon Schiele



Hommage to Thomas Bernhard

Austrian writer (1931-1989)

Childhood was a living hell for Bernhard, who as an illegitimate son had to suffer his mother's disgust at his presence.

"You are my misery!"
"Go to hell!"
"You destroyed my life!"
"It's all your fault!"
"You are my death!"
"You are nothing!"
"I'm ashamed of you!"
"You are as useless as your father!"
"You are worthless!"
"You are a troublemaker!"
"You are a liar!"

The violence of these words is symbolized by the gun in the hand of the mother standing at the threshold. A picture of her grown up son appears in the window beside the door.



The broken jug

This group of six was commissioned by the Theater Summer Festival 1989 in Weilheim, a town south of Munich.

"The broken jug", a play by classic German poet Heinrich von Kleist, was written in 1808 as a comedy. But if one looks closer at the basic pattern, one can discover elements of the tragedy "King Oedipus" by ancient Greek writer Sophocles.

The group refers to this topic: The physique of three of the men is well developed, but their eyes are covered as they were blinded. The bodies of the other three men seem to fall to pieces, only kept together by screws and fittings.

