Katharina Neuburger and Renate Wiehager: *Mancoba—Martins—Waldberg. Curators' Dialogue on the Exhibition Concept,* in: ***text booklet "In Her Hands. Women Sculptors of Surrealism"***, Bucerius Kunst Forum, Hamburg (Feb. 21. to June 1, 2025), with translations of the original texts from the exhibition catalogue "In Her Hands. Bilderhauerinnen des Surrealismus", ed. by Katharina Neuburger and Renate Wiehager, Hirmer Verlag, München 2025. This exhibition catalogue is published in German. ISBN 978-3-7774-4494-9. Translation from German by Everett Forrest Mason. German p. 8–19. English p. 3–7.

Katharina Neuburger und Renate Wiehager

Mancoba—Martins—Waldberg.
Curators' Dialogue on the Exhibition Concept

Katharina Neuburger (KN): Sonja Ferlov Mancoba, Maria Martins, and Isabelle Waldberg were three very different sculptors, both in terms of their work and their personalities: Mancoba, a very reclusive artist who created works of great sensitivity and interiority; Martins, a vibrant and open personality who was extravagant enough to have a kiln built in an embassy building in Washington D. C. in order to make her life-size sculptures, and who was one of the central figures of international surrealism; and Waldberg, an artist who set important milestones as one of the first woman professors of sculpture in Paris and who was positioned right in the middle of the intellectual movements of the post-war avant-garde in France.

Renate Wiehager (RW): In assembling the works for the exhibition and doing the research for this catalogue, we worked closely with the estates, private collectors, and people who have dedicated themselves to the task of preserving these important works. Until today, only a small number of museums have made an effort to acquire works by these three artists.

KN: It's true; up until now the three sculptors have mainly been exhibited in their home countries and have certainly never been shown together. Looking at each of these oeuvres individually, one must immediately ask: Why are they not included as integral positions in the modernist canon? We could therefore begin by discussing one argument frequently put forward against an "expansion of the canon," which we are implicitly proposing here with our exhibition and in our approach to these three sculptors. The argument against such an expansion essentially states that "forgotten" works carry no historical weight. In other words, a work that has been under- or not received at all in terms of the canonical narrative can only be evaluated on its own terms and thus remains irrelevant to the "grand narrative." We posit that just the opposite is true. We show how these oeuvres helped to shape and alter an entire

network within the modernist narrative and how these changes were reflected back into their works. Mancoba, Martins, and Waldberg have demonstrably left traces in the works of other artists and cultural figures; they have placed historically important accents and need only to be rediscovered as part of the “grand narrative.”

RW: The “canon debate” you are referring to is the result of a specifically defined view of 20th century art, an attempt at a regulated codification and “distribution of offices” within the assumed hierarchies and sequences of art isms. This has been all the more prevalent since the 1960s, when the laws of the art market were beginning to assert themselves and give rise to a regulatory system of value maximization and capitalization. Simply put, across the domains and arenas of art—museums, galleries, universities, academies, the art market, and auction houses—it was almost exclusively male figures who were forcibly steering the canon in one direction: toward their stars and starlets.

KN: It’s no coincidence that this development coincided with second-wave feminism in Europe and the U.S. Certainly by this point in time, a young generation of artists—in the context of historical surrealism as well—were critically questioning “father figures” such as André Breton, the founder of the movement. Trends in more recent art and cultural debates have also reformed in reaction to this. Perhaps no phrase is more emblematic of this altered position than Linda Nochlin’s question “*Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*,” the title of one of her publications from the early 1970s, one which remains a subject of controversy to this day. Nochlin rightly points out that there were and are different answers and reactions to her provocative question throughout history. These range from scholarly evidence that there were indeed outstanding female artists all along, to redefinitions of evaluation criteria, to her own proposed reassessment of the role that should be played by institutions. Whether works become visible or remain invisible is largely determined by the structural conditions of the art system.

RW: Of course, there are excellent examples of how the rediscovery of forgotten, overlooked, or suppressed works by women artists have blown open from within this system of male stars. In the face of the abstract-symbolist paintings of Hilma af Klimt, created around 1906, the idea of the alleged invention of abstraction by a group of men must be rethought; the multimedia works of surrealist artists such as Frida Kahlo, Claude Cahun, Leonora Carrington, Leonor Fini, Florine Stettheimer, and many others have wide resonance in contemporary art; names such as Lee Krasner or Helen Frankenthaler are now rightly understood as integral figures in Abstract Expressionist painting; and, for a couple more recent examples, artists like Charlotte Posenenske or Lygia Clark have given Minimal Art and Constructivism qualitatively fresh readings that are evident in the new art of our time.

KN: When we looked at the work of Marcel Duchamp and his significance as a networker, the discrepancy between his radius of action and the way it was researched was strikingly large.

RW: We then mounted an exhibition entitled *The Duchamp Effect*—in reference to the debate of the same name—and, with the publication *Duchamp and the Women: Friendship, Collaboration, Network*, we presented nearly one hundred women active in the arts and culture from the 1910s to the 1960s from within Duchamp's circle. It was striking to me how easy it was to *not* have to revert to conventional narratives—such as that of Duchamp's importance for the works of these women around him or one of the male artist and his muse—and instead to show the unbiased mutual influence and exchange that took place over the decades.

KN: We were often asked during the preparations for the exhibition *In Her Hands*: Why these three woman artists? A first answer would be that during our research for, among other projects, the Duchamp one I just mentioned, certain artists in particular seemed to exist in a kind of memory hole. Maria Martins, who is also central to this project, was one of the artists whose work I really wanted to continue working with; I also wanted to find out more about the art and influence of Isabelle Waldberg. And we noticed that these sculptors, closely linked as they were to the broad field of international surrealism, have received less attention overall. Why were you interested in these three women specifically?

RW: In our years of research into women artists in the context of modernism we were repeatedly led back to the oeuvres of these great sculptors. It was the quality of their works that was and remains the primary motivation to show them together and, as you say, to close some gaps in our research.

KN: The quality of the works is indeed central. I have very fond memories of the first time I saw Mancoba's work exhibited and being blown away by it. And that brought us to having three great positions for *In Her Hands*! And yet I still share Linda Nochlin's skepticism and her aversion to creating more "one-offs," in other words, to paraphrase her, of adding new power to the established cult of genius. When working critically with the canon, I consider it essential to start with the canon itself, to criticize it and, at the same time, to work out the reason why a certain position has been forgotten. We already began to work on this while writing the focused 'work biographies' in *Duchamp and the Women*, which presents women artists and cultural figures within their social contexts and discusses the artistic and historical significance of their work.

RW: And we took the same approach with this catalogue. The detailed biographies

reveal our subjects' artistic networks and provide a concise overview of the historical milestones they lived through, their influence on various trends, and the motifs that appear in the sculptures. The essays, on the other hand, focus on characteristics of the artistic and intellectual positions of Mancoba, Martins, and Waldberg and offer readings of some of the key works included in the exhibition from this perspective.

KN: This led to further accentuations, and connects back to my argument regarding the importance of the "network" to the question of selection. We wanted to show a network that was fanned out across styles and locations, into which we could dig at the specific points where certain movements coalesced. *In Her Hands* was never intended to be a large group exhibition, as we wanted to show these positions comprehensively and in depth; nor was it intended to be a dialogue between them. To have three artistic positions that exhibit overlapping aspects and yet can stand on their own was ideal for our purpose.

RW: One geographic location where numerous clusters of these international networks occurred was the greater Paris region—the birthplace of historical surrealism—before the Second World War, which also happens to be where the work biographies of the three sculptors overlap for the first time. Though it is not known whether they met in person, it is certain that they were often in the same place at the same time and that their works were exhibited together in several significant shows.

KN: The Brazilian Maria Martins, born in 1894, is about a generation older than the other two sculptors in our project. She traveled to Europe at a very young age, including repeatedly to Paris, mostly thanks to the professional commitments of her first husband and later also those of her second, Carlos Martins Pereira e Sousa, who worked for the Brazilian government and under Getúlio Vargas until the 1950s. Martins had already spent long periods in the French capital from the mid-1920s and then again towards the end of the 1940s. There are many other important places to mention, as she traveled a great deal. However, one point is essential: she never studied art at an academy, but continued her education privately in all the places where she lived for longer periods—in sculpture with Catherine Barjansky in Paris, Oscar Jespers in Brussels, and Jacques Lipchitz in New York, as well as in philosophy with D. T. Suzuki in Tokyo.

RW: Sonja Ferlov Mancoba and Isabelle Waldberg came to Paris in 1936 to study sculpture, both of them around the same age, about 25 years old, at the same time Martins was living her first years in Paris. Waldberg, who was Swiss, came from Zurich, and Mancoba, who was Danish, from Copenhagen. The influences they encountered in Paris that would shape their early work are similar: both visited the studio of Alberto Giacometti, for example, an artist they admired and with whom they became friends

independently of each other. Constantin Brâncuși was a similarly important “connecting figure” at this time who both artists also became acquainted with.

KN: What is rarely mentioned are the intellectual connections between the sculptors. I have already alluded to Martins’ interest in philosophy, a field in which she went on to publish extensively. Isabelle Waldberg did as well, though in quite different forms, and was closely involved with an important circle of theoreticians in Paris.

RW: Waldberg was a confidante of the French writer and philosopher Georges Bataille in pre-war Paris; she took part in the weekly sociology lectures and discussions he organized and was accepted into the small circle of the secret society Acéphale. After 1945, back in Paris, she wrote short poetic, quasi-scientific texts for the circle’s publications, including *Da Costa Encyclopédique*, to which Marcel Duchamp, among others, also contributed.

KN: The historical environment inscribed itself into the work of the three artists, in both written and visual terms. Depending on your perspective, you could say this was the ‘zeitgeist’ or an example of ‘elective affinity.’ Shared examples of this range from radical thought experiments to the breaking of social taboos around physicality, from the deployment of a surreal-experimental visual grammar to stylistic borrowings from ancient formal languages, all the way to collaborative activities in unusual media formats such as small-run publications, shop window exhibitions, or multimedia, installation-like stagings…

RW: Some recurring motifs in their oeuvres also reveal related receptions of both contemporary phenomena and historical traditions of thought. All three artists were interested, for example, in artifacts from non-European cultures, a great variety of which they were able to study in various Paris museums. By 1933, Waldberg was already acquainted with this through her first teacher, the sculptor Hans Jakob Meyer, and his collection of African masks and ritual objects. Since her youth in Copenhagen, Mancoba had known Carl Kjersmeier and his wife Amalie, who possessed a large collection of African art. And later, through her husband Ernest Mancoba, a South African-French artist, she would once again devote herself intensively to South African art.

KN: It is not easy to categorize these movements-within-movements. Maria Martins’ work biography, for example, reflects her engagement with non-European myths in the form of a very complicated perspective on them: in the mid-1920s, when they were both living in Ecuador, she and her husband Carlos acquired artifacts of pre-Columbian origin, which they would later give to a local museum. However, this enthusiasm for collecting did not initially have a direct influence on Martins’ work.

RW: Her connection to the different cultures of her country of origin was, for a large portion of her life, quite fraught.

KN: It's true. She came to engage with them in a roundabout way. I have a very telling anecdote about this: in 1942, Martins and her husband traveled from the U.S. to Brazil and their plane flew over the Amazon region. It was only after this trip that myths from the Amazon and, more specifically, the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé religion, became part of Martins' work. She "discovered" the Amazon for herself from a bird's eye view, at a remove from it, which one could interpret as a reflection of her own personal distance to it. Only after this did the interaction between so-called Western and Afro-Brazilian influences become an intentional aspect of her sculptural language. This change can be observed in the works she created in New York after 1940. One of her most important exhibitions took place from March 22 to April 10, 1943 at the Valentine Gallery in New York under the title *Maria: New Sculptures*. On display were precisely those works that had been created shortly before, immediately following her trip to Brazil. The works' titles borrow the names of mythical figures: Amazônia, Aiokâ, Boiuna, Boto, Cobra grande, Iacy, Yara, Yemenjá, Babassú...

RW: At the same time and in the same gallery, the exhibition *Mondrian: New Paintings* was also being shown. This was really the moment when the avant-garde of the New York exiles arrived.

KN: And everyone who visited that show also saw Maria Martins' really unusual bronzes. People like Breton and Duchamp were enthralled. It was the moment when the artist and her work first found a place in what we might now refer to as the canon.

RW: You could say that, on the one hand, around 1940, these three artists were processing the contemporary fascination with non-European cultures in their work. On the other hand, this happened in ways specific to each artist's biography and style and therefore can't be compared with each other.

KN: It's exciting to see how they proceeded, how in their work they were relating different cultures to each other and to themselves. This of course has to do with the fact that the influences that we might now refer to as being of the zeitgeist were always present in each of these artists' lives, which were of course shaped by politics and large-scale historical events. International surrealism, which was in full swing at the time, acted as a kind of umbrella for all these heterogeneous influences and approaches. And the motifs ...

RW: ... Masks and ancient-looking, abstract figurations, anthropomorphic creatures,

vegetal, intertwining figures—all of this can be found in the work of all three artists. They exhibit a pictorial and material language that is highly conducive to surrealist readings and contexts. For Martins and Waldberg, this had a very immediate effect, not least of all in terms of their institutional embedding. Martins was first invited to exhibitions of contemporary Latin American art in the U.S., then to exhibitions of surrealist art, and was, by 1941, being shown in a solo exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. You already mentioned her exhibition that occurred shortly after this at the Valentine Gallery in New York. And that's just a small sample of the way the embedding of one of these artist's oeuvres affected how, where, and by which audiences they were received.

KN: This brings us to another place where the stories of these women come together. Isabelle Waldberg made the crossing to New York in 1942.

RW: She arrived in the city that summer and immediately became involved in important exhibitions and projects of the surrealist movement with the airy, linear abstract sculptures she was creating at the time, which she called "Constructions." Taking just a brief look at this charged artistic environment in New York, however, reveals just how different Mancoba's situation in Paris must have been. During and immediately following the war years, she lived in extremely precarious circumstances, first with her husband and their son in Denmark from 1945 to 1952, then, after returning to France, in a village north of Paris. It was not until 1960 that she became institutionally anchored, and from then on only gradually. Today, of course, Mancoba is recognized as one of the most important female sculptors in Scandinavia.

KN: With just a few locations and figures, we have actually outlined a much larger network, one that includes other important names from the fields of anthropology, art theory, philosophy, and literature. For instance, because you just mentioned Isabelle Waldberg's *Constructions*, it is very likely that the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who taught in New York, was the one who showed Waldberg and colleagues from her circle the traditional stick charts that were used as nautical maps by the indigenous people of the Marshall Islands. These could be seen in American museums and undoubtedly inspired Waldberg's *Constructions*. There is also the story that Breton and Lévi-Strauss sailed into exile together from Marseille to New York and that the former was already well-acquainted with the latter's anthropological collection when they arrived in the U.S. Breton would also become an important conduit for this kind of knowledge in New York. In this context, we should also mention another personality of the time by name: Peggy Guggenheim …

RW: … a brilliant mediator, art collector, and gallerist. Around 1940, working from the south of France, she was actively involved in helping artists, especially those from the

Parisian surrealist milieu, find their way in exile. Once in New York herself, Guggenheim opened her gallery Art of This Century in October 1942. It was immediately a hotspot for the avant-garde, where Isabelle Waldberg was shown. A statement Waldberg made looking back at this period conveys the significance of Guggenheim for the New York exiles: “When you talk about Peggy, you are actually talking about a time, an era. Our friends were all surrealists. I was the last exile to arrive in New York, in July 1942. Peggy’s gallery was fantastic, and since I lived on East Fifty-Seventh street near Madison Avenue, I went there every week.”

KN: Waldberg married the art historian Patrick Waldberg shortly after her arrival in New York in 1942. He was an important figure in the context of surrealism, as was the French art and literary critic Robert Lebel, with whom Isabelle was close from the beginning of her New York years. So we have people like Breton, Guggenheim, the Lebels, the Waldbergs…

RW: That this was an important network in exile is easy to recognize. But at this point we should turn from this eventful time in 1940s New York and look back to France. The course of Mancoba’s life during these years was almost totally in contrast to the movements of Waldberg and Martins. She had met and married painter Ernest Mancoba in Paris in 1939. He was interned after the outbreak of war. She, on the other hand, lived and worked continuously in Paris until 1945, in complete isolation and near destitution. Nevertheless, it was during this time that she created one of her most important sculptures, which from today’s perspective can be counted among the outstanding examples of surrealist sculpture.

KN: You’re of course referring to this wonderful work with the seemingly inconspicuous title *Sculpture 1940–1946*, created during those years.

RW: Throughout the war years, Mancoba worked almost exclusively on this piece. It is deeply affecting to stand in front of this work. I understand Mancoba’s pictorial invention in sculpture within the context of other key abstract sculptures produced by Constantin Brâncuși and Alberto Giacometti in the 1920s and 1930s, a reading that goes some way in showing the significance I ascribe to this work.

KN: I agree; and I just referred to the work’s title as “seemingly inconspicuous” preceisely because I believe it was *the* sculpture for Mancoba in these years. It is one of the works by her now with a permanent place in the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen.

RW: It is interesting to trace the path that the reception of Mancoba’s oeuvre as a whole has taken. After those extremely difficult years, which bordered on being downright

hopeless for her, her work was first discovered and written about by young Scandinavian art historians after 1960, followed by some modest initial purchases by Danish museums and collections. Only later would she receive prizes and occasional support from private collectors. Today, as you've mentioned, her oeuvre has an established position in Scandinavia.

KN: And beginning in the 1970s, her work came to be understood as having been part of the *CoBrA* group, an important movement in Europe around 1950.

RW: This connection is an important catalyst for a wider reception of her work, even though it existed beyond the boundaries of the movement. A beautiful, late tribute: a few years before her death in 1984, her work was shown in solo exhibitions in Copenhagen, and Danish television presented a documentary on her, making a large, general audience aware of the artist. A novel based on her life was also recently published by Hanne-Vibeke Holst.

KN: Maria Martins' sculpture *The Impossible* also dates from the time of Mancoba's *Sculpture 1940–1946* and is similarly iconic. It was produced in the U.S. and was shown in Paris soon after the end of the Second World War. On July 7, 1947, what is today understood to be one of the most significant exhibitions of the surrealist movement opened, the *Exposition internationale du surréalisme* at Galerie Maeght. In the notorious *Salle de pluie* [*Rain Room*], Martins' sculpture *The Road; The Shadow; Too Long; Too Narrow* was sprinkled with rain and her work *The Impossible* was exhibited on a billiard table. Both works were placed in relation to *Constructions* by Isabelle Waldberg, which were also shown. So there we have one documented encounter between these works.

RW: That exhibition was fed by both suggested and explicit motifs of sexuality. The *Salle de pluie* especially has always been interpreted within this context. The theme of sexuality also runs—in very different ways—through the themes and motifs of the works by the three artists in our exhibition. Isabelle Waldberg, as already mentioned, was a member of Bataille's secret society Acéphale beginning around 1939. It introduced her—both in theoretical terms and in the form of ritual-like physical activities—to a view of humanity and self-experience characterized by instinct, intuition, and a confrontational attitude in dealing with repressed sexual energies. All of this can be discerned in her artistic work, from the 1940s on into her late work, and especially in her sometimes explicitly erotic representations.

KN: It is certainly no coincidence that the surrealist movement developed between the two world wars. The vehemence with which its artists broke taboos was also a reaction to the harrowing times they found themselves thrown into. On the subjects of sexuality,

desire, and longing in Waldberg's work, I immediately think of a meditation from 1939 that Georges Bataille addressed to her. It reads: "I imagine—until I feel ill—that the earth is spinning in the sky at a dizzying speed. I imagine that the sky itself is spinning and exploding. Sun, flame, alcohol, blinding light. Everything spinning with the eyes closed and so blinding it takes your breath away." A lived, intensely experienced sexuality was perhaps one means of intoxication to get through the madness of the time.

RW: And this period of "madness," as you call it, could also produce totally different reactions: for Mancoba, this meant engaging in a radically internalized work practice coupled with a sublimated eroticism that expressed itself formally in a reduced, archaic visual grammar and works reminiscent of cult objects. Standing in front of her masks and figures, one can't be sure: Are evil spirits being called forth here, or benign forces of nature invoked? Also, there are numerous pairs of figures in her work that express the strength of physical connection, of sensual closeness. Many of her other sculptures explore human or social gestures as well as shows of solidarity.

KN: Maria Martins developed a third approach, one based on a personal freedom that was partly of her own making, and partly a product of her practical situation. On the one hand, her social and financial position allowed her to move through the world in quite different ways than Mancoba or Waldberg could.

RW: Because of her background and her status as the wife of a diplomat, she was much less directly affected by the war years.

KN: You're of course right, though, on the other hand, Martins was bound by comparatively strict, conventional social responsibilities. This makes it all the more astonishing how freely she expressed herself artistically. Female sexuality and the female sexual organ itself, as well as an exploration of both in the face of opposing forms or forces, are core elements of her oeuvre. Her first bronze works seem made up of innumerable parts that attract and repel each other, wrap around each other, strangle each other, gobble up or bulge out. Even when the forms become denser and compositionally restrained, as in *The Impossible*, lust and desire remain central themes. Surrealist artists reacted enthusiastically to all of this. And, seen from a contemporary view, I find her transitional forms of human figures as they morph into abstracted organisms particularly interesting. I immediately think of Donna Haraway's extraordinary feminist text *Cyborg Manifesto*, still so relevant today, in which she treats "creatures," composed of social reality and fiction, with an ironic undertone.

RW: Martins was certainly aware of the possibility of such a rent between realities, as is perhaps evinced in the way she differentiated between her 'official' and artistic roles by

using different names: “Maria Martins,” as the ambassador’s wife, and simply “Maria,” as the artist.

KN: This points to something that to this day affects many people negatively, namely, that, consciously or unconsciously, women are all too often referred to only by their first names. Many have fought this tendency in vain. The theorist Hannah Arendt made an important observation when she recognized in this a social symptom that mixes the public and private in such a way as to penetrate the intimate space of the individual. If Martins did this in a calculated way, then she was undoubtedly aware that she was crossing boundaries. In her case, she was cultivating two versions of herself that were mutually beneficial.

RW: Her political role allowed her to become a key player in the founding and organization of the first São Paulo Biennial, and she also became involved in the founding of museums and, in the 1950s, after she and her husband had returned to live there after his retirement, the promotion of contemporary art collections in Brazil. Wasn’t she also involved in exhibiting Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica*, for example?

KN: Yes, that was for the second edition of the São Paulo Biennial. In the 1950s, she played a committed role as mediator—between European and American positions and between homegrown positions in Brazil. It is important to mention that by this time her work was being received quite critically there. Abstract tendencies in art had already gained more importance during Martins’ lifetime, more precisely toward the end of Vargas’ presidency, as can be seen, for example, in the work of Lygia Clark, whom you mentioned earlier, and Lygia Pape. These two women founded the Neo-Concrete group in 1958, a very important movement that was, it must be said, quite far removed from the possibilities of modern art represented in Martins’ work.

RW: As a result of extensive solo exhibitions of Martins’ work in Brazil over the last ten years or so, as well as with the presentation of her sculptures at documenta 13 in Kassel in 2012, her work is now being far more widely—and more attentively— received than during the last years of her life.

KN: Today, she is without question one of Brazil’s best-known artists. There is also a sculpture on display at the most recent Venice Biennale, a bronze from her so-called *However* group. It dates to her time in New York, to 1944.

RW: Isabelle Waldberg was also active as a cultural networker beginning after 1960, even if, unlike Martins, she wasn’t acting on a big picture, socio-cultural stage, but, rather, in the more intimate, though no less significant, communities she found in Paris. She exhibited in numerous galleries and museums and also curated exhibitions herself.

Her work has also been honored with exhibitions and awards in her home country, Switzerland. As a result, some of her works have been preserved in public collections, while others have remained in private hands. Waldberg was friends with many authors, moved in culturally influential circles and, after taking up her professorship in sculpture at the École des Beaux-Arts in 1973, directly influenced several generations of young students.

KN: Her family was and continues to be central to the preservation of her work. Her son Michel Waldberg initially managed her estate together with his wife Corinne Waldberg. After his death, Corinne took over this task and is currently working on a catalogue of works, among other related projects. The estate includes works in bronze, as well as plaster casts and molds, drawings, and photographs. Anyone who has ever dealt with artist estates knows what an enormously complex undertaking it is to preserve an artistic oeuvre, especially one consisting primarily of sculpture.

RW: With regard to Mancoba's work, I would like to point out the lasting and significant commitment of Copenhagen gallery owner Mikael Andersen. After her death, he worked on the inventory of her Paris studio, edited posthumous bronzes with Ernest Mancoba and their son Wonga, got museums and collections involved and helped initiate the design of a museum on the island of Bornholm that will house Mancoba's work in the future.

KN: Martins' work has also survived largely thanks to her descendants, including collectors such as Jean and Geneviève Boghici. Paul Jenkins and the Almeida & Dale gallery in São Paulo are also involved in extensive international networking. After all, preserving works also includes the task of getting them seen by the public.

RW: By this point we've "traveled" through a broad arc, from the 20th century to the present day and even across continents. What do we see up ahead? We are presenting these artists and their works with an eye to illuminating forgotten or underappreciated aspects of 20th century art history; they represent key art-historical as well as socio-cultural connections. The sculptural positions taken by Mancoba, Martins, and Waldberg, developed over decades, are now ready to be taken up again for international reception. This will, of course, require exhibition venues with the ability not only to show what is already widely visible, but also to allow for innovative approaches to historical narratives. Kathrin Baumstark is leading the way in this in her role as director of the Bucerius Kunst Forum.

KN: *In Her Hands* can be understood as an exhibition project in the context of a specific interest. In the exhibition *Surrealism Beyond Borders*, which was first shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and then at the Tate Modern in 2021, the interesting

proposal was made that surrealist-inspired art could be understood as the expression of an attitude transcending cultures and time periods. Surrealism can thus no longer be understood merely as a time-bound “ism” and a network that developed exclusively in Europe between the world wars and then spread internationally. The “father figure” André Breton founded surrealism in 1924 as a movement directed against the sense of control, which instead addressed the unconscious and a radical sense of freedom. Surrealism can still be understood in this spirit today, echoing the proposal of *Surrealism Beyond Borders*, as a constantly expanding principle of free expression that moves beyond moralizing small-mindedness.

RW: At the heart of our exhibition is the surprising realization that these three artistic positions combine to form an eye-opening picture of an interdisciplinary and continent-spanning contemporaneity whose core concerns are as relevant today as they were then. On the one hand, all three artists exhibit an intense physical and intellectual proximity to the media of their work. They “thought” artistically in terms of materials, lines, volumes, space, and expressive gestures. On the other hand, they shaped their social role as artists in relation to their work with an unprecedented sense of freedom. The title of the exhibition summarizes these two currents—*In Her Hands: Women Sculptors of Surrealism*.