

RENATE WIEHAGER

# / SONJA FERLOV MANCOBA'S (1911–1984, DK)

***SCULPTURE 1940–1946.***

RECONSIDERING A SURREALIST MASTERPIECE

A MONOGRAPH



Sonja Ferlov Mancoba, *Sculpture (Untitled) 1940–1946*  
Plaster, h 51,5 cm, Silkeborg Kunstmuseum

Sonja Ferlov Mancoba (1911–1984, DK), whose extensive sculptural work had largely been forgotten after her death in 1984, is today considered one of the outstanding representatives of surrealist-inspired sculpture. After completing her studies and working on her first three-dimensional designs, which were still created in her hometown of Copenhagen and on Bornholm, she moved to Paris in 1936, where she lived and worked with her husband, the South African artist Ernest Mancoba, until 1984. The monograph [to be released in spring 2026] is dedicated to the artist's major work from the 1940s, which has not yet been sufficiently appreciated in the art-historical discourse on Surrealism: her sculpture with the sober title *Sculpture 1940–1946*.

Throughout the war years, Sonja Ferlov worked almost exclusively on this piece. It is deeply affecting to physically stand in front of this work. I understand Ferlov'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.

The monograph, currently in progress, is a continuation of the work analyses published in the 2025 catalog *"In Her Hands. Mancoba | Martins | Waldberg"* and a biography of Sonja Ferlov Mancoba published in the same catalog.