



The scholar of Professor Gerda Fassel (Vienna) and Judy Fox (New York) started her sculpturing career with an extremely detailed three dimensional presentation of the human body, the so-called *Figured Outs*. Using these torsis she tried to reveal characteristics such as courage, determination or grief. Then a radical change followed in her work *Back to Stone*. Here she beat, pressed, knocked the before laboriously formed volumes back into blocks, cuboids, rectangles – *Back to Stone*.

With this disengagement and further development, from the shaped figure towards a profound statement about the typified, condensed, streamlined individual, she took a significant step, which she consistently pursues. By means of the 'frames', high-grade steel frames, she set an external boundary, that could be an extreme restriction but also some sort of shelter. Thus, one can see, as an example, a



Ucki Kossdorff

The Condensed Man

*Article by
Hannelore Seiffert*

THE AUSTRIAN CERAMICS SCULPTRESS UCKI KOSSDORFF with her large scale sculptures, torsis and highly sensible portrait busts is quite unique among ceramics artists. No receptacles, no abstract objects – her theme was and is exclusively the human being with all his shapes, relationships and entanglements, while she herself underwent a steady and amazing development.

couple – male and female – wedged in different directions, unable to free themselves from their frame. They must persevere, in utmost proximity and yet unreachable for each other, constrained by the pressure of the surroundings (tradition, society?).

In a further work, the *Cut-Figures*, semi-figures,



Facing page, top: *Shameful – Figured Out.*
Facing page, below: *Colorful – Back to Stone.*

Left: *Standing – Back to Stone.*

Above: *Untouchable Head – Cut Figures.*

which are cut out along prominent body lines and thus permit the viewer to see through them, she created works of great enchantment.

Kossdorff has further developed this 'cutting out' concept with the so-called *Untouchables*. We see the large, metre high outline of a face, distinguishable only by a mouth and a nose on a stick, encircled by the contour of long, flowing hair, or a female figure cut out of the surrounding rectangular frame, like a silhouette. The real body is only defined by three bikini-like areas mounted on wire. We however 'see' the female figure, assembling the body in our imagination, even though we only see the space in the background. The apparently recognisable figure is only an empty profile, an astute imagination, staged by the artist with ironic humour.

A preliminary climax of her artistic work was shown in Alpbach with the sculpture group *Thinkers at Work*. In the congress centre of the European Forum Alpbach, the annual meeting point of the world's great thinkers, she set up her life-sized sculptures as a permanent exhibition in the so-called thinker's helix. The European Forum's Alpbach president Dr Erhard Busek was so impressed by her work that he commissioned Kossdorff to create the *Thinkers Award*, a bronze figure, which is annually





awarded for an eminent intellectual achievement.

Being a person who enjoys experimenting Kossdorff always seeks new forms of expression. Together with the Italian painter Dorian Mingozzi, she created a series of works, which she titled *Quattro Mani – Vier Hände*. Her three dimensional sculptures serve as ‘canvas’ for Mengozzi’s abstract paintings.

Kossdorff herself says about her work “my figures are subjected to a process of change in which in the end they return to a permanent state of burnt earth, to stone. Somewhere in this transformation, however, they were also ‘human’ and traces of a soul cling and remain with them.

As a sculptress Kossdorff pursued a long and interesting path and she developed her highly personal and distinctive style with the human image. From her well-proportioned precisely perfected figures she attains, by progressive reductions, an increasing simplification and clarity of form, reaching an expression of the essential.

Currently Ucki Kossdorff is increasingly engaged with working on portraits of prominent persons and contemporaries. Among others, she made a portrait bust of the Austrian author Thomas Bernhard. At present she is occupied with a portrait of Nelson Mandela for the City of Vienna.

*Facing page, top: Couple in Frame.
Facing page, below: Thinkers by Night.
Above: Thomas Bernhard Portrait.
Below: Ucki Kossdorff with Kneeling.*



Hannelore Seiffert is a German ceramist and collector. As a chair of a group of artists, she organised a gallery and curated more than 30 exhibitions. She writes for catalogues and specialist journals. As a collector of contemporary ceramics she is member of the IAC since 2007.

Ucki Kossdorff exhibits her sculptures at national and international exhibitions on a regular basis and presented her work in the Agora Gallery in New York in 2012. Her works are represented in numerous public and private collections as well as in outside exhibitions. She is co-founder of the ICCA (International Contemporary Ceramic Art) and is a member of the Sculpture Network, with studios in Vienna and Altmünster in Upper Austria (www.ucki.net).