

2000

František Skála (1956)

Queen, 2000

František Skála pursues sculpture, painting, illustration, literature, music, and dance. He holds the Jindřich Chalupecký Award and has been widely acknowledged for his illustrations. He is a member of the Hard-Headed art group, performs in the Sklep [Cellar] Theater, and sings in the MTO Universal Prague and the Finnish Baroque bands. He is also part of the Tros Sketos group. In addition, he is the “real member” of the BKS secret organization and the Commander of the Order of the Green Ladybug. Skála, an authentic Renaissance multifaceted artist, is a romantic solitaire figure of contemporary Czech art – sometimes a mystifier, sometimes a provocateur, and a sarcasm abounding in flowery imagination and poetic originality. These features make his works full of tension, mysticism, and irrationality as well as ironic or self-ironizing humor.

Skála has been involved in woodcarving and working with wood since his secondary-school studies. Wood in its either natural or processed form appears very often in its oeuvre. He loves to travel, and therefore incorporates not only Central-European and tropical wood, but also Australian wood or Mexican roots into his works. He also uses leather of often bizarre origin, combining it with metal, wood, and other materials (claws, small bones, wing-cases, lichen, cones, clay, glass, bread mold, rotting carpet, paper linoleum, foam, plastic, and much more). He searches for these fragments of both natural and artificial origin wherever he goes, saving them for the future before they vanish under the impact of time, natural elements, human intervention or, conversely, human indifference. He has the gift to magically transform various items (which are sometimes unattractive as such) into works of new meanings, characteristic of playfulness, imagination, humor, exaggeration, and mysticism. Skála's admirable “recycling” method is unique and unmistakable even within the international art scene.

Skála loves Nature and his happiest moments are those spent on an old farm in the village of Dřevíč. And perhaps there, far from civilization and close to a mystical Celtic settlement, he created his *Queen*. We know sculptural portrait as a traditional genre represented by busts patiently carved in stone or sculptures modeled in malleable clay. But Skála approached it in his own manner in the *Queen*, and the result is an object created of several components and multiple materials. The main part consists of a piece of wood smoothly sanded by long exposure to water, while the combed bun combines wooden branches, old rubber rings, and electricity cables. The lady's decorative brooch is made of old rubber hair band and litchi fruit, while her ear is suggested by twisted plastic sheathing. The base is a small wooden oval that once served to support deer antlers. The object originated via composing seemingly incompatible elements, so characteristic of the artist. And the resulting portrait is beautiful – it looks sublime, proud and truly sovereign, as befits a queen...