

# MARIA PAPA ROSTKOWSKA & WIFREDO LAM

*IMAGINAIRES CROISÉS - ALBISOLA ET AU-DELÀ*

OPENING: THURSDAY JANUARY 15 - 7-9PM

EXHIBITION: JANUARY 15 - FEBRUARY 7, 2026

GALERIE DIANE DE POLIGNAC - 2BIS RUE DE GRIBEAUVAL - 75007 PARIS



Maria Papa Rostkowska in Tullio Mazzotti's studio, Albisola, Italy, 1960 - Archives of the Rostkowski family

The Diane de Polignac Gallery is honored to present the first solo exhibition in a French gallery of Maria Papa Rostkowska since her passing in 2008. This exceptional event was made possible through the collaboration of Nicolas Rostkowski, the artist's son, and his wife Joëlle Rostkowski.

This exhibition, accompanied by a catalogue, invites to a rediscovery of the golden age of Albisola, a vibrant period spanning from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. Albisola was then a privileged meeting place for numerous artists who experimented with terracotta there, particularly around the futurist artist Tullio Mazzotti. We have chosen to highlight the artistic ties and friendship between Maria Papa Rostkowska and Wifredo Lam, who collaborated there during their stay.

While bronze and terracotta marked Maria Papa Rostkowska's introduction to the world of sculpture, she definitively turned to marble in 1965. A virtuoso in direct carving sculpture, Maria Papa Rostkowska is recognized for the softness of her marble works. Fifteen of these sculptures, most of which have never been exhibited before, make up a unique selection.

This exhibition celebrates the extraordinary talent of a remarkable artist. The sensitivity and softness of her marble sculptures contrast with the harshness of her personal journey. Maria Papa Rostkowska, throughout the conflicts of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, worked tirelessly to leave behind a sensitive and deeply personal body of work.

## BIOGRAPHY

### MARIA PAPA ROSTKOWSKA (1923-2008)

Maria Papa Rostkowska (née Baranowska) was born on July 4, 1923, in Brwinow, Poland. She studied technical drawing and architecture in clandestine courses during the German occupation. In 1943, she married Ludwik Rostkowski Jr. Together, they joined the armed resistance and participated in the rescue of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto. Active in the Warsaw Uprising (1944), Maria Rostkowska was arrested, deported to Auschwitz, and managed to escape. After the liberation, she was decorated with the Silver Cross Virtuti Militari and Ludwik Rostkowski Jr. was honored with the Righteous Among the Nations Medal.

In 1947, Maria Rostkowska entered the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Thanks to a scholarship from the Polish government, she stayed in Paris from 1947 to 1950, dedicating herself to drawing and painting. This scholarship was renewed by the French government and UNESCO.

Returning to Poland in 1950, Maria Rostkowska taught in Sopot, Gdansk, and then Warsaw. Following the Stalinist repression that took her militant husband, she left the Polish capital. In 1955, she met the French painter Édouard Pignon and, in 1957, moved to Paris thanks to his invitation. Paris became her permanent residence. A year later, she married Gualtieri Papa di San Lazzaro, art critic and founder of the XX<sup>e</sup> Siècle journal and gallery.

During the summer of 1958, Maria Papa discovered ceramics in Albisola, collaborating with renowned artists (Fontana, César, Jorn, Gilioli, Lam, etc.). Her creations were exhibited at the Galleria del Naviglio in Milan and the Galerie XX<sup>e</sup> Siècle in Paris. In the mid-1960s, following the advice of Arp and Marini, she turned to direct carving of marble. In 1966, she set up her studio in the Henraux marble workshop in Querceta, near Pietrasanta. There she worked alongside Henry Moore, Jean Arp, Marino Marini, Joan Miró, César, and Alina Szapocznikow. Maria Papa received the Nelson William and Noma Copley Foundation Award for Sculpture. This marked the beginning of a prolific period of monumental and intimate works in marble.

Maria Papa exhibited in Poland in 1991. She returned there, after thirty-four years of absence, in 1994, for the last time. In 1995, a documentary film was dedicated to her, notably showing the sculpture *La Promesse de bonheur* (The Promise of Happiness), now in the French National Assembly.

Maria Papa Rostkowska participated in over a hundred exhibitions, her works enriching private and public collections in Europe, the United States, and Japan. She continued to create works in marble, odes to life and joy, until her death in 2008 in Lido di Camaiore, Italy.

Today, 45 sculptures are visible in public collections in France, Italy, Poland, and the United States.

Nicolas and Joëlle Rostkowski are behind numerous donations of sculptures: in Poland to the National Museum of Warsaw, Lublin, and Sopot, to the Royal Palace of Lazienki, the Royal Castle of Krakow, and Oransko; in Italy to the Università degli Studi of Milan; and in France to the Musée de l'Hospice Saint Roch, the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Meudon, the Musée de Dijon, and the Musée de Grenoble. In 2011, the monumental version of *La Promesse de bonheur* was unveiled at the French National Assembly, its donation being praised by President Bernard Accoyer, who called Maria Papa Rostkowska a "Frenchwoman at heart".



UNTITLED, 1958-59 - Terracotta - 45 x 30 x 30 cm



LA MÈRE ET L'ENFANT, 1987 - White Carrara marble and Belgian black marble - 54 x 22 x 12 cm