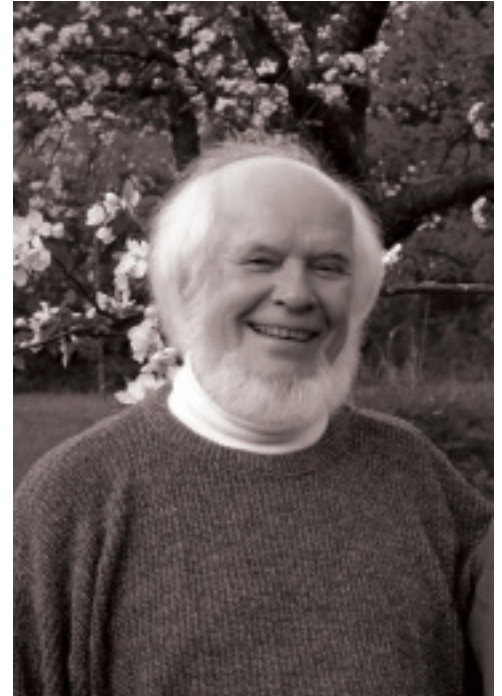


BARBORA

Vladas Vildžiunas (Vilnius, Lithuania)

WHO MADE THIS SCULPTURE? Vladas Vildžiunas is the artist who produced this sculpture. He was born in Dabūliai, Lithuania in 1932. His father Kazys Vildžiunas was a farmer, whose brothers Clement and Bronius were defenders of social justice. Vladas graduated from the Vilnius Art Institute, where later he served as Professor of sculpture—later becoming the head of the sculpture department at the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts. In 1993 Vladas founded the Jerusalem Art Center in Vilnius. Currently he works with his youngest son Kunotas Vildžiunas, who is also an accomplished artist. Most of Vladas' sculptural work has been done in wood, metal or stone. His work ranges from pieces done in the folk sculpture tradition to the monumental, with figures using bold geometric shapes in forming the figure. Many of his commissions have been memorials or commemorative. Many of his sculptures connect to themes of freedom, and the striving for justice and equality as in a monument to Lithuanian deportees to Russia, a monument to Lithuanian Martyrs in Siberia, a Freedom monument in Anykščiai, Lithuania and a monument for Independence Balade in Kelme, Lithuania.

WHAT THIS SCULPTURE ABOUT? This sculpture titled Barbora is about a woman who was once the Polish Monarch, the Queen of Poland, the wife of Sigmund the Second and Duchess of Lithuania in the 1500's. In this time period Kings and Queens did not often marry for love, instead strategic political alliances were secured through marriage. The story of the love affair and subsequent marriage of a Prince and Barbora is the stuff of legends. Of all of the tragic love stories in history, the tale of Barbara Radziwill and her King remains



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one of the most powerful, and yet one of the least known outside of Poland and Lithuania. The story has inspired poems, myths, paintings, films, sculptures and plays. Because an actress playing the role of Barbora in a play was said to resemble the figure in the sculpture the artist Vladas Vildžiunas decided to name the sculpture Barbora. He did not set out to portray this famous ill-fated Queen, but now this sculpture has her name which allows us to learn her story.

Barbora's story: In 1543 the Prince Sigismund was married to Elizabeth, a Hapsburg. Sigismund had already been Vice-Regent of Vilnius for fourteen years, and the city was enjoying its golden age. The Prince embellished the Royal Castle furnishing it with a theatre, a choir and a picture gallery, replete with exquisite Flemish tapestries. The eccentric Prince kept five bears, a lion and ten camels, as well as an extensive stable. As the sole heir of the Jagiellonian dynasty, the crucial link in the twin state of Poland and Lithuania it was



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imperative that he have an heir to the throne. Elizabeth was epileptic, and after two years of marriage she died of injuries caused by a fall from a horse. In order to secure the line the Prince would have to re-marry, and it would likely be arranged to be politically advantageous. However the Prince soon fell deeply in love with a beautiful young Lithuanian widow Barbora, the daughter of a magnate. Barbora was tall, blonde and by accounts at the time extremely beautiful. Barbora had an interest in fashion and cosmetics, was well educated and could read and speak many languages. The court in Cracow was against the marriage,



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as were the King and the Queen Bona Sforza. Rumours circulated at the time that Queen Bona, Italian by birth, had somehow poisoned the Prince's first wife for failing to produce an heir. Despite intense objections and going against the laws governing royal marriages the Prince, disobeying both the King and Queen, married Barbora in 1547. When the King died in 1548 Parliament demanded a divorce claiming that the marriage was illegal.

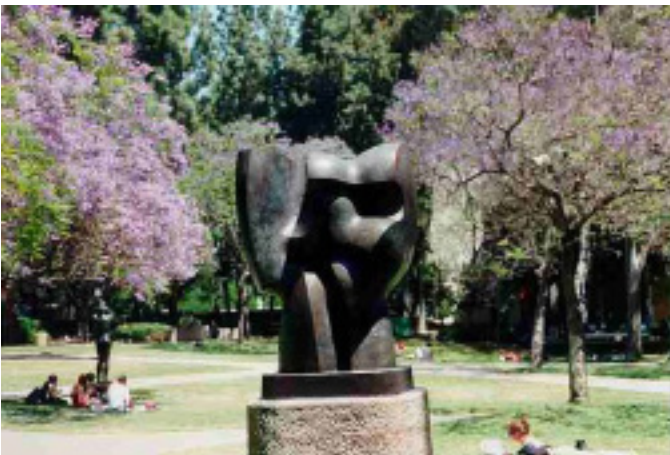
Five months after their marriage Barbora became mysteriously ill. Rumours circulated that Queen Bona had poisoned the new bride of the young King. On May 8, 1551 Barbora died at the Wawel Castle, in Krakow. Loyal to her Lithuanian heritage, her wishes were to be buried in Vilnius. The King was lost in grief and would wear black in a state of mourning for the rest of his life. Queen Bona quickly arranged a new marriage for her grieving King to



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Catherine, a second Habsburg princess and the sister of his first wife. But the marriage was unconsummated and therefore childless. Queen Bona would later flee Poland after falling out of favour at court, taking refuge in an Italian nunnery. She died of poisoning in 1557. Years later Sigismund facilitated the union of Lithuania and Poland (1569). After his reign Kings would be now elected to a joint throne. This phase of history marks a high point of independence and a time of a prosperous and cultivated empire for Lithuania. While under Russian occupation, plays telling this story were banned because Lithuanians used the narrative as a symbol of nationalism and the striving for an independent Lithuania. In Lithuania, in 1972, Junozas Grušas wrote a play titled, *Barbora Radvilaite*. The play was very popular, becoming a symbol for resistance to the Soviet regime.

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WHAT IS THIS ARTIST'S OTHER WORK LIKE? Much of Vldas Vildžiūnas artistic work has been in the form of monuments. There is a impulse in much of Eastern Europe, including in Lithuania, to hold memory and honour historic events and figures, especially after their independence from the Soviet Union. The monument to the Independence fighters by Vldas Vildžiūnas in Anykščiai is an example of historic memory represented in a contemporary artistic form. The monument pictured here is dedicated to Chiune Sugihara who single-handedly saved thousands of Jewish lives during the Holocaust. The memorial was erected in Vilnius, Lithuania in 1992. The work was designed and created by Vldas Vildžiūnas and Goichi Kutogawa. Consul Chiune Sugihara, was the first Japanese diplomat posted in Kaunas, Lithuania. During World war II Kaunas was the temporary capital of Lithuania. Sugihara's issuing of transit visas enabled over 6,000 Jewish refugees to escape the Holocaust. For his efforts, Sugihara was imprisoned by the Soviets and fired from his job by the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

Glossary

JAGIELLONIAN DYNASTY—This term refers to a family of monarchs or rulers of the empire made up of Poland-Lithuania, Bohemia and Hungary, one of the most powerful kingdoms in East-central Europe in the 15th and 16th Centuries. The death in 1526 of Lavis II ended Jagiellonian rule in Bohemia and Hungary. The end of the rest of the Jagiellonian dynasty came with the death of King Sigismund II in 1572, who died without an heir to the throne.

LITHUANIA—A country north of Poland and one of the Baltic States. By the 15th century the Kingdom of Lithuania was one of the largest and most populous of the European states with land that included parts of what is now Belarus, Ukraine, Poland and Russia. By the end of the 18th century the country became part of the Russian empire. In 1918 Lithuania regained its independence, which was maintained until it was occupied in World War II. It was not until the 1990's that Lithuania again became an independent and democratic country.

NATIONALISM—A loyalty and pride in the goals and interests of one's own country. This term is also used for the aspirations for national independence in a country under foreign domination.

MONUMENT—A structure, marker, or sculpture intended to honour, or commemorate a person, act, historical event or occurrence so that it will be remembered in the future. Often monuments are erected in public spaces to last over time, thereby holding the memory of what is being honoured.

WHO PUT THIS SCULPTURE ON DISPLAY IN RICHMOND? This sculpture is part of Vancouver Biennale 2009-2011 Exhibition. The Vancouver Biennale is a non-profit charitable organization that celebrates art in public space. Each exhibition transforms the urban landscape into an Open Air Museum, creating globally inspired cultural experiences where people live, work, play and transit. The Biennale features internationally renowned and emerging Contemporary artists that represent a diversity of cultural perspectives and artistic disciplines including sculpture, new media, performance works and film. The objective is to use great art as a catalyst to transformative learning and social action.

The Vancouver Biennale also creates supporting public programs, events and publications including the award-winning BIG IDEAS Education program, the International Artist Residency Program inspired by Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream", the CineFest LIVE documentary film festival and the Tour de Biennale and BIKennale arts & culture cycling events.

TO LEARN MORE you can search the terms **BIENNALE**, **PUBLIC ART** or **OUTDOOR SCULPTURE PARKS** on-line. Also Visit the Vancouver Biennale website at www.vancouverbiennale.com

IMAGE CREDITS:

- 1 Artist portrait; artist
- 2 *Barbora*; Dan Fairchild
- 3 Barbara Radziwill, 1520 - 1551; Public Domain
- 4 Barbara Radziwill; Public Domain
- 5 *Chiune Sugihara*, monument in Vilnius, 1992; Alma Pater
- 6 *The Bird Goddess*, 1977; UCLA

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