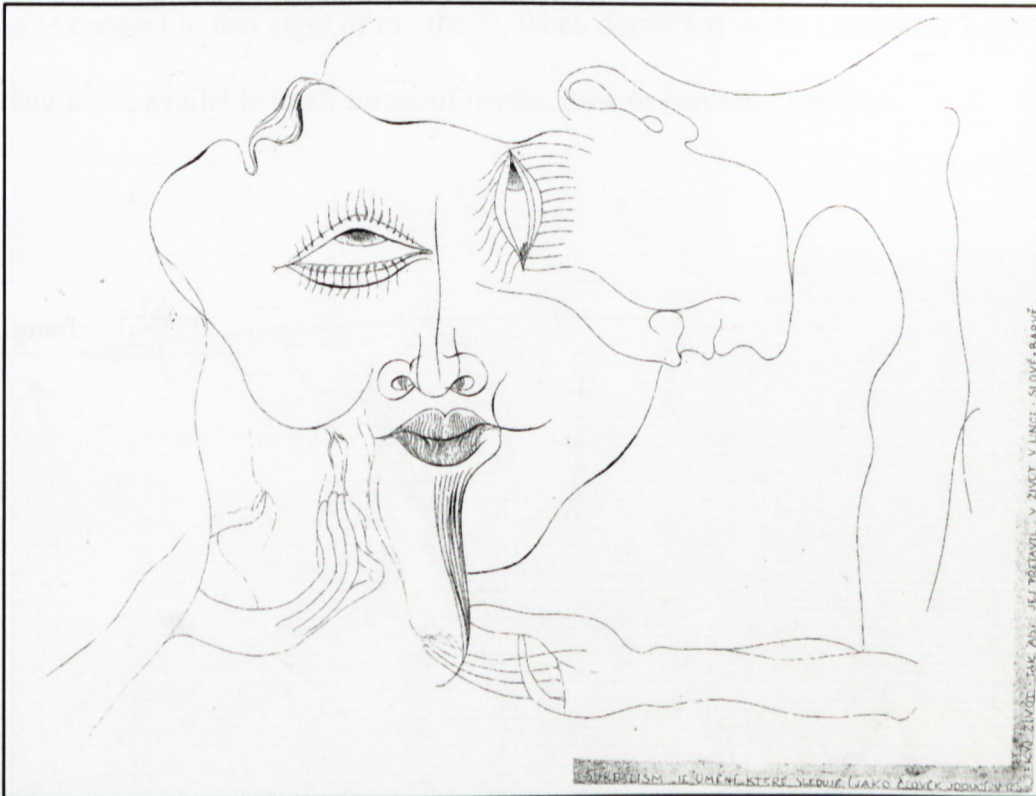


Deep and Defiant

*Dušan and Voitre Marek; Two European Émigré
Artists in Post-War (South) Australia*



Voitre Marek c.1952

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Declaration:

This work contains no material which has been accepted for any other degree or diploma in any University or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Abstract:

The two émigré artists Dušan Marek (1926-1993) and his elder brother Voitre Marek (1919-1999) chose different modes of expression, Dušan becoming a painter and film-maker and Voitre a sculptor. Each worked in the surrealist style until 1960, when Voitre's career took a different direction. He then made the decision to devote himself to ecclesiastical sculpture. Voitre's major religious work can be described as a synthesis of the Byzantine and Romanesque influences.

Educated as professional artists in Prague, Czechoslovakia, during the years of World War Two, Dušan and Voitre chose to escape the communist regime under the hammer of Stalin in 1948, arriving in Australia in the same year. They exhibited together for the first time in Australia in the following year. An underlying religious dimension in their lives propelled them each on a different path towards spiritual fulfillment, which found expression in their art. Their inevitable and relentless search for this fulfillment began with their father's influence and their shared cultural backgrounds.

The brothers' spirituality was deep and their commitment in the face of their initial critical reception in Adelaide, defiant. The thesis *Deep and Defiant* explores the different paths taken by each of the brothers, through a close examination of their drawings, paintings and sculptural works. The other media with which they worked, silver-smithing and film-making in Dušan's case, and print-making and jewellery-making in Voitre's case, is not considered in detail in the thesis.

Dušan's was not a conventional spirituality, pursuing a spiritual path instead through the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, the psychologists Sigmund Freud and

Carl Jung, philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, and reading religious works such as the Bible, the Koran and other major tomes, expressing himself in a variety of stylistic and technical ways which included surrealism and film-making. His restless search led him to develop a quasi-religious reverence for nature and a distinctive imagery which reflected his intellectual, artistic and spiritual quest.

Voitre's path was more conventional, finding spirituality in his Christian faith through the Catholic religion. He explored spirituality initially through his study of philosophy and comparative religion. Later, after an epiphany at the age of twenty, his surrealist style began to find expression in religious subjects, until in 1960, at the age of forty-one he made the decision to devote himself entirely to ecclesiastical sculpture.

The thesis concludes that spirituality and religiosity were defining aspects in the brothers' art. The combination of their previous artistic experiences and religious and philosophical interests, and the new landscape and critical environment they found in Australia, sharpened the religious and spiritual aspects of their art. Although their journeys were different, and they each followed different modes of expression, I argue here that their spirituality was central to their artistic expression.

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