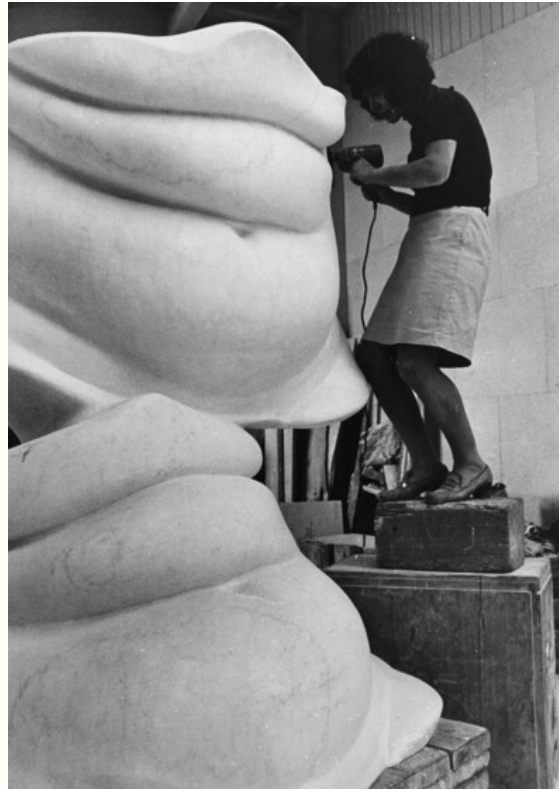


Alina Szapocznikow (Polish, 1926-73) – Artist Resources

In 2009, the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, held a [symposium on Szapocznikow](#), bringing scholars from around the world to discuss prominent themes, individual pieces, and her identity as a female artist working directly with figure in the male dominated realm of post-war abstraction. Scroll down for more videos, including those from [MoMA curator Connie Butler](#), and feminist scholar and art historian, [Griselda Pollock](#).



Szapocznikow working on *Grands Ventres (Big Bellies)*, 1968

Photograph: Roger Gain for Elle/Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw.

In 2013, MoMA hosted the international touring retrospective, [Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone](#), bringing together over 100 works in the mediums of sculpture, drawing, and photography. The exhibition was produced with the [WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels](#), and the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, which holds a substantial [collection of the artist's work and archives](#).

Considered one of the most important Szapocznikow scholars outside of Poland, Griselda Pollock, discusses Szapocznikow's life, career, and relationship with trauma in [a 2012 lecture](#) at the opening of the [Sculpture Undone retrospective](#) at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. "If Alina Szapocznikow is finally to have her moment, to be incorporated into the history of international 20th century art," Pollock reflects, "let it not be for what is most easily assimilated...[or] the resonance with Surrealism or Pop Art or Machine Art, but let it be for the difficult of our encounter with the project that struggled to recreate the human world after a catastrophe that radically ruptured human history."

[The Guardian](#) honored Szapocznikow with a thoughtful and penetrating profile of her life and work in 2017 in conjunction of 2018 exhibition, [Alina Szapocznikow: Human Landscapes](#), the first retrospective in the UK, at The Hepworth Wakefield in Yorkshire.

Hauser & Wirth showcased the last ten years of Szapocznikow's career, exploring her body casts and experimentation with material in an exhibition that opened in [New York](#) in 2019 and travelled to [London](#) in 2020. The show's title, *To Exalt the Ephemeral*, comes from the artist's 1972 manifesto, in which she wrote, "My gesture is addressed to the human body...to its most vague and ephemeral sensations. I want to exalt the ephemeral in the folds of our body in the traces of our passage."

Read Margot Norton's essay, [Alina Szapocznikow's Radical Instability](#), from the Hauser & Wirth exhibition catalogue.



Szapocznikow, Paris, 1964

Alina Szapocznikow (Polish, 1926-73)

Lampe-Bouche (Illuminated Lips), 1966

Colored polyester resin, electrical wiring (220V) and metal

Collection of Allison and Larry Berg; L2019:76.1

Jewish artist Alina Szapocznikow survived an adolescence in concentration camps and the later distress of tuberculosis before training at L'École des Beaux Arts in Paris during the 1950s. Her oeuvre reflects the enduring remnants of the inter-war avant-garde and the post-war movements flourishing in the artistic capital, to which she remained closely connected for the rest of her life. In Poland, Soviet restrictions on art loosened following the death of Stalin in 1953, and Szapocznikow transitioned from her classical training and sanctioned Social Realist paintings to haunting mixed media sculptures that explore the somatic experience of memory and history through surreal sculptures of the human figure. As the artist explained, "I am convinced that of all the manifestations of the ephemeral, the human body is the most vulnerable, the only source of all joy, all suffering, and all truth." Like many of her mature sculptures, **Lampe-Bouche (Illuminated Lips)** expands on the conceptual process of Szapocznikow's first body casts (of her own legs) in 1962. It straddles an uncomfortable divide between abstraction and representation, human and object, sensuality and absurdity, frailty and permanence.

On view January 15 – April 19, 2020

