

## ABIGAIL VARELA

Abigail Varela was born in Caracas, Venezuela, on February 9, 1948. From an early age he was attracted to art, and his fellow student, Josuné Dorronsoró, who became a renowned historian of photography, encouraged him. His first artistic steps were in 1973 in ceramics: he took classes with Hiroshi Kawajiri and opened a workshop with his wife María Victoria Babi, where they manufactured utilitarian pieces.

In 1975, Varela traveled through Latin America where he came into contact with pre-Columbian cultures, which confirmed his desire to become a sculptor.

In 1976, he collaborated as an illustrator and photographer for the literary magazine *En Ancas* of Maracay, Venezuela. He also began exhibiting successfully, participating in II Salón Nacional de Escultura de Pequeño y Mediano Formato in Valencia, Carabobo State, Venezuela, where he won the prize for the best work with *Comadreo*, two figures made in terracotta.

Between 1977 and 1978, he took drawing classes at the Instituto de Diseño Neumann and the Escuela de Artes Plásticas Cristóbal Rojas in Caracas; his first solo exhibition took place at the Centro Bella Vista Gallery, Porlamar, Venezuela; and he received an honorable mention in the IV Salón Nacional de las Artes del Fuego in Valencia, Venezuela.

In 1979, he created *Homenaje al pregonero*, a tight group of 13 figures with slightly bent legs, outstretched arms, and erect heads which expressed the dynamism and vivacity of the bustle of the streets of Caracas. This early appearance of those physical disproportions—the thin and filiform arms; the fine, high necks; and the small heads contrasted with wide hips—became a characteristic staple of the artist's sculptural works. At this time, Varela made sculptures in plaster or terracotta as well as cut-out iron.

Influenced by Mario Ceroli's sculpture, *The Piper*, in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts of Caracas, Varela produced several works of grouped figures, flattened and silhouetted, which he presented in his first solo show in Caracas, *Reflejos daily*, in the G Gallery in 1982. That same year he was a founding member of the Asociación Nacional de Jóvenes Escultores (National Association of Young Sculptors).

In 1985 he participated in Escultura 85 at the Teatro Teresa Carreño in Caracas with *Two comadres*, made of epoxy and real bags. In this work, the ready-made merged with the evocation of primitive forms. In the 1980s, Varela's artistic style

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was strengthened: his theme became almost exclusively the female figure (with the exceptions of felines) using the technique of modeling and subsequently cast in bronze. His peculiar interpretation of distorted anatomy was also affirmed, providing multiple contemporary variants of an eternal theme.

After participating in numerous events during the early '80s sculpture "boom" in Venezuela, he broadened his reach internationally in the '90's with exhibitions in El Salvador, Miami, London and New York.

In 1997, he created the film and music award trophy for the Time for Peace Foundation of New York.