



# Fiore de Henriquez

20th June 1921 - 5th June 2004

Fiore was born in Trieste in Italy to a mother of Turkish origin and her father came from a line of Spanish noblemen of the Habsburgh court in Vienna.

As a teenager, she was part of the fascist youth movement. In 1935, her father was denounced as an anti-fascist as he refused to Italinise his name and was sent into internal exile. During the Germany occupation of northern Italy, she helped escort Jewish refugees to safety by assisting the partisans. At the end of the war, she was caught by the Germans and they interrogated her – she luckily managed to escape through a window of a toilet.

While studying philosophy and literature in Venice, she made friends with some of the arts students. While helping one of the studios knead the clay, she started making a head which was a self-portrait which led to her becoming a sculptor. She studied at the Academy of Fine Art in Venice from 1939-1942.

Her first exhibition was in Florence in 1947. In 1949, she won a competition for a civic statue in Salerno. For this, she created a monument in bronze of Don Giovanni Cuomo. When the men present realised that a woman had won the competition, they destroyed the monument.

In fact, Fiore was not exactly, or wholly female. Raised as a girl, at puberty she developed both gender attributes. Later a sympathetic doctor prescribed male hormones - Fiore at this stage aspired to join the Carabinieri - but after a while she stopped. To accommodate a female bust and male hips she created a dress style of smock, knee breeches - and a fine fedora that led to many challenges in churches and toilets.

Following this she left for England. In the first few months of her living in London, she had some commissions for portrait sculptures. In 1950, she had two head sculptures exhibited in the Royal Academy summer show and following this she was commissioned to produce work for the Festival of Britain in 1951.

Over her life, she would divide her time between Tuscany and London and had a studio in London. She became a British citizen in 1953. She had two solo shows in Rome in 1975 and 1983. During the second half of the 50s to 1965, she travelled around the USA.

As part of her work, De Henriquez created portrait sculptures of many people including Oprah Winfrey, Laurence Olivier and Igor Starvinsky. Between 1948 and 2004, she created 4000 portraits.

Her experience of being intersex informed her work. Androgyny was a common theme as well as ambiguous creatures, conjoined figures and twinning motifs of paired heads. She declared herself "proud to be hermaphrodite" and "two people inside one body". Gay author Christopher Isherwood described her as appearing "dressed like a male peasant in Cavalleria Rusticana and announc[ing] that she had a love for life."

She died on the 5th June 2004 at the age of 82 in Peralta, a hamlet which De Henriquez helped restore.

Image designed by Andrew Dobbin, Schools OUT UK

"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jnr.



2022:  
**Politics  
in Art**  
*the arc is long*

