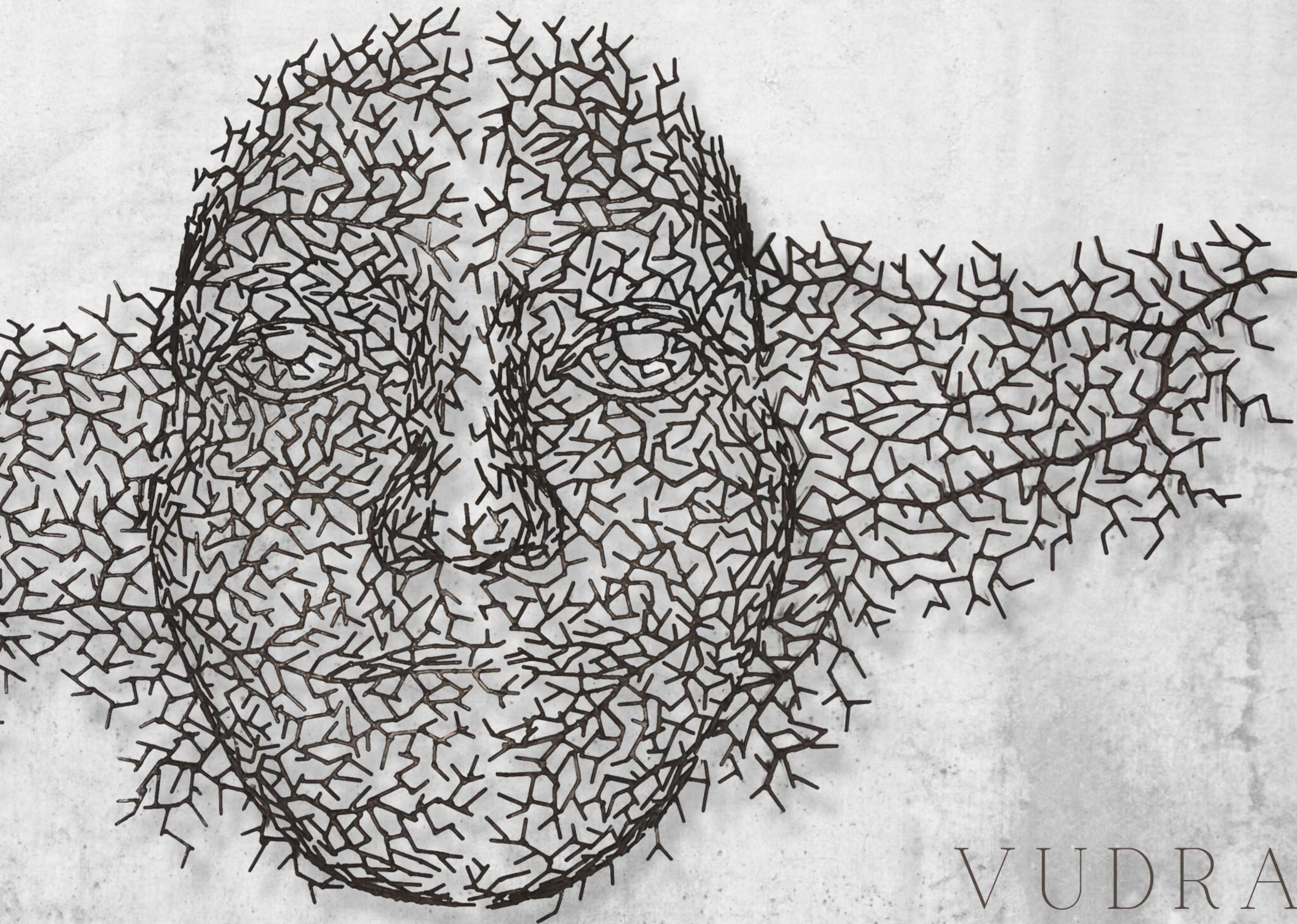




VUDRAG



Nikola Vudrag, born in 1989 in Croatia, embarked on his artistic journey surrounded by the metalworking legacy of his family. Raised amidst forges and workshops, Vudrag developed an early bond with metal's transformative power. His unconventional approach was evident from a young age, diverging from societal norms and hinting at his future as an innovator and artist. To refine his natural talents, Vudrag pursued formal education at the Academy of Applied Arts in Rijeka and later at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. This academic journey, enriched by studies in art therapy and specialized medal-making training, broadened his understanding of art's cultural and psychological dimensions. His education fostered an innovative approach to materials, particularly metal, setting a hallmark for his practice.

Rooted in a synthesis of science, mathematics, linguistics, philosophy, and mythology, Nikola Vudrag's work transcends mere physical representation. His sculptures engage viewers with layered interpretations reflecting the world's fundamental structures and mysteries. Inspired by the legacy of master sculptors, Vudrag harmonizes past and present, creating works that serve as both homage to tradition and beacons of modern expression. His use of geometry and physics reflects a shared language between art and science, transforming abstract concepts into visual poetry. Complemented by a deep respect for materials, particularly steel, Vudrag manipulates his mediums to achieve both strength and subtlety. Rejecting fragmented expressions, Vudrag focuses on the search for universal truths, aiming to create art that resonates beyond cultural and temporal boundaries. His work reflects a harmonious blend of historical continuity and modern insight, striving for aesthetic beauty and a profound understanding of human connections.



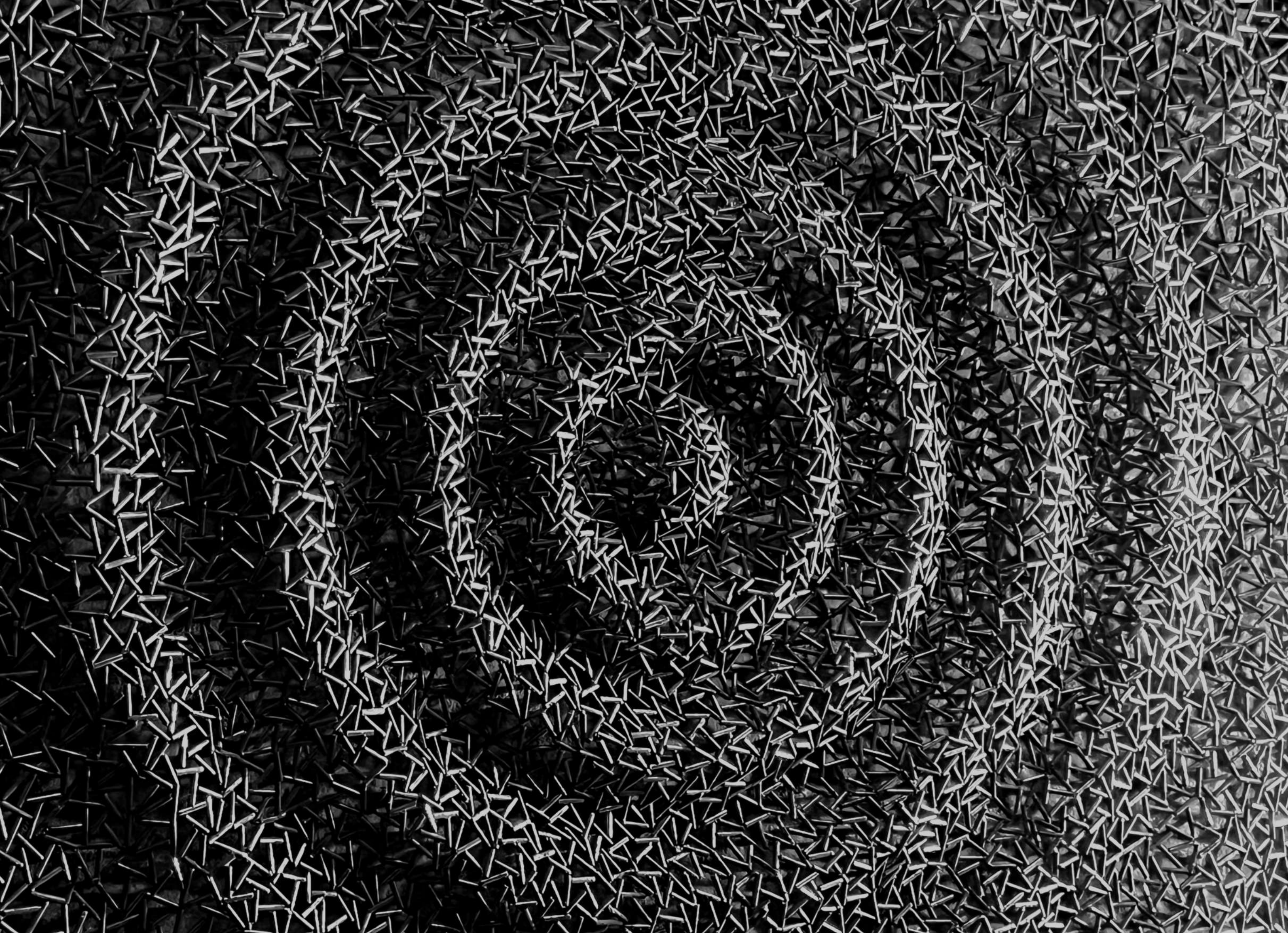
Vudrag's career expanded into the specialized realm of medal and coin design; a rare craft that seamlessly combines centuries-old techniques with cutting-edge technology. His creations, most notably the national side of Croatia's euro coins, place him among the great master medalists of antiquity, while underscoring his exceptional technical skill and imaginative range. Simultaneously, Vudrag emerged as a leading force in large-scale public sculpture, works such as the world's largest Nikola Tesla monument exemplify his ambition to weave art into the fabric of everyday experience without limitations in size or complexity. These monumental pieces act as cultural beacons, cultivating dialogue between art, science, technology, and civic identity.

Participation in prestigious international exhibitions; spanning major events across Europe has further amplified his global footprint, introducing diverse audiences to his distinctive visual language. Endorsements from governments and renowned art institutions highlight Vudrag's steadfast commitment to art's broader societal purpose, advocating for creativity as an engine of public discourse. His numerous accolades, including the latest "Visionary of the Year" award, affirm his substantial influence within contemporary sculpture. Collectively, these recognitions narrate a career devoted to probing the fertile intersections of myth, metal, and meaning, definitively solidifying Vudrag's stature as a prominent and innovative figure on the world art stage.

Vudrag's "net-work" method begins with piles of short steel rods; mute, identical fragments that seem to promise only repetition. Yet it ends in sculptures that feel as alive and unrepeatable as the infinite ratio unfolding without end. At first glance the feat looks athletic: up to 20,000 welds fused end-to-end, hour after hour, days after days... But in reality, it is a ritual of attention. Each weld is executed as a single, mindful breath; the next occurs in answer, accumulating not monotony but momentum, a slow accretion of will and intuition. The artist maps an austere primary form: a sphere, wave, or amphora, like a geometer tracing the invisible syntax of the cosmos. That armature pays homage to logos, to the orderly intelligence he calls "the symbolic display of the perfection and complexity of God's mind." Then the surrender begins. Gridlines dissolve and an organic lattice proliferates according to impulses felt more than calculated. Vudrag becomes conduit rather than controller, allowing the piece to "finish itself," confident that true perfection belongs to forces larger than the human hand.

Surface treatments reinforce this union of order and improvisation. Some works are blackened in fire, others bitten by acid until opalescent colors bloom, others left as bright facets of polished steel. Each patina records an instant of heat, chemistry, and chance; an alchemical diary impossible to copy. Seen in daylight, the bars appear dense; step closer and the mass dematerializes into airy negative space, a floating skeleton of glints and shadows. At night, internal lighting turns the lattice into solidified mist, a nebula trapped under glass. In every condition the eye oscillates between solidity and void, certainty and flux, mirroring the sculpture's birth from strict blueprint to intuitive sprawl.

What emerges is more than an object; it is a philosophical proposition in three dimensions. A single droplet, rendered in net-work, becomes simultaneously a model of quantum entanglement, a microcosm of Genesis, and a meditation on action and reaction. The calculated framework testifies to humanity's hunger for perfection; the wandering infill celebrates our glorious fallibility. Vudrag thus joins the rare lineage of classicists who refuse to separate concept from beauty: the mind must be fed, the eye delighted, the soul stirred. In a culture of infinite replication, each net-work stands as an absolute original—time's irreplicable signature welded into steel, proof that patience, presence, and humility can still coax the eternal out of the elemental.



PERSONA



The word "person" comes from the Latin *persona* (from the Greek *prosōpon*), meaning mask, as in the mask worn by actors on the classical stage. Vudrag's "Persona" examines identity through its ancient roots and meaning of personality. This steel construct embodies duality serving as both armor and expression. Inviting contemplations of self and defense, the piece interrogates the interface between outward presentation and inward essence. Through this sculptural inquiry, Vudrag suggests the mask isn't merely a facade but an essential self-aspect, bridging the soul with the world. He has created a visual metaphor for the unseen yet palpable network of societal constructs that uphold and sustain community. Scientifically, its structure resembles lattice materials that provide immense strength with minimal material—mirroring how cooperative units within nature and society achieve unity and strength.

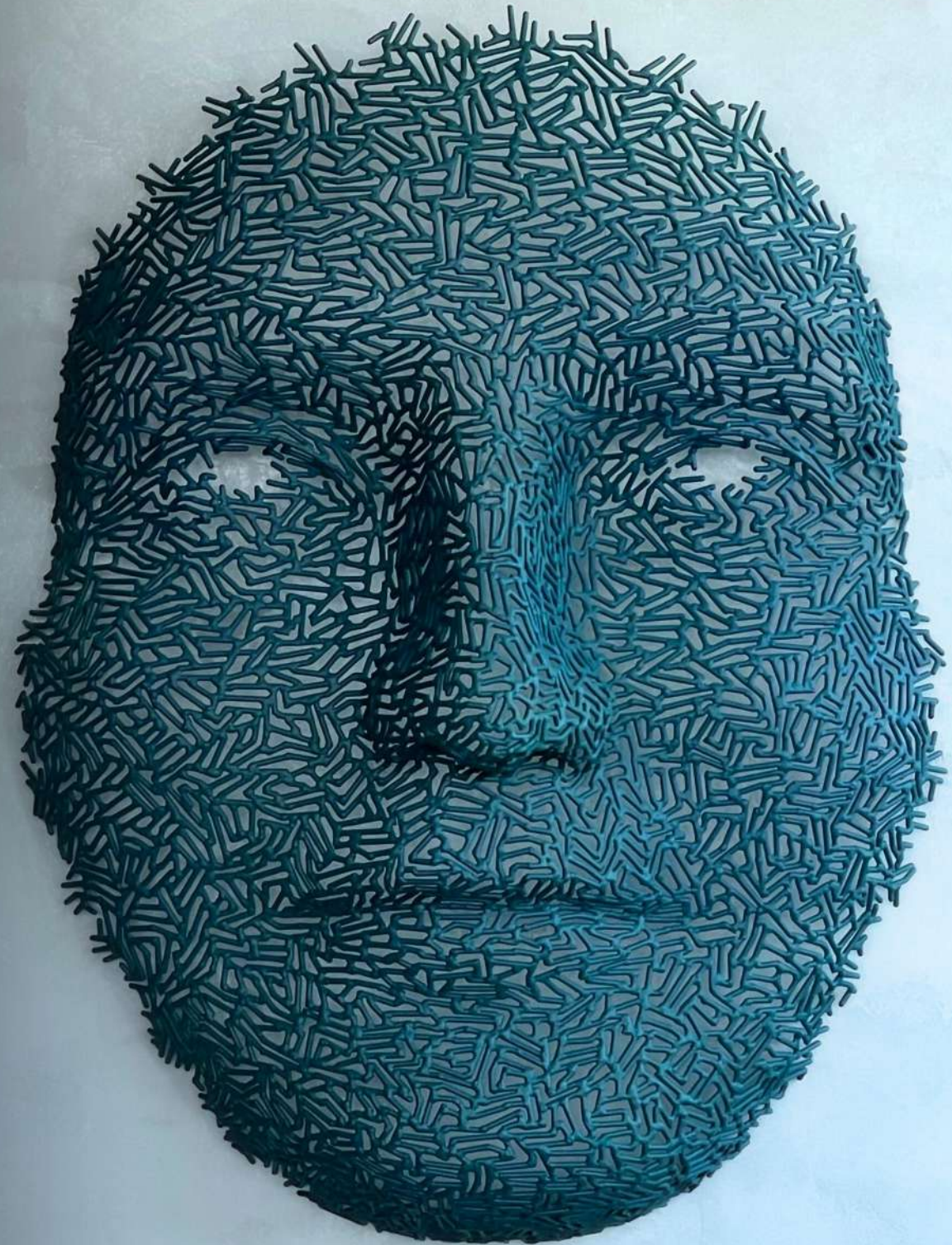
120 x 90 x 40 cm, 2022.

VITREOLUM

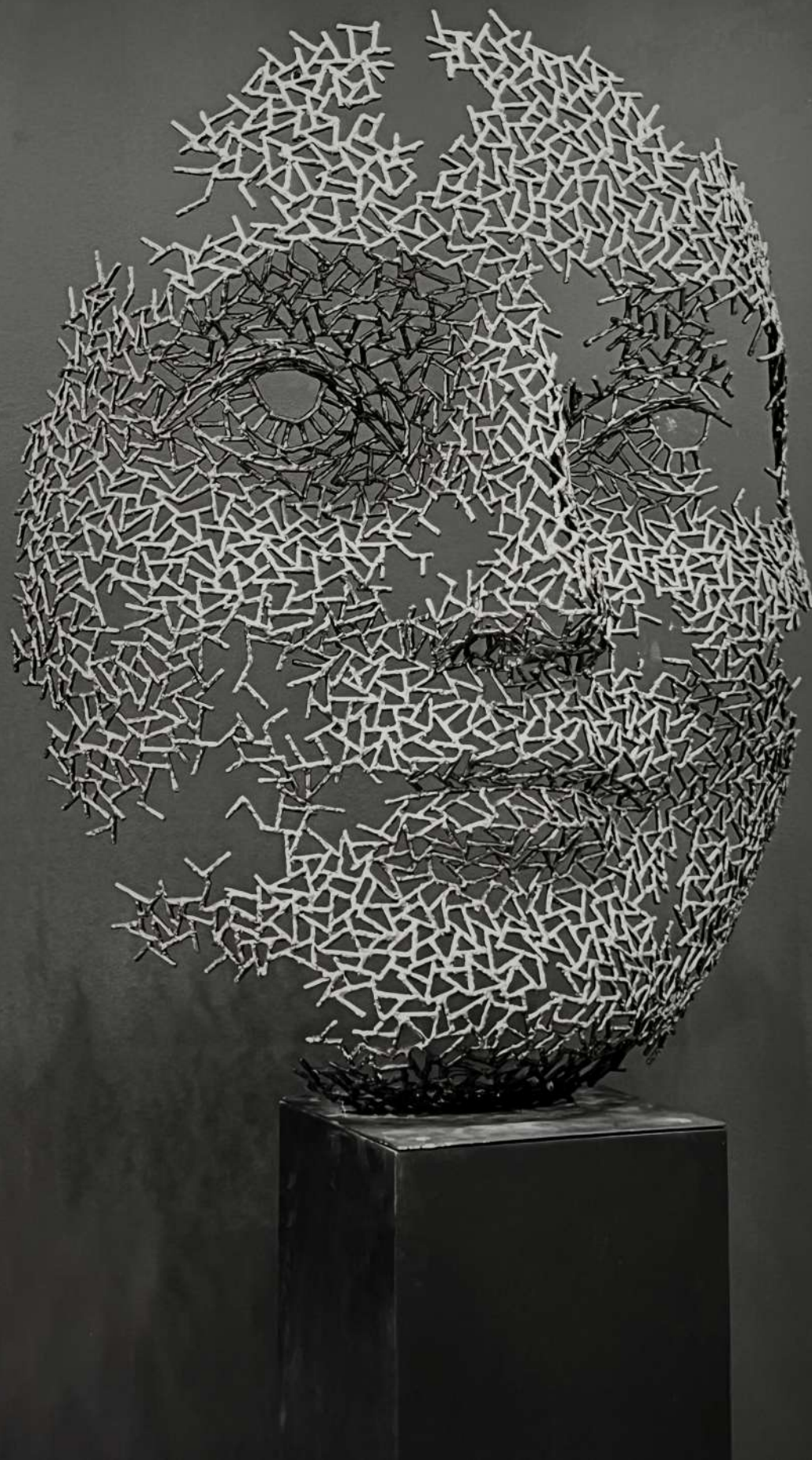
The face emerges from a web of iron bars, stern, noble, frozen in rigid geometry. The longer we trace its angles, the farther it drifts; the harder we search for warmth, the more it dissolves into pure lattice.

What is a "Persona"? Perhaps every identity is a cage, forged from inherited bars of lineage, memory, and expectation. We rattle those bars and call it self-knowledge, yet the clang only echoes our confinement. The sculpture never begs for intimacy; it demands only witness. At once visor and confession, its hollow eyes insist that every visage we meet, even the one in the mirror, is merely a scaffold of fleeting perceptions, poised for demolition. Behind the iron visage lies unfixed possibility, a silence waiting to choose its voice. It is the mask in a play where no one recognizes the actor, where the costume absorbs the character, and where the curtain never quite falls.

120 x 90 x 40 cm, 2023.



THE RELIC



Before us stands a face: universal, classical, a relic of antiquity, yet undeniably of our moment. Its contours feel familiar; the noble brow, the composed lips, the gaze that seems to peer calmly through layers of time. It is simultaneously presence and absence, solidity and void. The face occupies space, yet we can almost see through it; its substance is openness, its apparent mass an illusion woven from intersecting lines of steel.

Tradition, too, operates this way. We sense it as a single, seamless inheritance, yet it is really a vast latticework of fragments and thoughts, beliefs, memories... endlessly fitted together. The metal does not conceal its genesis; every weld remains visible, every joint proclaiming the discipline of labor and the spark of human intention. Similarly, tradition is not born pristine; it is forged, contested, repaired, and reshaped across generations.

The face endures not despite its transparency but because of it. It stands as a relic that refuses stasis, a symbol that openly reveals, even celebrates, the ongoing process of its own construction.

120 x 90 x 50 cm, 2022.

THE LAST IRON MAIDEN

In the culminating work of his Persona cycle, Vudrag welds thousands of heavy steel rods into a single, breathing visage. Each bar is cut and welded to the next until the joints form a labyrinth of molten seams. Heat treated like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the full spectrum of hidden steel colors appears as Vudrag draws chromatic fire from the metal. Standing before it, one feels a strange contradiction: the cold heft of industrial stock and the warmth of a gentle gaze. That friction becomes the sculpture's electricity. Massive weight is gathered and condensed into form, yet the planes between are feather-thin, as though the steel has learned to exhale. Deep charcoal shadows collect in the interstices while polished weld peaks catch stray light, causing the face to pulse between opacity and glow. This is the densest, most saturated piece in the series, Vudrag's maximal declaration of metal's own truth. In this suspended state, the artist suggests that a mask can conceal as much as it reveals; still, there is a glimpse behind it of a universal source, where we peek through the last mask, the final persona; almost a complete "persona-lity."

120 x 90 x 40 cm, 2025.





MADONNA AND THE VEIL

In a reverent remembrance of Madonna (Maryam or Maria), Vudrag confronts an artistic and spiritual dilemma that has tested painters, sculptors, and poets for centuries: how does one suggest the radiance of a figure whose grace is universally acknowledged to surpass mortal depiction? He concludes that any attempt at a definitive likeness would fall short, perhaps even diminish the very holiness he wishes to honor. Therefore, he turns to paradox. Instead of crafting a perfect portrayal, he places a veil where the visage would be, and that absence becomes the locus of presence. The cloth of mystery both shields and reveals. By refusing to show what cannot be shown, he invites the viewer to experience the unshowable.

Within this translucent barrier lies a second, deeply human layer of meaning. The artist remembers Maryam not only as a vessel of divinity but also as a mother who carried real terrors in her heart. Every parent knows the anxious pulse of protective love. In hiding her expression, the veil speaks for the unspoken dread she must have felt as her child walked toward an uncertain destiny. Thus a single gesture of concealment connects celestial reverence with universal maternal empathy.

To construct this conceptual veil, Vudrag marshals a nearly impossible level of patience. More than twenty five thousand slender steel bars are welded together, one by one, until they form an airy lattice, fragile to the eye yet resilient to the touch. Each weld marks a moment of focused breath; each junction is a tiny monument to discipline and faith. The resulting mesh glimmers like woven light, simultaneously porous and strong, earthly and otherworldly. Stand close, and you see the labor, the sparks, the fingerprints of effort. Step back, and the structure dematerializes, becoming an apparition that flickers between object and aura.

In that oscillation between material and immaterial, the sculpture achieves its highest aim. It transforms heavy metal into soft drapery, turns absence into articulated space, and allows the divine to be sensed rather than seen. The graceful void where a face might have been becomes an invitation to contemplation, a silent threshold where the finite meets the infinite.

190 x 107 x 49 cm, 2025.

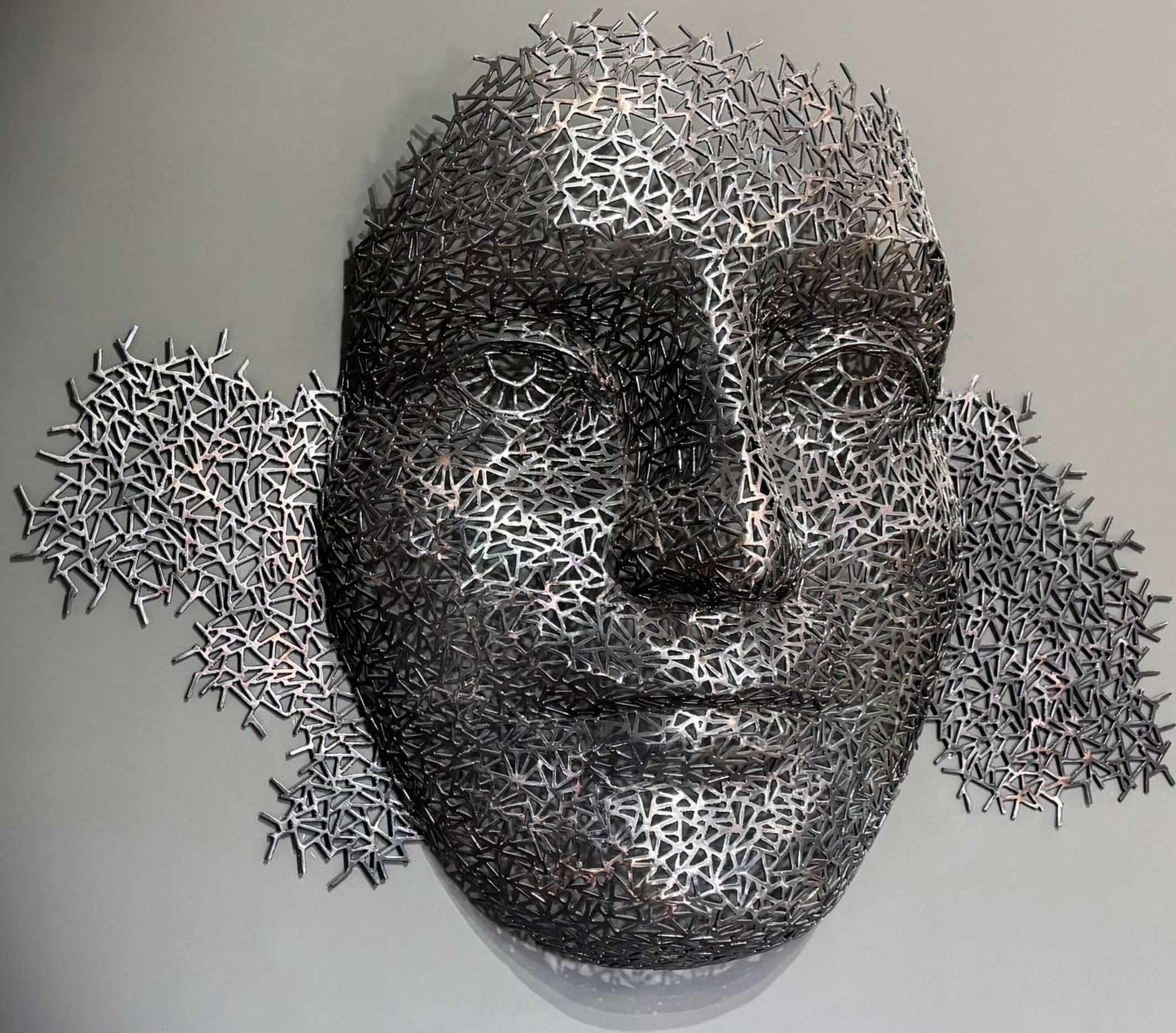


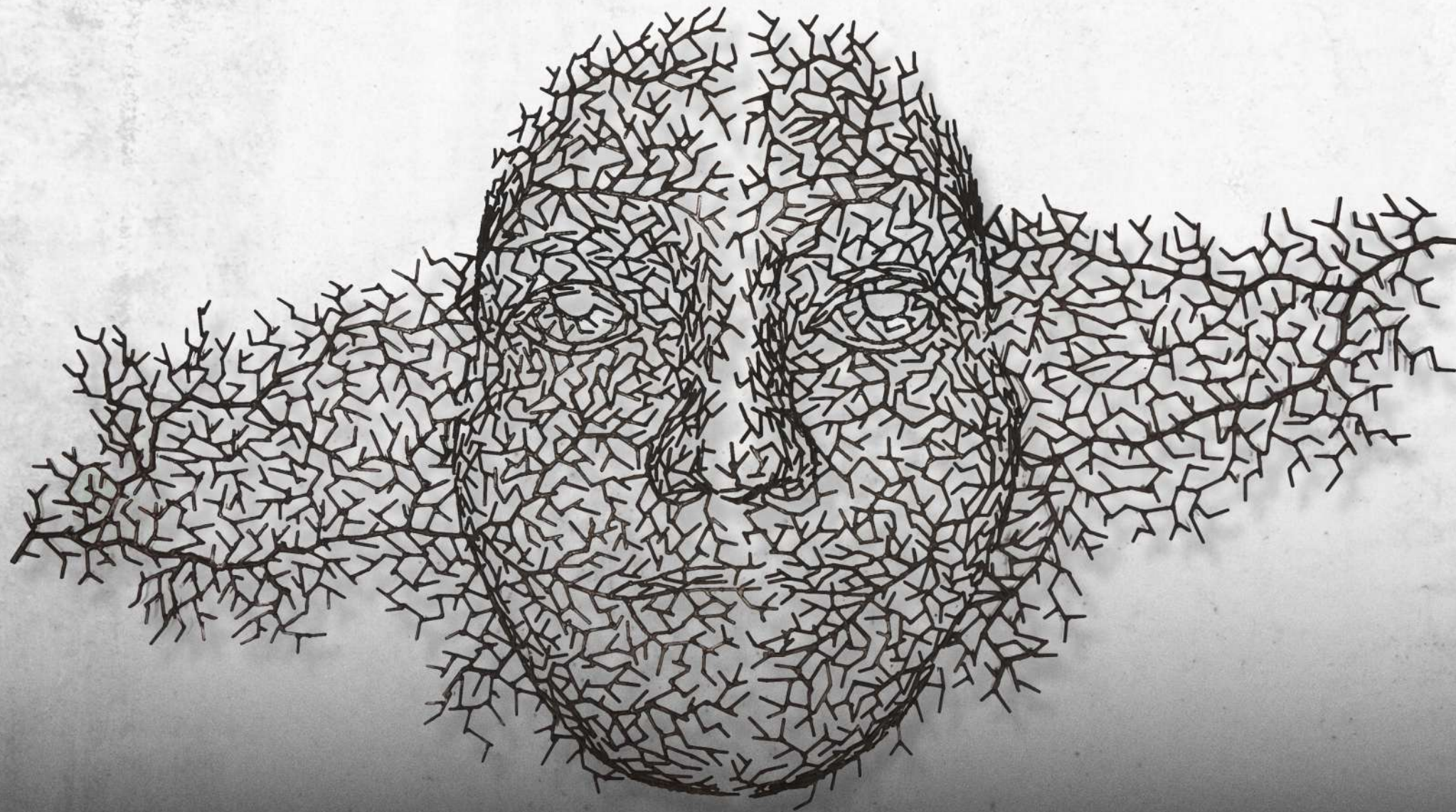


IRON MAIDEN

One of the artist's earliest welded face sculptures, the first IRON MAIDEN (2016) from the series pushes the very definition of what a wall relief can be, blurring the boundary between painting, drawing, and sculpture. Working with dozens of slender steel bars, the artist welds line to line until a numinous visage hovers within an airy lattice. From straight on, the piece feels almost like a charcoal sketch suspended in three-dimensional space; step to the side, and the fragile grid thickens into architecture. Shadows quiver across the wall, turning ambient light into an active collaborator, so the portrait is never fixed but constantly rewritten by the room's shifting illumination. The first works debuted in Paris at "Carré d'Artistes," where viewers likened their shimmering transparency to a crystalline thought network; a geometric scaffolding that seems to sketch a face in mid-air. A subsequent showing at "De Médiçi Gallery" confirmed the series' ability to command both intimate contemplation and sweeping spatial presence, sparking critical talk of a "post-industrial chiaroscuro."

Craft and concept advance together. Each bar is hand-cut, filed, and welded at delicate junctures so fine they appear fused. The resulting network behaves like a skeleton of pure gesture; industrial material made to mimic the fleeting softness of human expression. In 2023, that tension between rigor and fragility reached the international market: a single Iron Maiden realized staggering 712,000 EUR at the Omenaa Art Foundation (Poland) auction sale, where bidders cited the work's "weightless monumentality" as its most disarming quality. Measuring 170 × 90 × 45 cm (2023 version), the sculpture projects nearly half a meter from the wall yet seems lighter than air, activating the negative space around and within it. By allowing absence to speak as forcefully as steel, Iron Maiden articulates a paradox of presence: what is unseen can strike the eye more powerfully than what is plainly visible. In an era saturated with images, the work reminds us that the most resonant portraits may be those built from gaps; openings through which memory, history, and imagination are free to flow.





AMAZONA

This metal sculpture, one of the "Fragments" series, evokes the organic complexity of the Amazon's tangled branches and winding rivers. Its double arc suggests twin riverbanks whose currents mirror each other in quiet tension. Composed of two complementary sections that never quite touch, it embodies a single form held in permanent suspense, visually unified yet physically apart. The dark, rusted patina carries the weight of time, as if shaped by centuries of natural erosion; two harmonious masses flow like water and branch like trees, converging into a visage that feels both ancient and alive. Hung as a wall relief, it reads as a fragment of a larger, unseen landscape, inviting reflection on the silent dialogue between land and river, past and present, separation and wholeness.



210 x 90 x 50 cm, 2022.

To deepen that primeval resonance, the artist subjects the steel to a meticulous rusting ritual that mimics nature's own slow alchemy. After fabrication, the metal is abrasively opened and misted with saltwater and diluted ferric nitrate in repeated passes, each followed by carefully timed cycles of humidity and airflow. Over several days, ochre, sienna, and umber blooms spread like mineral deposits along an ancient floodplain, selective buffing exposing bright ridges while recesses darken into shadowed tributaries. A mild alkaline wash arrests further oxidation before a microcrystalline wax seal preserves the living patina, so the surface seems grown rather than made, its weathered skin sustaining the illusion of timeless continuity even as the two parts remain forever just apart.

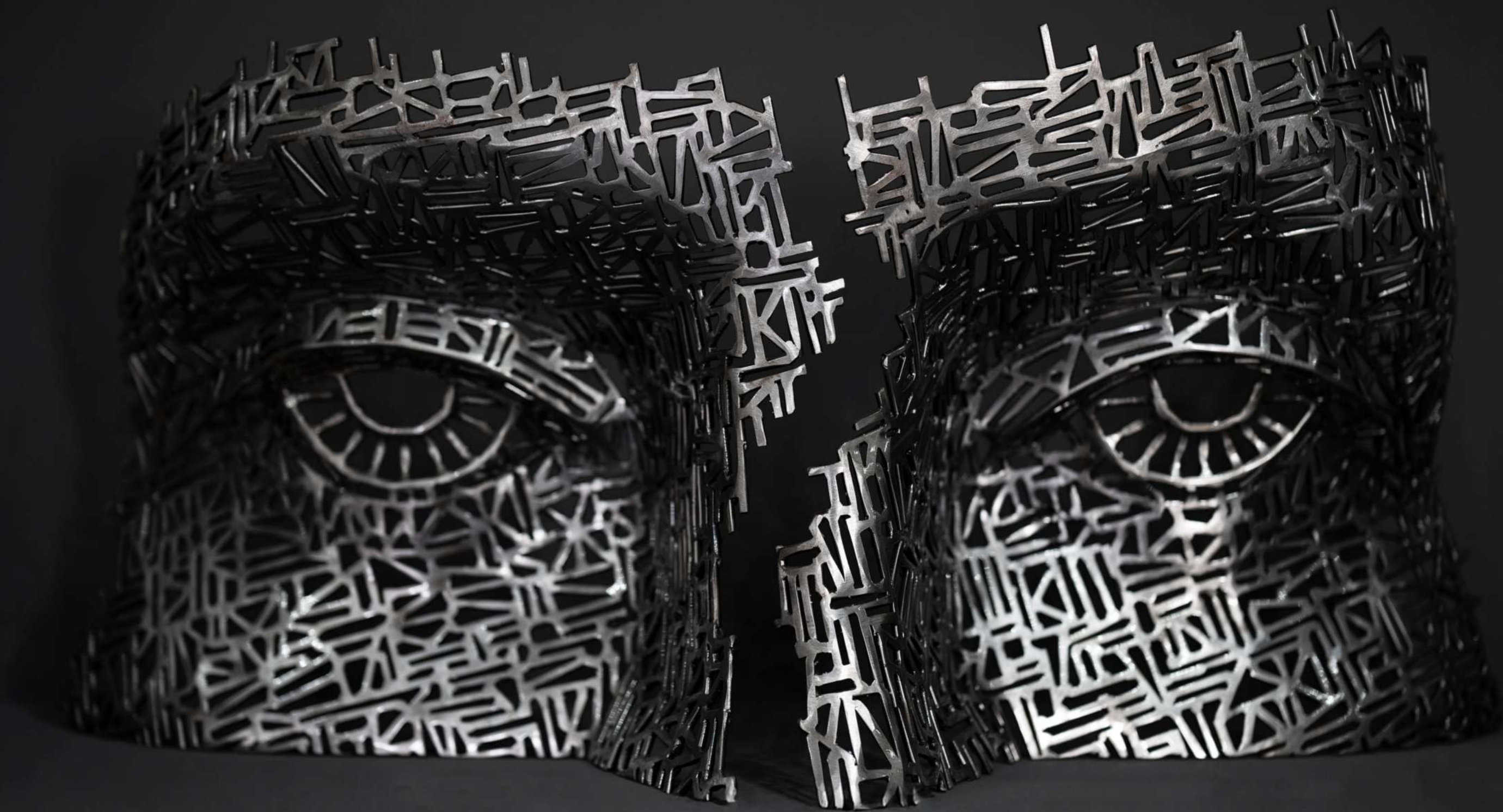
SUMERIAN CUNEIFORM AND FRAGMENTS

Vudrag's "Fragments" series contends that what looks broken can still generate unity. Each work begins with cut steel rods welded into airy lattices; the gaps are deliberate, inviting viewers to complete the forms in their minds. What emerges feels at once archaeological and futuristic; a sculptural sentence that hovers between presence and absence.

At the heart of the project is Vudrag's "Sumerian pattern," a contemporary translation of the world's earliest script. He studies the wedge impressions of clay tablets, then re-scores their cadence in steel. Every rod operates like a stylus mark; every weld, a cuneiform press. The resulting mesh evokes a weathered shard of a Sumerian clay tablet, an ordered field of glyph-like rods cracked by time, whispering the archaeology of forgotten ages. Repetition exists, yet no module is identical, mirroring how language mutates while retaining a core grammar. Although individual pieces measure from 45 × 45 × 40 cm up to 100 × 40 × 45 cm, the series is conceived as one dispersed artwork. Some fragments gather in a gallery, shadows hinting at a lost manuscript; others travel to distant cities, entrusted to collectors, spouses, or friends: each keeper holding a shard that whispers a tale only they know. The gesture echoes cultural diaspora: ideas break apart, migrate, and recombine into fresh narratives. Welding unites the metal; distance frees it to speak with many accents.

Craft remains visible. Each joint announces labor, refusing seamless illusion. Vudrag stops before the mesh fully closes, leaving apertures for light and interpretation. The sculptures become living manuscripts; forever incomplete, forever readable. Rusted steel, coaxed through controlled oxidation, blooms in ochre tones, making the lattice feel excavated and as old as the script itself. Dark-silver torch patina glints like moonlit bitumen. Bright silver, polished to liquid sheen, thrusts the pattern into the present, scattering sharp reflections like freshly spoken words.

From 45 x 45 x 40 cm to 100 x 40 x 45 cm
2022. - 2025.





SUMERIAN MOON

In this striking spherical sculpture, Vudrag orchestrates a deliberate and potent clash of form and language. The perfect, universal shape of the sphere, a symbol of unity and celestial harmony, is encased in a sharp, angular skin reminiscent of ancient Sumerian cuneiform. This is not a mere aesthetic choice, but a conceptual dialogue between the primordial and the eternal. The sphere represents the unspoken, fundamental laws of the cosmos, while the sharp, script-like pattern evokes humanity's earliest attempts to codify meaning, law, and story into a permanent, legible form.

Vudrag deliberately pushes the technical limits of his network technique here, forcing sharp, crystalline corners onto a relentlessly curved surface. This high-wire act of fabrication introduces intentional, controlled imperfections; not as flaws, but as a testament to the human hand's struggle to impose order upon the ideal. These subtle variances amplify the contrast, making the pattern feel both ancient and alive. The result is a work that is both a geometric object and a metaphysical proposition: a world inscribed with the forgotten grammar of its own creation, standing as a silent monument to the eternal dance between perfect form and the imperfect, beautiful language we use to describe it.

40 x 40 x 50 cm, 2025.





TRIPTYCH OF AMPHORAS

In triptych of amphoras, Vudrag conducts a masterful exploration of how materiality dictates narrative. The classical form remains constant, yet through subtle variations in pattern and patina, each vessel tells a distinct story of Mediterranean essence.

The first amphora "Relic", with its rusted, compact network and irregular voids, stands as an archaeological relic. It speaks of the earth's melted iron core, of time's slow corrosion, and of the object's primary history as a container pulled from the soil, heavy with the whispers of forgotten voyages.

The second vessel "Water" is a hymn to transparency and light. Its structure is a radiant, expansive lattice, evoking the molecular arrangement of water. This is the amphora not as a container of life-giving water, but as a vessel becomes water, a symbol of purity, fluidity, and the source of life itself.

The third amphora "Oleum" is a dense, almost black form, its surface burned and sealed as if coated in centuries of olive oil. It embodies the rich, sacred substance of the Mediterranean, a symbol of anointing, nourishment, and ritual. Here, the vessel is not excavated or translucent but sanctified.

By shaping steel into archaic silhouette, Vudrag reminds us that technology changes, yet the fundamental dialogue between vessel and life remains constant. The piece stands as both relic and prophecy: evidence of how one simple tool can accompany humanity from darkness into light, and promise that, whatever shapes tomorrow's vessels assume, they will still echo the first hollow made by cupped hands at a river's edge.

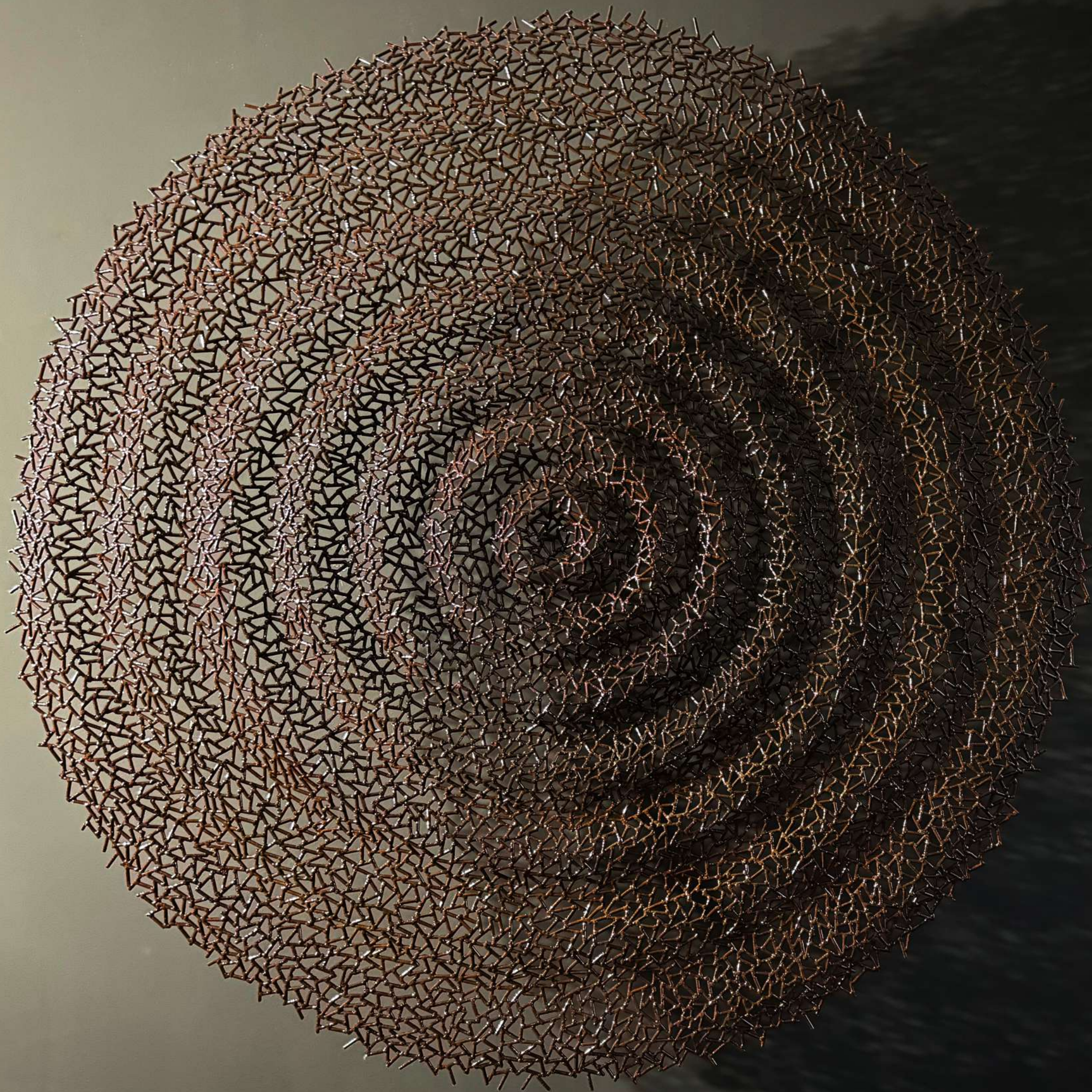
AMPHORA OLEUM

In Amphora Oleum, Nikola Vudrag sanctifies the classical vessel through an act of metallurgical alchemy. He burns the steel, coaxing a deep chromatic spectrum from within the alloy itself: emerald greens and violet iridescence bloom across the surface like stained light refracted through ancient basilica glass. This is the amphora not as mere container, but as transubstantiated essence: the sacred spirit of *Olea europaea* fixed in metal, hardened yet alive with laminae of color. It embodies the liquid gold that once fueled Mediterranean commerce, votive ritual, medicine, cuisine, and illumination; its very skin seems to glow with the afterimage of countless hearth-fires and temple lamps. Here, the vessel becomes what it once held, standing as a timeless tribute to the cultural DNA that runs through all regions where olive trees root themselves in stony soil.

The work also gestures toward a broader archaeology of human need. Across millennia, we have sought ever more refined intermediaries between hand and sustenance: from cupped palms scooping spring water, to clay bowls pressed from riverbank mud; from the bowl's shallow assurance to the handled cup that lifted drink from ground to lip; from cup to spouted jug that poured communally; and from jug to amphora, whose pointed foot and elegant neck allowed oil and wine to voyage safely across seas. Even after glass flasks and industrial bottles replaced terracotta, the essential gesture endured; an unbroken lineage of form serving function, function inspiring form. Vudrag's steel amphora compresses that lineage into a single object that remembers every stage of its evolution.

80 x 33 x 33 cm, 2025.



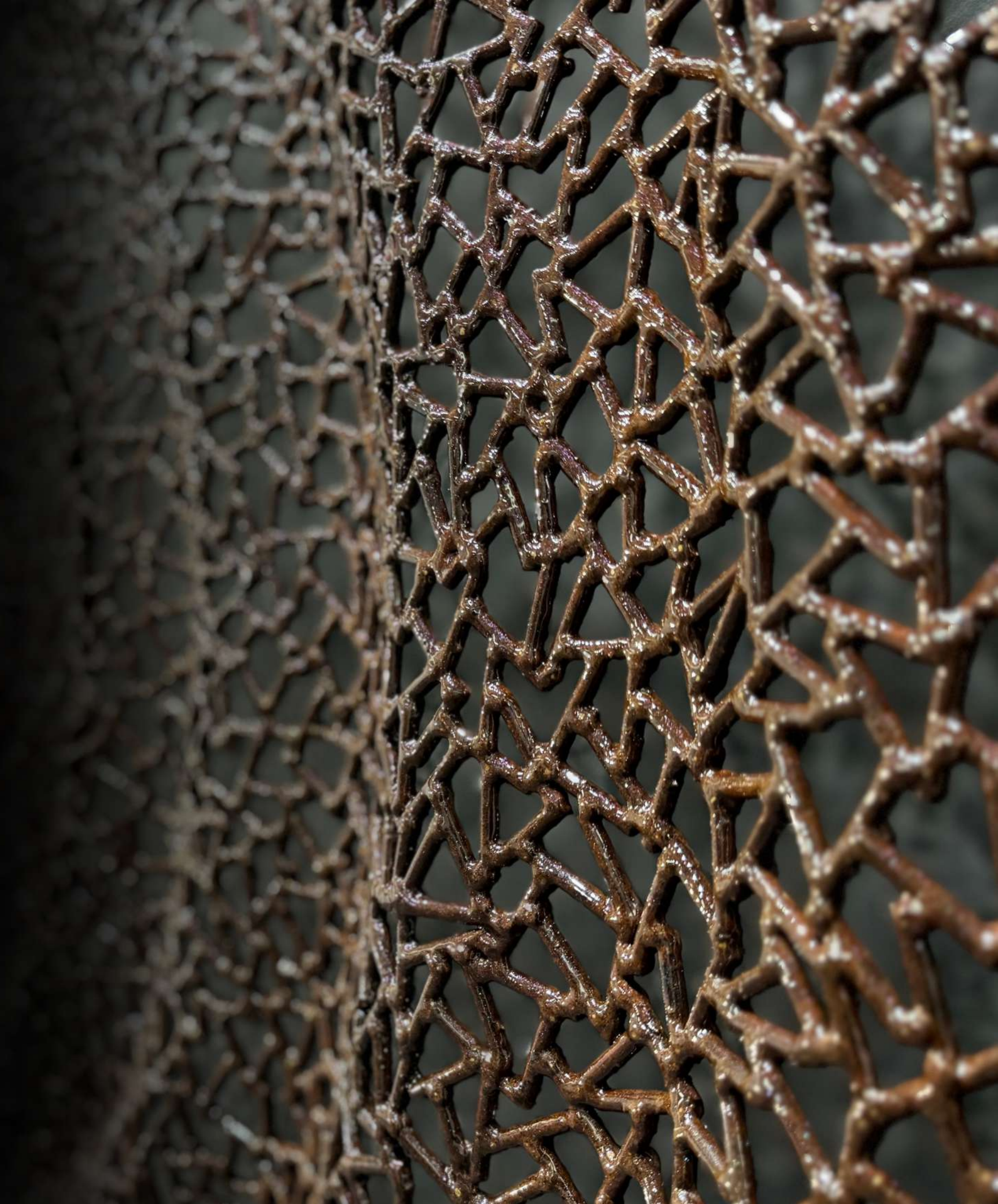


WATERDROP

Waterdrop is a masterful synthesis of art, theology, and science, materialized as a shimmering ripple frozen in time. Crafted from over 20,000 individually welded metal bars finished in a high-gloss patina, the sculpture possesses a paradoxical quality: the solidity of metal evokes the perfect transparency and energy of a water droplet impacting a surface. This intricate, radiating form serves as a visual metaphor for the interconnectedness of all things, linking the unseen, probabilistic waves of the quantum realm to the tangible reality we inhabit.

The work is deeply inspired by the narrative of Creation, with each concentric wave symbolizing the generative days of the universe. From a central point of origin the first wave emerges, initiating a chain reaction that expands outward. This phenomenon elegantly connects the theological story of genesis with the principles of quantum mechanics, where observation and interaction collapse potential into form. Waterdrop thus becomes a contemplative object on the primordial energies that shape existence. It visualizes the profound idea that reality itself is a series of interconnected vibrations, a continuous dance of creation emanating from a single, sacred source, reminding us of the fundamental forces that orchestrate both life and the cosmos.

207 x 207 x 7 cm, 2025.





OILDROP & RIPPLE

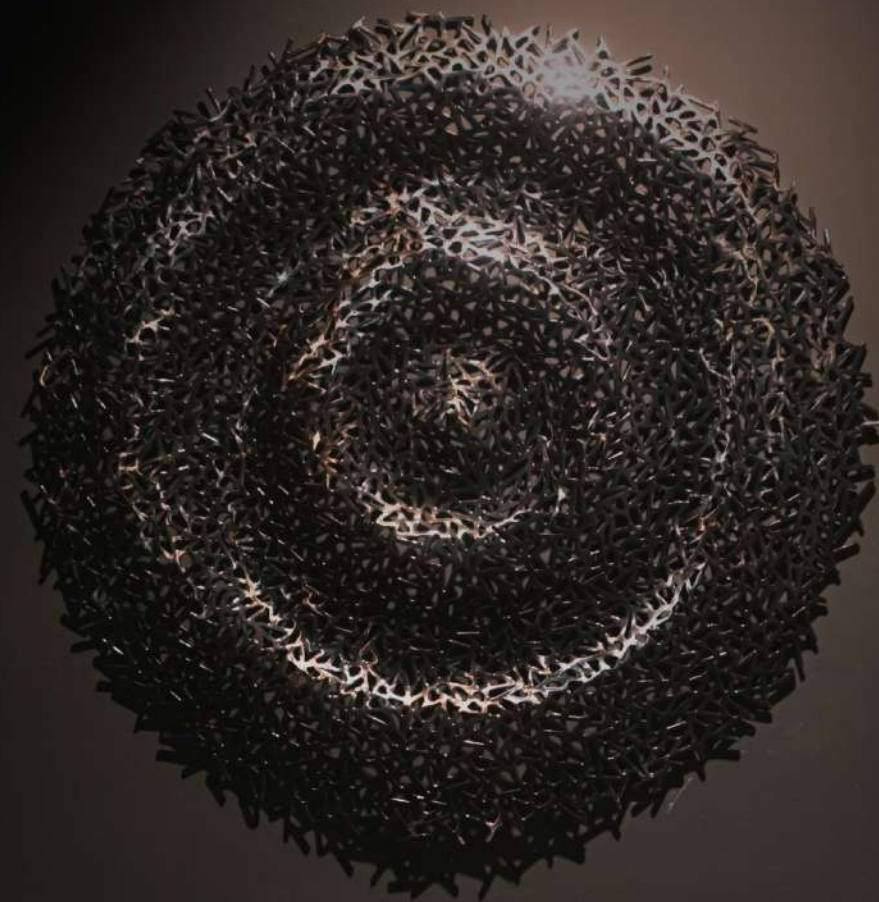
In this diptych of sculptures, Vudrag distils the essence of his monumental Waterdrop into two intimately scaled, yet profoundly symbolic works. Each standing at one meter in diameter, “Oildrop” and “Ripple” continue the artist’s meditation on creation, but with a focused precision that reveals new layers of meaning. The reduction to three distinct waves is a critical theological and conceptual choice, directly referencing the third day of Creation when God separated the land from the sea and brought forth vegetation. Thus, the trio of waves becomes a numeric symbol of the very origin of the elements they represent.

Oildrop embodies the substance of the earth. Its surface is burned with mechanical oil, achieving a deep, dark patina that shimmers with underlying spectra of green and purple as if the sculpture itself has absorbed the complex chemical composition of oil, a product of ancient biological life and geological force. It is a vessel of concentrated, terrestrial energy.

In perfect contrast, Ripple manifests as its pure, life-giving counterpart. Finished in a radiant, high-gloss polish, the sculpture appears as crystallized water, capturing light and clarity within its net-like structure. It is a testament to transparency and origin.

Together, these works form an elemental pair. They are the amphora reimagined for the natural world; one holding the dark richness of the earth, the other the clear vitality of water; two fundamental pillars of existence, forged in steel and fire.

100 x 100 x 5 cm, 2025.





THE DANDELION

The dandelion is a quiet philosopher of the ruins, a golden whisper born from cracks in the pavement, from trampled earth, from the choked aftermath of fire. It does not ask for fertile ground; instead, it makes calamity a cradle, turning pulverized masonry and soot into nourishment. Its taproot threads beneath asphalt, splitting concrete like a subtle earthquake, while its jagged leaves unfurl from powdered dust, each blade a manifesto that life will flourish precisely where it is told it cannot. To pluck it is futile; a single breath scatters parachute seeds into every stray gust, converting attempted erasure into sudden multiplication. The dandelion is not fragile; it is the refusal of fragility, a wild paradox of softness and indomitability, wearing its bright corona like a defiant sun above desolation.

In stark counterpoint rises the mirrored steel sculpture: cold, immaculate, its surface a flawless choreography of reflected light and shadow. It catches the sun like molten silver frozen mid-pour; every petal is a calculated arc, every stamen a needle-fine line engineered to fractions of a millimeter. Here delicacy is achieved through discipline: edges sharp enough to cleave reflection from reality, planes polished until they seem to liquefy the surrounding world. The piece appears weightless yet is anchored by industrial mass, a bloom forged in the crucible of metallurgy rather than soil. It is a dandelion reimagined as an artifact of precision, a specimen to be revered from a distance, admired for its shimmering perfection but never grazed by an ungloved hand. In its chilly brilliance, the sculpture honors the flower's tenacity while reminding us that even the most humble symbol can be recast into monumentality.

190 x 110 x 110 cm, 2024.





THE "AFTER" DANDELION

Here, Vudrag stages a dialogue between two dandelions. The first, rendered in mirrored stainless steel, captures the weed as immaculate idea: petals honed to scalpel edges, surfaces polished until they dissolve into pure reflection, borrowing color from whatever passes before them. It is the dandelion at the instant of conception, a flawless diagram of potential held in chrome air, so light it seems patterned out of sunlight itself.

Across from it stands its time-worn twin, forged from weathering Corten steel. Here the identical geometry has endured imagined centuries: petals have thickened into rust-scarred plates, stems have swollen into iron ligaments streaked with orange runoff, and every once-silky curve is now rough enough to grate stone. What was once mirror now drinks in daylight like parched earth, casting back only a dull ember. Where the stainless bloom feels weightless; hovering on the brink of disappearance, the Corten version anchors itself like a siege engine, its oxidized mass gripping the ground.

Together they act as bookends of a single narrative; birth and afterlife, purity and persistence. The gap between them vibrates with unwritten chapters: seasons of rain, furnace heat, industrial smoke, and wind-driven seeds. Vudrag's pairing urges us to glimpse all the weather, fire, and years that flowed between the first razor-sharp idea and the battered survivor that still holds its place in the world.

190 x 110 x 110 cm, 2024.



PORTRAITS

Nikola Vudrag approaches portrait sculpture with a disciplined realism that never lapses into mere replication. Trained in the classical tradition yet alert to contemporary surface language, he studies anatomical nuance, period attire, and archival photography before laying clay onto the armature. Planes are modeled with a naturalistic softness so that bronze can breathe; pores, hairlines, and fabric folds are rendered just sharply enough to convince the eye, then subdued to let expression dominate. What separates Vudrag's busts from strict academic likeness is his insistence on capturing what he calls the "second portrait": the private pulse behind the public face. A slight tilt of the head suggests curiosity, compressed lips hint at resolve, a lifted brow opens space for contemplation. Patinas are chosen to reinforce the idea, and in this way each sculpture records both the outer geometry and the intangible spirit of its sitter.

That philosophy animates an extensive roster of commissions. Seven busts of Dr. Franjo Tuđman, Croatia's first president commissioned by the State, anchor plazas from Zagreb to the sea, their firm jawlines and forward gaze reflecting the determination that secured independence. The visionary bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer is portrayed echoing his advocacy for education and ecumenism. Radimir Čačić, first head of the post-independence government, leans subtly into space, the pose conveying a reformer's momentum. Literary voices receive equal care: Ivo Brešan's portrait carries a wry, almost conspiratorial smile befitting a satirist, while a bronze of J. R. R. Tolkien commissioned to be installed in an Oxford park shows the author's gaze roaming beyond the immediate world, as if mapping Middle-earth anew. Academic precision surfaces in the bust of anatomy professor Dr. Predrag Keros, whose attentive expression mirrors a lifetime of teaching. Vudrag's range widens further with philosophical icons: Friedrich Nietzsche modeled with visible marks that suggest restless thought, and Hypatia of Alexandria sculpted in serene defiance, cloak drawn against the winds of history. Together these works form a bronze gallery that honors not only appearance but the lasting character and cultural legacy of each subject.







DR. FRANJO TUĐMAN

First president of Republic of Croatia

Vudrag's series of seven busts of Dr. Franjo Tuđman forms a cohesive bronze narrative charting Croatia's transition to statehood. Each portrait, installed in a different city, from public squares to government institutions, shares an anatomically precise likeness: the broad brow and resolute jaw that made Tuđman instantly recognizable. Yet Vudrag avoids repetition by tuning size, expression and patina to local context. In institutional environment the portraits are sharp and bright patinated, emphasizing optimism and diplomacy; in war-scarred cities the bronze darkens, the gaze hardening into vigilance. By blending rigorous naturalism with subtle psychological cues, Vudrag's Tuđman busts honor both the man who fought for independence and the statesman who envisioned Croatia's future.

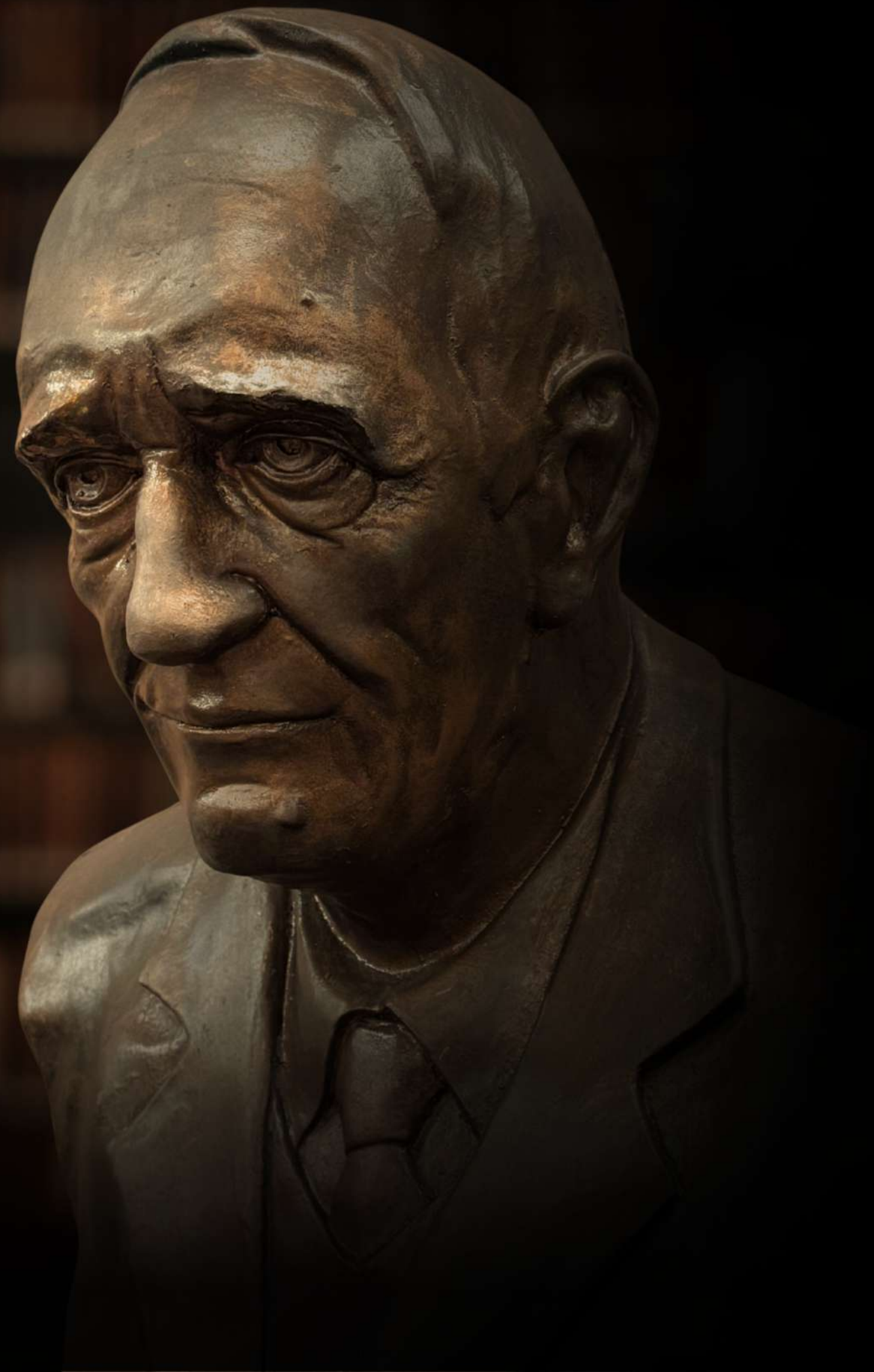
Vudrag's commitment to material symbolism deepens his tribute to Dr. Franjo Tuđman. In few of his latest public busts of the first president, in the cities most scarred by the Homeland War, he collected spent brass bullet casings from the army's hangars, alloyed them with fine bronze, and cast Tuđman's bust from this transformed metal. In that alchemical act, fragments of conflict become a gleaming effigy of Croatia's first president and a renewed promise of national recovery.

IVO BREŠAN

Commissioned by the Croatian National Theatre in Šibenik, Nikola Vudrag created a monumental bronze bust honoring Ivo Brešan, the revered Croatian playwright, prose writer, Slavic scholar, and screenwriter. More than a simple likeness, Vudrag's task was to capture the essence of the man, a figure known not just for his immense intellectual contributions but also for his physical presence as a gentle giant, standing over two meters tall.

Vudrag's portrayal masterfully translates this duality. The bust itself is grand in scale, reflecting Brešan's commanding stature, yet the artist instills it with a profound sense of approachability and warmth. This is achieved through the careful manipulation of the bronze medium, cast in a rich, warm brown hue that seems to absorb and softly reflect light, adding a lifelike vibrancy to the form.

The most captivating detail lies in the rendering of Brešan's eyes. Vudrag sculpted them with deep sensitivity, creating a gaze that is both intelligent and kind, mirroring the compassionate and scholarly spirit for which Brešan was beloved. The result is an intimate and powerful portrait that seems to breathe. It stands as a permanent tribute, ensuring that the legacy of this cultural giant continues to watch over the institution he helped shape, with his presence forever felt in the halls of the theatre.





JOSIP JURAJ STROSSMAYER

Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1815-1905) ranks among the seminal figures of nineteenth-century Croatia. A farsighted theologian and tireless advocate of education, he championed the ideal of a culturally united South-Slavic people and used his ecclesiastical prestige to found enduring institutions: the University of Zagreb, the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, and a vast network of primary schools that lifted literacy across Slavonia. Within European church history he is remembered as one of the leading voices of the Old-Catholic movement, opposing the proclamation of papal infallibility at Vatican and pressing for a return to conciliar dialogue.

Vudrag's bronze portrait translates that expansive legacy into form. The bishop is depicted mid-thought, watching and contemplating as if he is ready for one of his celebrated parliamentary orations. Shoulders drape in a simplified cope, its folds modeled with a naturalistic fluency that avoids theatrical excess. Vudrag chose a warm, honey-brown patina for Strossmayer's famously approachable temperament. Highlights that catches ambient light suggests intellectual illumination, while deeper umber tones settle into the cope's recesses, grounding the figure in pastoral responsibility. The overall effect is a sculpture that breathes: neither remote saint nor mere academic, but a living mediator between church, state, and culture. In bronze, as in history, Strossmayer stands poised to address future generations on the inseparability of knowledge and moral purpose.

J.R.R. TOLKIEN

Nikola Vudrag's bronze bust of J. R. R. Tolkien is both portrait and coded tribute. The author; Vudrag's lifelong favorite linguist, and an Oxford English Dictionary editor, appears in familiar tweed with eyes lost in story. The bust appears on stack of books whose spines step back to spell 1-9-7-3: the year of Tolkien's passing and a nod to his Rings: one, nine, seven, three. What looks like casual shelving becomes a numeric code for attentive fans.

More lore hides in his waistcoat. Three buttons are tiny Silmarils; and next to them the One Ring secreted in a pocket. Thus the sculpture becomes a quiet puzzle: casual viewers meet a genial Oxford don, initiates discover Tolkien legendarium encoded in bronze.

The project arose from Vudrag's conversations with Tolkien's grandson, who supplied family insights and supported the initiative for Oxford memorial. Cast in warm, lightly patinated bronze, the portrait captures Tolkien's scholarly warmth while the layered symbolism invites onlookers to "read" the sculpture line by line. In doing so, Vudrag honors Tolkien not merely as storyteller but as master linguist whose love of words birthed entire worlds; worlds now whispered through the subtle numerals, jewels, and hidden rings embedded in the bronze.





HYPATIA OF ALEXANDRIA

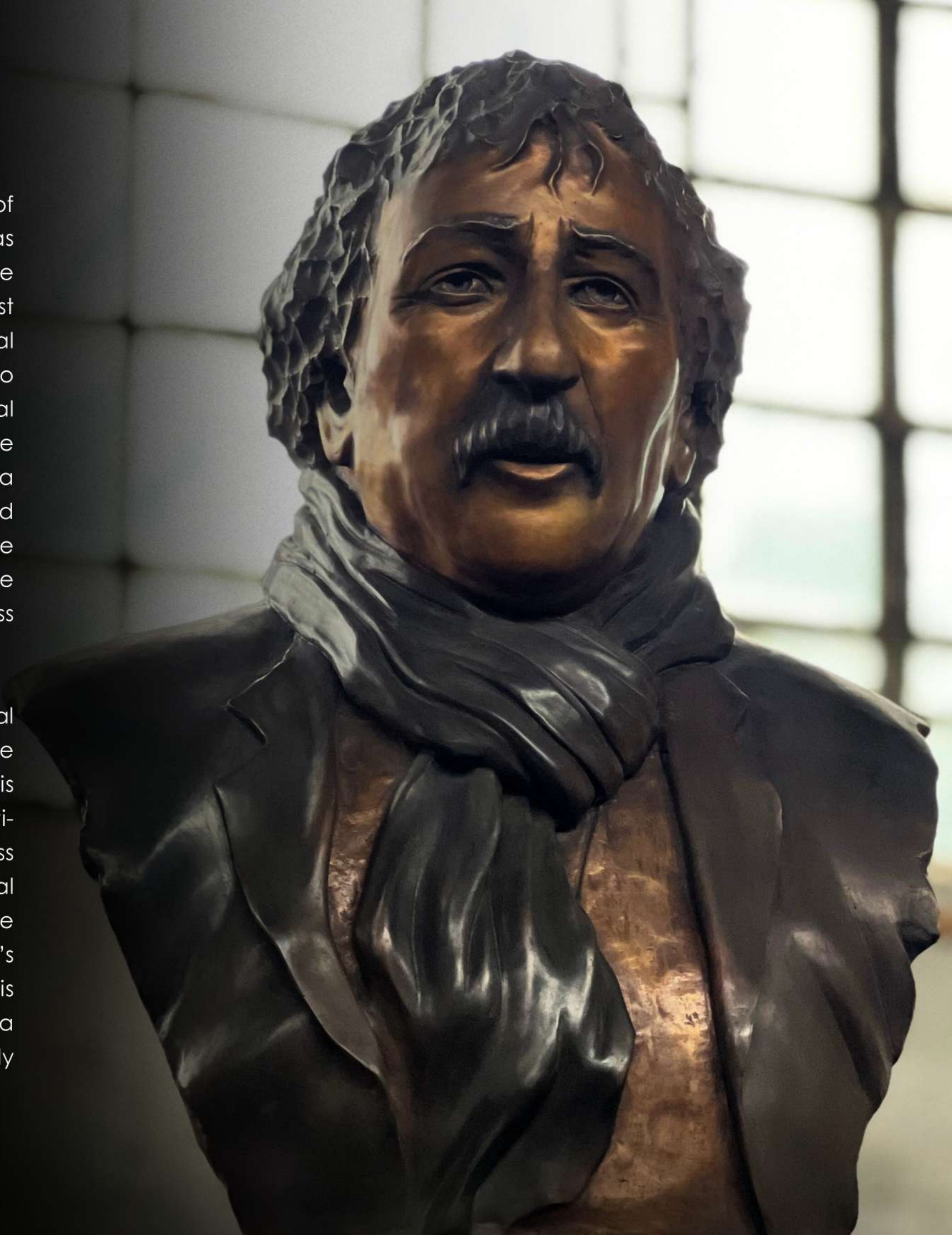
The bust of Hypatia of Alexandria stands as a profoundly symbolic work in Vudrag's early artistic journey, a tribute to the pioneering mathematician, astronomer, and philosopher whose brilliance illuminated the ancient world. Created during his first years of study, this sculpture was not only an exercise in form but also a deep engagement with intellectual history. Hypatia, who preserved and advanced knowledge amid growing turmoil, became a personal muse for the young artist. Yet, in a twist of fate mirroring the tragic vulnerability of knowledge itself, the plaster original was lost for years, stored and forgotten in an academy warehouse.

When Vudrag rediscovered it, the bust was fractured, a poignant echo of Hypatia's own fate and the destruction of the Great Library of Alexandria, which she strove to protect. Rather concealing the damage, Vudrag assembled the broken pieces with care and reverence, casting the repaired form in bronze. The cracks remain visibly embedded in the metal, not as flaws, but as scars, testaments to fragility and resilience. In this restored bust, Hypatia emerges once more, not as a perfect relic, but as a fractured yet enduring guardian of wisdom, much like the fragmentary ancient texts she saved and which continue to shape our understanding of history today.

MONTY SHADOW

Commissioned by close friends, Vudrag's portrait bust of the late Čedo Komljenović; known affectionately as "Monty Shadow", captures not just the likeness but the vibrant, life-affirming spirit of one of Croatia's most intriguing social figures from the 1980s and 90s. A pivotal character during the nation's transitional decades, Čedo moved with elegance and influence through international circles, counting among his closest associates figures like Bernie Ecclestone, the renowned Formula 1 owner. As a passionate patron of the arts, Komljenović collaborated closely with global institutions and creators, including the esteemed publisher Taschen and luxury brands like Mercedes, often orchestrating projects from his Swiss castle, a hub of creativity and refined taste.

Vudrag's portrayal deliberately avoids cold, official grandeur, focusing instead on Čedo's engaging presence and intellectual warmth. The sculptor achieved this intimate effect through a masterful application of multi-tonal patinas, selectively applied in distinct sections across the bronze surface. This innovative approach adds visual richness and emotional nuance, using variations in tone and texture to reflect the many facets of Čedo's personality: his generosity, his cosmopolitan flair, and his unwavering dedication to art and beauty. The result is a portrait that feels alive, approachable, and deeply personal, much like the man it honors.





NIETZSCHE and ZARATUSTRA

In one of his early solo exhibitions (2011) Vudrag set up an arresting dialogue between thinker and thought: a bust of Friedrich Nietzsche (left), facing across the gallery, a matching bust of Zarathustra (right), the prophet-hero of Nietzsche's own creation. Both sculptures share Vudrag's signature black-sandy mixture of iron-oxide and paint. The finish evokes scorched earth, appropriate for a philosophy that sought to burn away inherited certainties.

Nietzsche appears tense, brow knotted, while across the room, Zarathustra rises in serene defiance. To embody this "higher self," Vudrag modeled the features on his longtime mentor, Professor Marian Vejvoda, the teacher who first urged him beyond technical craft into deeper literature and metaphysics. The choice personalizes the allegory: the teacher who expanded the artist's horizon now embodies the figure who expands Nietzsche's. Zarathustra's calm eyes contrast sharply with Nietzsche's clenched jaw, suggesting answer meeting question.

The spatial arrangement turns viewers into participants. Walking the axis between the two busts, they enact Nietzsche's dialectic: from human anguish to the possibility of self-overcoming. A fleeting image of philosopher confronting his own ideal. In this way, Vudrag transforms a pair of portraits into a living philosophical encounter, one that honors both his intellectual debts and the restless spirit of inquiry that binds teacher, artist, and thinker across time.



TOMISLAVUS REX CROATORUM

Commissioned as the flagship monument for Croatia's 1100-year jubilee of statehood, Vudrag's "TOMISLAVUS REX CROATORUM" is the artist's first sculptural treatment of King Tomislav in 2025 and the centerpiece of Varaždin's Center of Excellence for National History. Conceived at a breathtaking 600 × 550 × 210 cm, the Corten steel head stretches six meters in length and occupies nearly fifty square meters of ground, its fractured planes evoking the archeological remnants of a once colossal statue. Vudrag deliberately presents the king in ruin-form; parts sheared away, crown segments broken, surface pitted like masonry, to fuse archaic gravitas with contemporary abstraction. Viewers encounter not a polished equestrian hero but the weathered memory of one, a silent witness whose very fragmentation testifies to the storms of conquest, empire, and renewal that Croatia has endured since Tomislav's coronation in 925.







The monument's unveiling in 2025 triggered a wider programme of commemorative design: following the sculpture's acclaim, the Croatian National Bank invited Vudrag to create the "Tomislav" gold and silver investment pieces as well as the circulating €2 coin, ensuring the king's image will circulate from museum forecourt to everyday pocket. This continuum of steel, bullion, and coin underscores the artwork's central meditation on transience and permanence: kingdoms crumble, statues weather, but symbols reinvent themselves for each era.

Locals use the sculpture as a civic compass, visitors pause to photograph its monumental chiaroscuro, and historians praise its power to compress a millennium of nation-building into a single, contemplative ruin. In melding historical reverence with avant-garde form, Vudrag has forged not only a landmark for Varaždin but also a lasting argument for how art can keep the pulse of a medieval king beating in the contemporary imagination.





COINS

Before the monumental sculptures came the miniature marvels. This section of the book unveils a foundational pillar of Nikola Vudrag's artistry: his masterful work as a medallist and coin engraver for the Croatian National Bank and the European Central Bank. For over 15 years, Vudrag has honed a discipline of extreme precision, a craft he initially embraced through formal academy training and then deepened through dedicated study of 18th and 19th-century masters like Oscar Roty, Jules-Clément Chaplain, and Victor Vernon.

What makes his achievement truly exceptional is the method: this micro-realism is accomplished primarily through traditional hand-engraving, with minimal reliance on digital technology. Working directly on plaster models often smaller than 15 centimetres in diameter with a relief not exceeding 1.2 millimetres, and later steel negatives, Vudrag's hand-carved lines achieve breathtaking detail. Yet, with the modernization of coin making, Vudrag has astutely adopted new technologies, not as a replacement for tradition, but as an enhancement. He now combines his engraved hyper-realistic relief with techniques like micro-painting or bi-metal minting, adding nuanced color and depth to his motifs. This innovative synthesis allows him to unite his diverse disciplines: sculpture, painting, and engraving within a single, concentrated field.

The resulting series of commemorative and investment pieces is exceptionally scarce: most are struck in 999.9/1000 fine gold and issued in just three formats: 1 ounce, 1/16 ounce, and 100 grams; each limited to barely 100–300 examples worldwide. Surfaces are polished to an ultra-high mirror field that exceeds 99 percent reflectivity, yet Vudrag rarely settles for a single finish. He layers that flawless sheen with zones of hand-floated frosting, laser-matted micro-granulation, and selective toning, producing a spectrum of textures and colors that only intensifies the play of light.

But true coinage mastery extends far beyond metallurgy. Every piece begins as a dense weave of symbols: dynastic emblems, dates, and heraldic flora are arranged to tell a compressed narrative of Croatian sovereignty while satisfying the subconscious need for balance and authority that drives mass psychology. To convert that narrative into metal, Vudrag conducts meticulous studies of letterform proportion, metal flow, and die alignment. Even the height of a serif or the taper of a numeral must anticipate the grain structure of gold under hundreds of tons of pressure and the subtle expansion that occurs when a blank cools from annealing temperatures to room atmosphere. Add variables such as humidity, press dwell-time, and minting speed, and each strike becomes a small feat of applied physics.

This seamless fusion of allegorical storytelling, sculptural composition, and material science places Vudrag in the rarefied company of the world's greatest medallic artists; craftsmen who can make a coin act simultaneously as portable art, national archive, and investment bullion.





KING TOMISLAV - circulating

For the “1100th Anniversary of King Tomislav,” Vudrag retained Croatia’s iconic red and white checkerboard as the base grid, then elevated one layer above that bears the king’s stance sitting on a horse. The gesture links today’s state emblem to its medieval origin, presenting modern sovereignty as a direct outgrowth of Tomislav’s coronation in 925. Two versions circulate side by side: a standard €2 piece struck in copper-nickel with selective brass plating, and an exquisite proof edition in bi-metallic silver-gilt, limited to only 5000 examples. The circulating coin keeps the relief low for commercial use tolerance, while the proof uses finer sculptural modeling and hand-polished fields.

A companion design, “Entry into the Eurozone,” reverses the hierarchy: the Euro symbol arches in relief with its seamless integration to Croatian checkerboard spaces. Where the Tomislav piece stresses historical continuity, the Eurozone coin celebrates forward momentum, showing that national identity can nest confidently within a larger union. Together, the pair offers citizens both a pocket-sized chronicle of 1100 years of kingship and a tangible emblem of Croatia’s newest chapter in Europe.

KING TOMISLAV - gold and silver

This bi-metallic coin crowns Nikola Vudrag's numismatic work, minted for the 1100th anniversary of Croatia's first king, Tomislav. The obverse presents a hyper-realistic profile: every knot of cloak and facet of the crown rendered by micro-engraving, then accented with selective micro-gold plating that deepens shadow and highlights. The king's determined gaze emerges from relief scarcely half a millimetre high, proof of Vudrag's precision within mint-press tolerances.

The reverse shifts from portrait to parable. An olive tree bursts from bare stone, its roots gripping the rock, its branches spreading across a polished silver field. In Mediterranean lore the olive signifies resilience, wisdom, and peace; here it also mirrors Croatia's capacity to survive between empires. A ring of early-medieval lettering surrounds the motif, sealing the composition with historic gravitas.

Gold fused to a silver core is more than decoration. Gold evokes royal authority, silver the enduring fabric of the state; their union turns legal tender into a pocket-sized monument. By compressing epic narrative into a 30-millimetre planchet, Vudrag achieves the depth of public sculpture on a surface meant to pass from hand to hand, letting citizens carry a millennium of sovereignty in their palm.





DALMATIAN DOG

In this exquisite gold and silver coin, Vudrag celebrates the beloved Dalmatian breed while paying homage to its Croatian origins. While his signature hyper-realistic relief captures the dog's muscular form and alert posture with remarkable vitality, the true genius emerges in the intricate detailing of its iconic spots: the subtle silhouettes of the Dalmatian islands themselves.

This unexpected conceptual move creates a poetic dialogue between the breed and its homeland, weaving geography into genetics. The dog's coat becomes a living map, where the patterns of nature and culture merge. This coin demonstrates Vudrag's unique talent for investing a numismatic object with profound cultural resonance, transforming a breed portrait into a layered narrative of heritage, identity, and the enduring bond between a land and its natural symbols.



CROATIAN BLACK LIZARD

In the Croatian Black Lizard coin, part of a series dedicated to indigenous species, Vudrag elevates a native reptile into a powerful symbol of national heritage. This work is a masterclass in texture and contrast, showcasing the artist's ability to render organic life with startling realism within the severe constraints of metal and miniature scale. The lizard, an inhabitant of Croatia's unique volcanic island Brusnik, is captured in a moment of poised tension, its sleek form rendered through a combination of deep, sculptural relief and subtle micro-engraving that suggests the fine, granular texture of its skin.

The coin's power derives from Vudrag's bold treatment of its surface where the creature is finished in an intense, deep black patina, a result of advanced and specialized finishing techniques that gives it a formidable, almost fossilized presence, mirroring the dark, volcanic soils of its habitat. Here, Vudrag moves beyond simple representation to explore deeper themes of resilience and endemic identity. The Croatian Black Lizard is not merely a depiction of an animal, but a symbolic portrait of enduring life specific to the Croatian land, a creature forged in gold that carries the silent, potent energy of its primordial homeland.



VIŠNجان OBSERVATORY



This commemorative coin masterfully synthesizes celestial ambition and terrestrial heritage in tribute to Višnجان. The obverse presents the Višnجان Astronomy Observatory with extraordinary precision, where micro-engraving captures each individual stone with photographic clarity, transforming the metallic surface into an architectural portrait that reflects both scientific discipline and geographical authenticity. This meticulous rendering embodies humanity's upward gaze toward the infinite, firmly grounded in local reality.



The reverse reveals Vudrag's profound symbolic vision through a powerful allegory: the indigenous Istrian Boškarin bull carries Višnجان entire cityscape upon its back. This represents the tribute to the enduring agricultural strength that forms the foundation for all human achievement. The bull's monumental presence speaks to a deep connection with the land, suggesting that even our highest celestial aspirations are ultimately supported by timeless, nurturing earthly forces. Together, these faces form a complete narrative where the Boškarin symbolizes resilient foundations while the observatory represents soaring curiosity. Here Vudrag merges scientific accuracy with deep allegory, binding heaven and earth into a harmonious medallionic poem that celebrates both local identity and cosmic wonder in a single enduring artwork.

MEDALS

While still completing his fourth year at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, Nikola Vudrag had already established an exceptional reputation within academic and artistic circles as a prodigious medalist. His rapidly expanding portfolio included the prestigious Žarko Dolinar Award for scientific achievements, commissioned by the University of Zagreb, alongside commemorative medals honoring cultural icons such as Victor Hugo, Johannes Brahms, and Ivo Rendić. Demonstrating remarkable versatility and early mastery, Vudrag was also commissioned to create the lifetime achievement award for acclaimed filmmakers Oliver Stone and Joshua Oppenheimer, as well as an innovation award for the German Business and Industrial Chamber of Commerce. This prolific output during his formative academic years signaled the emergence of a significant new talent in the field of medallic art.





EURO COINS

This collection presents the official circulating Euro coins of the Republic of Croatia, where Vudrag's medallic artistry achieves a remarkable technical and symbolic innovation. These coins transcend their function as mere currency to become miniature canvases of national identity, featuring an unprecedented two-layer design that establishes new standards in modern numismatics. Beneath each primary motif; the silhouette of Croatia, the portrait of inventor Nikola Tesla, the indigenous marten, and the historic Glagolitic script, lies a foundational layer of the national checkerboard coat of arms. This creates a remarkable effect where Croatia's map appears to emerge from the very fabric of the nation's heraldic identity, where Tesla's genius is framed by the historical patterns of his homeland, and where the marten moves through a landscape of cultural patrimony. The Glagolitic script, Europe's oldest Slavic alphabet, gains additional resonance when visually rooted in the checkerboard that has symbolized Croatian statehood since the Middle Ages. This architectural approach to coin design transforms everyday currency into portable monuments, where citizens carry not just economic value but layered cultural meaning in their pockets. The collection stands as a testament to how national symbols can be reimagined through advanced minting techniques, creating a cohesive monetary series that is both technically unprecedented and rich in symbolic intentionality.



THE PROCESS

The final hand-engraved plaster model, crafted before 3D scanning, showcases extraordinary sculptural finesse. Despite an original relief not exceeding 1.2mm in thickness, Vudrag masterfully layers multiple motifs atop one another within this minuscule space. After scanning, the minting tool, typically no larger than 25mm in diameter and featuring relief details under 0.5mm, undergoes a rigorous refinement process. This involves precision polishing of various surfaces and meticulous cleaning of micro-details to achieve absolute perfection, transforming the fragile plaster original into a durable, masterfully precise striking tool.

PUBLIC WORK - MONUMENTAL

Nikola Vudrag's artistic practice extends dramatically beyond the miniature precision of coins and intimate portraiture into the realm of monumental spatial interventions. Drawing from his medalist's discipline and experience in networked welding of small elements, Vudrag approaches large-scale construction with remarkable technical fearlessness, often personally engineering the statics of his ambitious creations. His monumental works defy gravity and convention, merging constructivist aesthetics with profound conceptual themes.

Among his most iconic public works is a 12 meter tall sculpture of Nikola Tesla, the largest of the pioneering inventor in the world. True to Tesla's breakthroughs in electrical transmission, Vudrag rendered the figure in the form of a powerline pylon; literally holding electricity cables in its hands. This functional sculpture, which originated as a studio sketch, is designed to potentially scale to 45–50 meters, blending art with infrastructure.

Equally ambitious is his commissioned "The gardens of the Hesperides" composition, located in the basement of one of southern Europe's most modern wineries in Rovinj, Istria. Standing 5 meters tall, the sculpture is composed of two parts connected by a self-grasping hand, creating a dynamic illusion of support. The composition is further enriched by 21 scattered elements, some levitating on welded chains from the floor, others suspended from the ceiling; a complex arrangement that challenges viewers to unravel its engineering.

Vudrag's largest collaboration to date is the 17 meter tall "Our Lady" Madonna, co-created with his friend and Professor Milun Garčević. Vudrag sculpted the figure in concrete, which Garčević then enveloped in mosaic stone, uniting structural boldness with intricate surface detail. Through these works, Vudrag continues to redefine the possibilities of sculptural form, combining architectural scale with medallion refinement.





TESLA POWERLINE

Nikola Vudrag's monumental sculpture of Nikola Tesla stands as a tribute to the visionary inventor's revolutionary work in electrical energy. Soaring 12 meters high, it is the largest sculpture of Tesla in the world, yet its true innovation lies in its conceptual and physical form. Vudrag reimagined the inventor not as a static figure, but as an active participant in the transmission of power, shaping Tesla's body into the structure of a powerline pylon. In a striking visual metaphor, the figure is designed to literally hold electrical cables in its hands, merging human genius with industrial function.

Originally conceived as a studio sketch, the design is technically scalable; envisioned to reach heights of 45–50 meters as a fully functional powerline, blending art with public utility. The constructivist aesthetic reflects Tesla's own forward-thinking spirit, defying gravity and convention while honoring his legacy. More than a memorial, Vudrag's Tesla becomes an embodiment of energy itself: a dynamic intersection of form and function, past and future, paying homage to the man who harnessed the invisible forces that power our world.





THE GARDENS OF THE HESPERIDES

Of all the Labors of Heracles, the quest for the golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides is among the most profound. It represents not a simple search of fruit, but the pursuit of ultimate Knowledge. To possess such knowledge is to operate in absolute Truth, with a vision that encompasses both the deepest roots of cause and the farthest ramifications of effect. This labor is, therefore, a metaphor for the evolution of consciousness itself, an its indefinite expansion, striving toward a liberation from the confines of time and space as we perceive them.

It is this rich symbolic framework that Nikola Vudrag masterfully channels in his monumental sculpture, strategically positioned in the basement of one of southern Europe's largest and most modern wineries in Rovinj, Istria. Vudrag's conceptual genius lies in his placement: he installs the Titan not on a mountaintop, but in the foundational underworld of the building. Here, Atlas becomes the literal and metaphorical support of the entire structure: a 5-meter colossus who bears the weight of the world above him. This evokes the original myth where Atlas holds the celestial spheres, but transposes it into an architectural context. The immense scale of the winery complex above only amplifies the sculpture's power, making visitors feel as though they are standing in the presence of one of the ancient Titans, dwarfed by a myth made tangible. Vudrag further deepens the narrative through the sculpture's form. Atlas is ingeniously constructed in two parts, connected by a self-referential hand grasping its own form. Twenty-one additional elements are scattered around him, some levitating on chains from the floor, others suspended from the ceiling, representing the fragmentary and interconnected nature of wisdom.





THE APPLES OF THE HESPERIDES

In a compelling extension of the Hesperides myth, Nikola Vudrag's Golden Apples are exhibited at Lugisland of Art during the first Malta Biennale, while his Atlas supports the world in an Istrian basement. This geographical and conceptual split enriches the narrative: the apples—the objects of Atlas's labor—now glow with internal illumination, representing a profound evolution in Vudrag's polygonal and monumental work.

Here, Vudrag turns the concept inside out, both literally and philosophically. The external, sculpted form of each apple acts merely as a mold—a temporary shell—for the radiant idea contained within. The light inside becomes the true subject, suggesting that the essence of the apple—like Truth or Knowledge—is intangible and luminous, independent of its physical manifestation.

This approach echoes Platonic ideals, where perfection exists only in the realm of forms. Vudrag presents one ideal "apple" of pure concept, while our reality offers infinite imperfect reflections. Each illuminated apple, though unique in shape and expression, shares the same inner light—reminding us that while embodiments vary, the pursuit of knowledge remains a universal, glowing constant across myths and minds.



ATLAS AND PROMETHEUS

European Cultural Centre, 60th Venice Biennale

In this powerful exploration of the Atlas myth, Nikola Vudrag distills the Titan's eternal burden into a single, gripping form: a hand erupting from the earth, clutching a classical pillar. The sculpture masterfully conveys a dual sensation of immense upward force and crushing downward pressure, capturing the essence of Atlas's struggle; not merely to hold the world aloft, but to sustain the ideals it represents. The classical pillar symbolizes more than strength or beauty; it becomes the weight of civilization itself, the pressure to preserve enduring values against the erosion of time and trend.

Vudrag then contrasts this with the myth of Prometheus, creating a dialectic between burden and rebellion. Where Atlas embodies steadfast endurance, Prometheus represents defiant pursuit; his chained, pulled hand symbolizing the tension between knowledge and constraint, innovation and punishment. Mathematically, Vudrag uses geometric precision to give Atlas's form inherent structural integrity, allowing it to resist force and gravity, a metaphor for resilience. Conversely, Prometheus's strained form leverages dynamic tension and imbalance, reflecting struggle and the cost of enlightenment.

Together, these works form a profound narrative on human aspiration: one figure holds the world steady, the other strives to change it; both bound, in their way, by forces greater than themselves.







THE ILLUMINATED CONCEPT

Nikola Vudrag's illuminated CorTen steel sculpture, shaped as an open-edged diamond, powerfully embodies the journey of an idea from conception to reality. The rugged, weathered steel exterior represents the raw, unrefined potential of a thought—strong, enduring, and tangible. Yet, it is the light emanating from within that truly defines the work: a radiant core symbolizing the inner ideal, the Platonic form, shining through its material shell.

By day, the sculpture stands as a monument to potential—an unpolished gem of immense strength and possibility. But by night, it undergoes a metaphysical transformation. The inner illumination breaks through the steel framework, representing how abstract concepts, when nurtured, can transcend their material constraints and manifest as visible truth. The open edges suggest that this energy is not confined; it interacts with the world, blurring the boundary between the ideal and the real.

In this work, Vudrag visualizes the very act of creation: not as a finished form, but as a dynamic process where light—the essence of idea—gradually defines and defies its vessel. It is a testament to the power of inner vision to reshape outer reality.





GATES OF PURGATORY

In the lush, botanical paradise of Palmižana, a publicly accessible resort, Nikola Vudrag introduces a minimalistic yet deeply symbolic art intervention: Gates of Purgatory. This installation consists of a large, stark iron gate, seamlessly integrated into the natural landscape, through which every passerby must walk. As they approach, a gentle but persistent curtain of water descends, compelling visitors to pass through this liquid veil.

The experience is both physical and metaphorical. The iron structure stands in deliberate contrast to the vibrant, organic surroundings: a human-made threshold within nature's open expanse. The water curtain acts as a cleansing barrier, evoking the concept of purgatory: a transitional space of purification, where one is symbolically washed of past burdens before stepping into a new realm.

Vudrag's intervention is subtle yet transformative. By integrating water, a life-giving, elemental force, into the rigid industrial form of the gate, he creates a moment of reflection and renewal. The piece feels magically harmonious within the botanical park, not as an intrusion but as a natural part of the journey. Those who pass through emerge not just on the other side of a path, but subtly altered, reminded of the possibility of renewal that exists at the intersection of art, nature, and human experience.

VIOLIN

Standing in the city of Varaždin, Vudrag's Violin is a striking homage to both music and industrial design. Constructed from steel and bolts, its intricate latticework directly echoes the structural elegance of the Eiffel Tower, blending robust engineering with artistic delicacy.

This sculpture transcends static observation through its most innovative feature: four fully playable strings. This interactive element invites every passerby to become a participant; to pluck a note, create a chord, and contribute their own sound to the urban soundscape. It transforms the artwork from a mere visual monument into a living, collaborative instrument, engaging the community in a shared creative experience.

More than just a representation of a violin, Vudrag's work becomes a symbol of cultural resonance and public connection; a permanent fixture in the city that honors Varaždin's artistic heritage. Towering four meters tall, the steel Violin stands as a modern sentinel beside the baroque elegance of an 18th-century palace. This deliberate placement creates a dynamic dialogue between the enduring craftsmanship of the past and contemporary structural innovation. Its presence pays homage to the city's deep musical roots, symbolized by a renowned music school that has operated continuously for 190 years.





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"I was drawn to Nikola Vudrag's art because of his intellectual approach. This kind of approach isn't necessarily a requirement for artists or curators, but rather a matter of personal choice and sensibility. Nikola is incredibly dedicated and knowledgeable, particularly in his use of theological subjects to address contemporary issues such as stress and the burdens imposed by society and the resilience of humanity. This approach adds depth to his work and elevates it to a global level."

Tatiana Palinkasev, art curator and cultural producer from Metamorphosis Art Projects

"He is in the full creative power and energy of a mature sculptor with a distinctive and recognizable style. He contemplates the themes and content of his works with exceptional depth and significant philosophical insight. The perfect technical line in the execution of the exhibited sculptures gives the impression of monumentality and the sculptor's superiority. The artist leaves nothing to chance and refines details to the finest degree: a byproduct of his years of working with medals and relief in miniature form."

Robert Kavazović Horvat, mag.hist.art criticism and conservation, Managing Director at Dzamonja Foundation

"Vudrag has not changed at all since the first interview, he continues to be full of enthusiasm, inexhaustible energy, self-confidence, and conviction in his artistic mission. Unlike most introverted artists, Vudrag is extremely communicative, proactive, and eloquent, which has greatly helped him establish contact with people of different backgrounds. This, along with his undeniable talent, has enabled his success in the art world."

Mladen Pleše, journalist and art commentator at Telegram, former editor of Start, Vjesnik, Nacional, Globus, and Jutarnji list.

"Being in his creative space, I can genuinely describe him as a modern Renaissance man... Vudrag exudes excitement and passion for working on large-scale monumental sculptures that stand out for their remarkable material quality, a testament to his profound appreciation and understanding of metals. Moreover, he delves deep into exploring the relationship between the viewer, the work of art, and its surrounding environment, creating a profound and immersive experience for anyone encountering his sculptures. What distinguishes Vudrag from many other sculptors is his unique perspective on the impact of his art on people's lives. While some artists might be offended by an amorous couple memorializing their love on their works, I witnessed Vudrag's delight when he saw a mark of love on the foot of his sculpture of Nikola Tesla. To him, it signifies that his art has become an integral part of people's lives, evoking emotions and becoming a meaningful part of their stories."

Eric Merchant, Kiseki-global gallery



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