

Beyond Consulting



Tomasz Domański

# THE GARDEN OF JUAN SORIANO

A STORY OF A FULFILLED LIFE

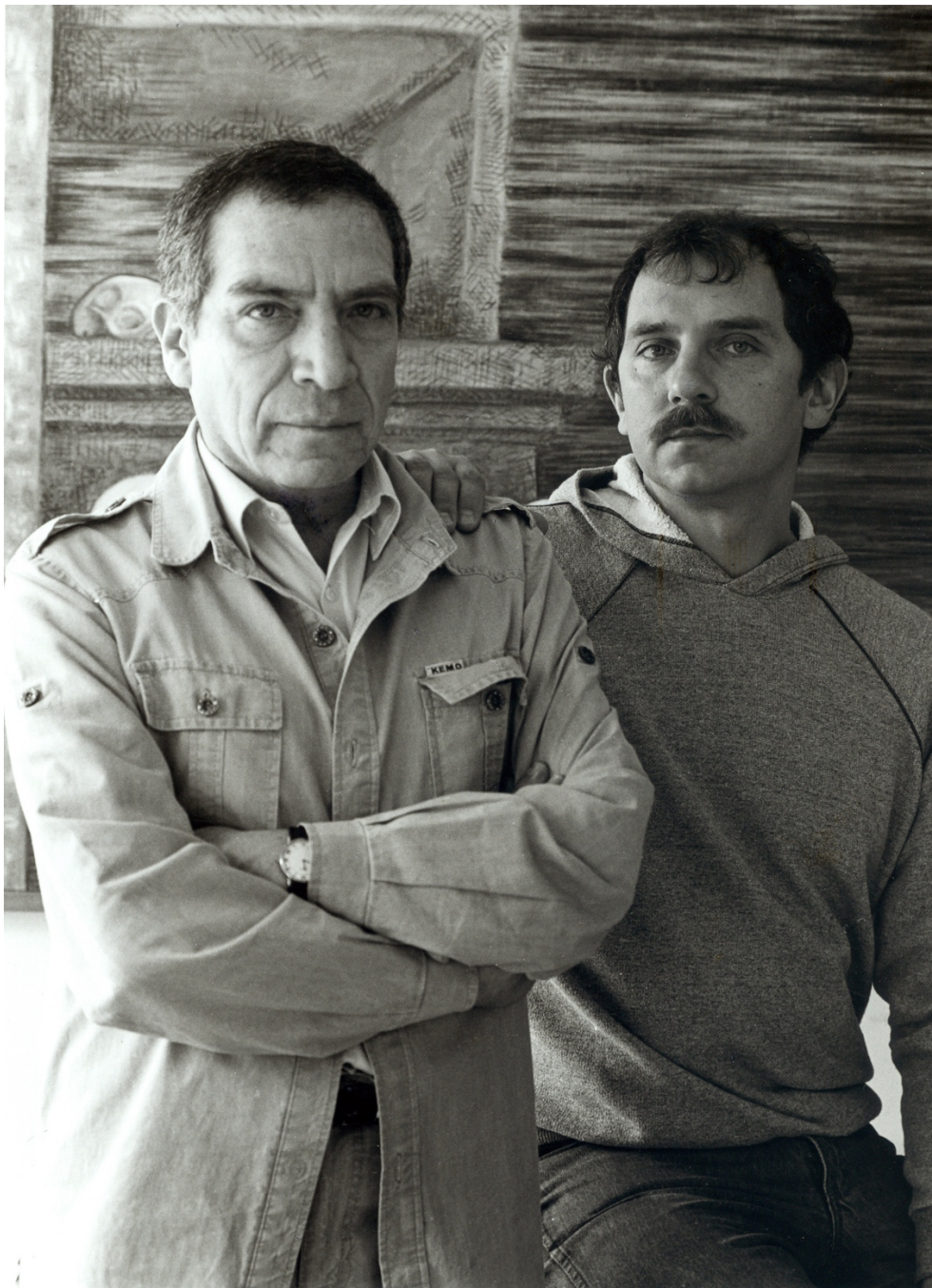


documentary film  
concept



**FILM OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the film is to popularize the figure and work of the Mexican painter, set designer and sculptor Juan Soriano, as well as to present the interesting biography of Marek Keller - his long-term manager and guardian, who comes from Piaseczno near Warsaw. The pretext for presenting this film story is a beautiful garden filled with outdoor sculptures by Juan Soriano, located in the village of Owczarnia, adjacent to Podkowa Leśna. The creator and owner of the garden is Marek, to whom Juan passed on his artistic heritage. The "Kazimierówka" manor house, which includes a garden, is a charming place under the patronage of the Juan Soriano and Marek Keller Foundation, as well as the Mexican Embassy in Poland.









## SYNOPSIS

The story of Juan Soriano's life and work is composed of Marek Keller's memories and voice-over narration. Marek extracts from his memory places, people, events and emotions that accompanied them. The reader presents the dates and stages of Juan's life, combining the pictures of memories sketched by Marek into a chronological whole. The Juan's story also includes interesting anecdotes from the life of the Mexican and European artistic elite, with whom Juan had close ties from his early youth. Among his friends were Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera.

The first shots of the film present a beautifully landscaped and well-maintained garden with large, steel sculptures by Juan Soriano. A walk through the garden introduces you to the colorful, richly illustrated story of the extraordinary life of Juan and Marek. The film tells the story of Juan's youth in his native Guadalajara, his early departure to the capital of Mexico, and then his escape from the bloody revolution to Europe, and his artistic career far away from his homeland. A parallel thread is the story of Marek, who after completing his military service joined the National Song and Dance Ensemble "Mazowsze", with which he traveled around the free world from behind the "Iron Curtain". After finishing his cooperation with the band, Marek decided to emigrate to Paris. There, he met Juan.

Juan and Marek were connected not only by the love of art, but also by the community of emigration experiences. They also had a difference in character. Juan was a sensitive and completely unorganized artist, while Marek is the type of efficient and consistent manager. Thanks to Marek, Juan could devote himself entirely to artistic creation, and Marek found himself perfectly in the role of his impresario.

The main thematic threads of the film are marked with the following working titles: (1) Introduction, (2) Chance and Destiny, (3) Love of Art, (4) Artist's Manager and Guardian, (5) Juan's Family Home, (6) Guadalajara, Mexico and the Mexican Revolution, (7) Interests in painting and sculpture, (8) Juan's world of imagination, (9) First theater, (10) Courage, rebellion and perseverance, (11) Real art and money, (12) Artist and audience, (13) Enthusiasm of loved ones, (14) Recognition and persistence, (15) Monumental sculptures, (16) Birds - hidden obsession, (17) Juan's journey to Poland, (18) A piece of Mexico in Poland, (19) "Kazimierówka" manor house, (20) Touching sculptures, (21) I have not stopped being a Pole, (22) Fulfillment.

Contemporary shots from Juan Soriano's Garden include fragments of events with the participation of the Mexican ambassador to Poland and the Polish ambassador to Mexico. The film ends with an invitation to visit the Garden, which is an open and friendly space for everyone who appreciates art and the charms of beautiful nature. Part of the garden is a gallery where you can admire the works of Mexican and Polish artists.



## TECHNICAL PARAMETERS

video duration: 40-50 minutes

technique: digital, H264, 1920p

number of shooting days: around 7, in Juan Soriano's Garden

review: March 2018

premiere: May 2018

The film will be realized entirely by Tomasz Domański (pre-production, production, post-production), in cooperation with Marek Keller. The voice-over part will be recorded by the actor of the National Theater in Warsaw, Marek Barbasiewicz.





**LEADER'S NARRATION**

## KAZIMIERÓWKA

a piece of Mexico in Poland

Juan Soriano's garden is hidden in the wooded alleys of the village of Owczarnia near Warsaw, located in the immediate vicinity of Podkowa Leśna. It spreads over a seven-hectare area of the 19th-century Kazimierówka manor, which in its heyday served as a boarding school for girls from good homes, and during the Warsaw Uprising as an arms storehouse and a shelter for refugees from Warsaw.

The manor was destroyed as a result of warfare. The only farm buildings have survived to modern times: the manager's house, a barn, a cellar with a storage room on the first floor and a park with old trees, ponds and pulsating spring water.

In May 2006, Kazimierzówka was bought by a Polish emigrant - Marek Keller, who, under the supervision of a monument conservator, restored it and breathed new life into the place. He created an open exhibition of extraordinary sculptures by the Mexican artist Juan Soriano and a gallery where artists from Mexico, Central America and Poland are promoted. The host of this place is the Juan Soriano and Mark Keller Foundation. The Ambassador of Mexico, Raphael Steger, is enchanted by this place. He proposed - thanking Marek Keller for " *giving a piece of land in Poland to Mexican art and artists* " - to make this place also part of his Embassy.

Juan Soriano's garden in Kazimierówka, although it is privately owned, remains open to visitors every day from morning until dusk. Here you can admire the wonderful sculptures, touch them and step on the lawns, as well as visit the exhibitions in the gallery and enjoy the beauty and tranquility of the picturesque landscape.





## MAREK KELLER

emigrant, art dealer , philanthropist

## ARTISTIC CAREER

military bands and the band Mazowsze

Marek Keller is a contemporary art dealer, collector and philanthropist. He comes from Piaseczno near Warsaw. In his youth, he studied piano, but did not make a career as a pianist. During his military service, he performed in the Central Artistic Group of the Polish Army, and after finishing his military service, he continued his artistic career in the state folklore group "Mazowsze".

## EMIGRATION

Paris 1972-1975

In 1972, Marek Keller left Poland with the intention of earning money in the United States, but never returned. He settled permanently in Paris. He was enchanted by the city, which captivated him with its possibilities, magic and ... brought him to Mexico. There, through Sergio Pitol - the cultural counselor of the Mexican Embassy, whom he met earlier in Poland - he met the acclaimed Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes (then the Mexican Ambassador in Paris) and the Mexican artist Juan Soriano, who was gaining growing popularity. It wasn't long before it became clear that Juan and Mark's contrasting personalities complemented each other perfectly. Juan trusted Mark. He entrusted him with the management of the commercial aspects of his work, and Marek has never betrayed that trust.

He was a quarter of a century younger, the manager and guardian of Juan Soriano. Juan - a scatterbrained, a clutterer out-of-this-world - was getting lost in everyday trifles, he did not remember meetings, he forgot in which gallery did he leave his painting or sculpture... Marek, on the other hand, was organized and punctual, so running Juan's affairs came naturally to him. This synergy of characters and cooperation gave birth to their joint success - artistic and commercial.

## PATRON OF POLISH AND MEXICAN CULTURE

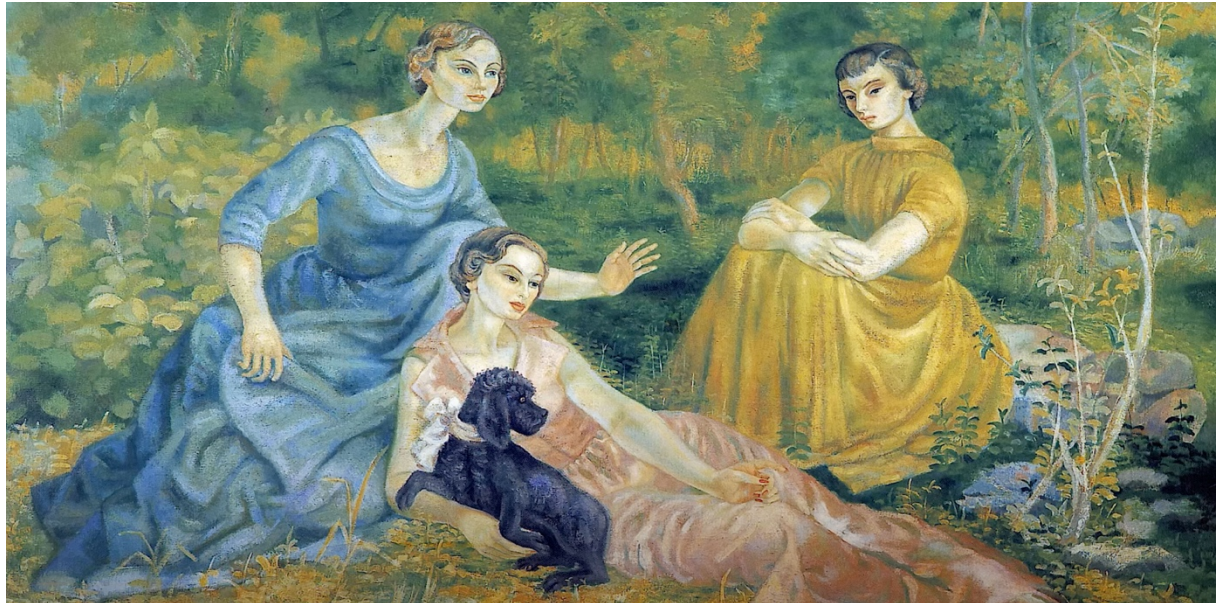
Marek Keller never stopped being a Pole. He once said: *"Because it is in the soul and does not change with the change of passport"*. He proved the truth of these words by becoming a significant patron of Polish culture. He acquired many valuable memorabilia of Fryderyk Chopin around the world, which he then donated to the Fryderyk Chopin National Institute: manuscripts, 19th-century publications belonging to the composer's family, and several dozen letters from Chopin and his sister Ludwika, in which they describe their daily lives. Marek Keller's generosity surpassed even Artur Rubinstein. In recognition of these merits, he was honored with the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland and the badge "Meritorious for Polish Culture".

When leaving Poland, Marek Keller took a handful of banal memories and hope. He left it in the grip of real socialism and missed the moment



when it regained independence. A combination of various circumstances led to him becoming an art dealer, and this continues to this day. He represented several other artists, but ultimately, he stayed with Juan Soriano. He was the most important to him.

Juan gave Mark a piece of his Mexico. Marek decided that Juan should have his own piece of Poland. He created the Soriano Garden - out of friendship and gratitude. Because this meeting with Juan made his youthful dreams come true. Today, Marek Keller's life takes place between three capitals - Mexico City, Warsaw and Paris.



JUAN SORIANO,  
a millennial child

CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
in the 1920s and 1930s

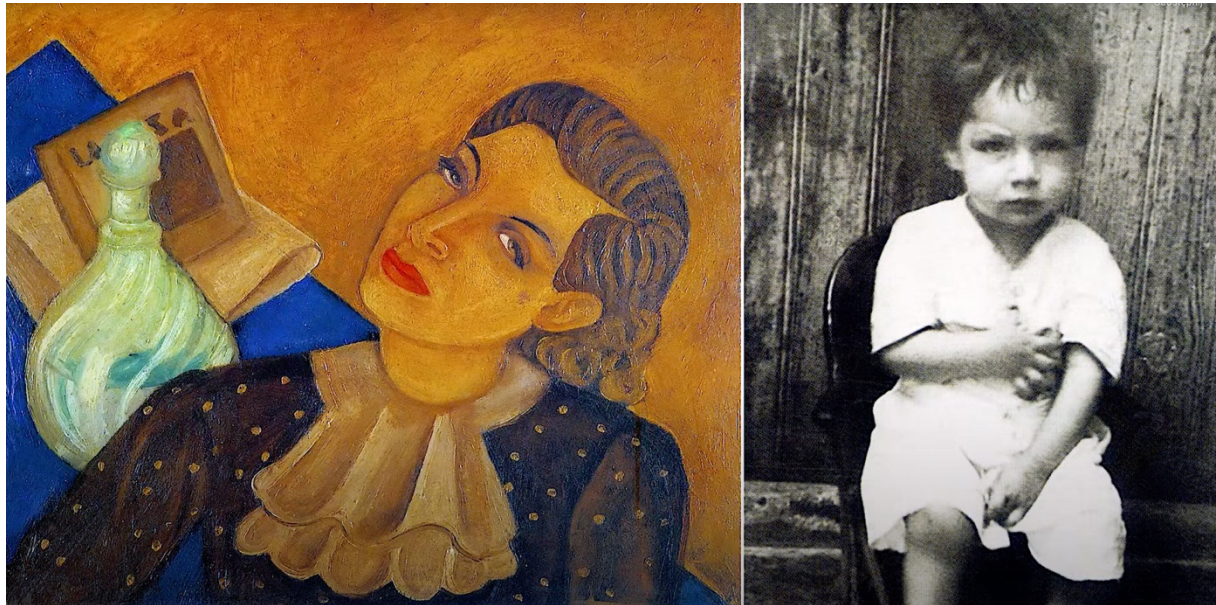
Juan Francisco Rodriguez Montoya was born on August 18, 1920, in Guadalajara, Jalisco, into a middle-class Mexican family. His parents were Rafael Rodriguez Soriano and Amalia Montoya Navarro. From childhood, however, he was known as Juan Soriano because he took his father's middle name.

Guadalajara during Juan's childhood and youth was a beautiful and stuffy city, where people committed all kinds of sin, betrayal and vice, although on the outside they were saintly and ostentatiously pious. The only old women - dignified, dressed in black - smoked cigarettes and drank tequila in public, because they didn't care.

Mexico's 20th-century history was marked by bloody elite struggles, the strong influence of neo-colonial politics, and failed attempts to build lasting social and economic solutions. Juan's mother and father fought in the Mexican Civil War, so Juan rarely saw them. He grew up surrounded by a dozen or so women - sisters, aunts,



grandmother and nanny. This environment undoubtedly had a significant impact on his character, artistic sensitivity and life path. The Mexican revolution filled him with horror and disgust.



Juan Soriano's imagination developed in his childhood, when he became interested in painting and sculpture. The love for sculpture was born from dough figures made by his teenage nanny Mari, who entertained and occupied him in this way to gain more time for other activities.

At the age of several years, he began to create his own toys, and one of the most favorite was the puppet theater for which he made puppets. He spent hours modeling them. Neither he nor anyone else predicted that in the near future he would be designing stage sets and theater costumes for such works as "The Maids" by Jean Genet or "Electra" by Sophocles.

Sometimes he was visiting a cartoonist neighbor to watch him draw his characters. He copied them wherever he could - in the margins of newspapers or on the lid of a shoebox. He drew brothers and sisters, his nanny's children and other people from his immediate surroundings. It was then that he discovered how much fun it gives him to invent images out of nothing - his own images. He was passionate about inventing non-existent graphic and spatial forms, which were realized in his drawings, paintings, scenography, theater costumes and sculptures.

He drew inspiration for his work from the Mexican folk tradition - the oldest, pre-Spanish one, as well as from the colonial tradition and the work of European artists of his time - impressionists and abstractionists. He combined his imagination with many artistic traditions and created his own distinctive style.

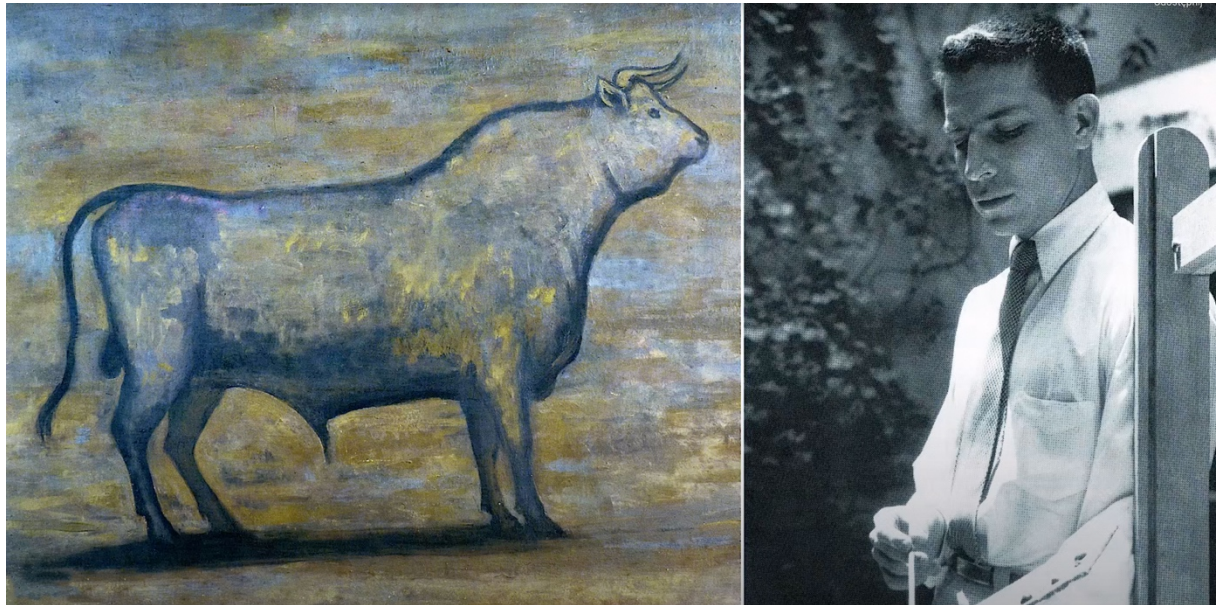
His talent was revealed to a wider audience in his early youth, when he showed his works at the collective exhibition of the "Evolution" art workshop at the Guadalajara Museum. It was 1934 and Juan was only 14 at that time. This exhibition was a turning point in his life. The following year, together with his sister Marta, he left for Mexico City, where he took up artistic studies and joined the life of Mexican artistic elites. He met Diego Rivera, Inés Amor, Rafael Solana, Isabel



Villasenor , Frida Kahlo and Lupe Marín. He made friends with Salvador Novo, Carlos Pellicer and Octavio Paz.

#### PAINTING, CERAMICS, THEATER 1940s

In the 1940s, Juan Soriano developed his talent by painting, scenography, designing theater costumes and creating ceramic sculptures. He presented his works at exhibitions in Mexico and the United States. Octavio Paz and Octavio Barreda wrote their first essays on Juan's work at that time.



#### FOREIGN EXHIBITIONS AND TRAVELS in the 1950s

At the beginning of the 1950s, Juan Soriano traveled to Rome twice, where he dealt with ceramics and painting. In Mexico, he collaborated with choreographers, illustrated a book and designed sets. In 1956, he presented his paintings for the first time in Italy - at the Schneider Gallery in Rome. It was the first of a long series of exhibitions in Europe. In the following years, he also presented his work at the Ruthermore Gallery in San Francisco, and at the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Antonio Souza Gallery in Mexico City. He also wrote his first essay on art entitled "Abstract Painting".

#### ART, POLITICS AND EMIGRATION 1960s

In the first half of the 1960s, he became a master of ceramics at the School of Design and Crafts of the National Institute of Fine Arts in Mexico. At that time, he also created a series of portraits of Lupe Martin, which stands out in his work. Juan continues to design theater costumes and also publishes an essay on the work of Pablo Picasso. During a trip to the Yucatan, he was involved in a car accident and - under the influence of that event - he painted a picture entitled



"Accident". Among other artistic works, he created ceramic sculptures and bronze sculptures. In 1966, he presented his sculptural work for the first time at the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City.



In October 1968, there was a bloody massacre of students in the Square of Three Cultures in Mexico City. As a result of these dramatic events, in 1969 Juan Soriano left for Rome and stayed there for the next six years. He struggled with depression for a long time, unable to come to terms with the political situation in his country. In 1975, he meets Marek Keller in Paris and establishes cooperation with him. He decides to move permanently to Paris, which is helped by a lucrative contract he signs with the Olivetti company. In Paris, he meets and befriends, among others, Antonio Saura, Julio Cortazar, Milan Kundera and Valerio Adami. Since then, he lives between Paris and Mexico City.



### INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION 1970s

In the 1970s, Juan Soriano's artistic work is already recognized on international art markets and awarded many times. He received the Special Award at the 8th International Painting Festival in Cagnes-sur-Mer, France; foundation cultural Televisa awarded him a high scholarship, and the Cabañas Cultural Institute honored him with the Gold Medal of Excellence.



### MONUMENTAL SCULPTURES of the 1980s

In 1985, Juan Soriano celebrated the 50th anniversary of his artistic activity, and a tribute to this occasion was an exhibition organized at the Palace of Fine Arts, later presented in many other Mexican cities. In 1987, the Mexican government awarded him the National Prize of the Arts and the title of Knight of the Arts.

The same year also saw the first commission for a monumental bronze sculpture. It was the "Bull" that stood in Tomas Park Garrido Canabal in Villahermosa, in the state of Tabasco. Juan Soriano made his first attempts at creating large statues in the 1960s, but the "Bull" from Villahermosa was the first fully successful realization of a sculpture in this scale. Juan Soriano was interested in painting and sculpture at the same time, but he gained recognition as a sculptor very late.

In the late 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, Juan Soriano created several more monumental bronze sculptures. They were: "Dove" - for the MARCO contemporary art museum in Monterrey; "Wave" - for the World Trade Center in Guadalajara; "Snail" - for the Amparo Museum in Puebla and "Moon" - for the National Auditorium in Mexico. The monumental works were created as a result of cooperation with architects: Ricardo Legorreta, Teodor González de Leon and Abraham Zabludovski. Other monumental sculptures include "The Mermaid", which adorned Piazza Loreto; "Dafne" which complements the architecture of the Arcos building Bosques in Mexico City; the monumental "Hand" decorating the building of the Herdez corporation in Mexico City and the abstract



"Dove", which today contemplates the Tuscan landscape in a private gallery in Greve in Chianti.



THE CAPTURE OF A BEAUTIFUL LIFE,  
the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries

In 1997, the Reina National Art Museum Sofía in Madrid presented an extensive retrospective of Juan Soriano's works made in the period 1937-1997, and the following year Elena Poniatowska published a book entitled "Juan Soriano, a thousand-year-old boy". In this book, she presented the content of several interviews conducted with the artist in the period from the mid-1960s to the present day.

In 2000, as part of the 16th Historical Festival in Mexico City, ten monumental sculptures by Juan Soriano were placed in the Plaza de la Constitución. They were a tribute to Juan on his 80th birthday. In the same year, two monumental sculptures were also presented at the EXPO



exhibition in Hanover. Juan Soriano's last monumental sculptures were created in 2003, commissioned by several states of the Republic of Mexico. His sculptures were usually made in nine copies - six copies for commissioners and three originals.

Juan Soriano's works have been exhibited in 166 exhibitions around the world - in America, Europe and Asia. In the last two years of his life, Juan Soriano was honored with many Mexican and foreign awards. Among them were: the French National Order of the Legion of Honor, the Spanish Premio Velázquez and the Polish Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland.

#### A CALL TO ART

Juan Soriano focused primarily on creativity, not paying much attention to the commercial side of his work. Many friends were chastised him for simply giving away his works. At that time, he replied that *"he does not create to get rich... that art loses its true value when money begins to play a role in it"*. On the other hand, he gratefully received the enthusiasm of people close to him - Marek Keller, as well as architects who in various ways incorporated his works into their architectural projects. In his teenage years, he often heard bitter remarks at home that he would end badly and would starve to death in a bohemian environment. However, that did not happen. He proved with his life that if someone really has character and perseverance, he will achieve success, even if he has to break with tradition and blaze his own trails.