

Maternité Prize

Background story to the Maternité Statue

During a lecture trip to Wolfsburg in March 1966, I first saw a small copy of the Maternité Statue in the home of Professor Finkbeiner, Head of the Women's Hospital, who was a good personal friend of the artist, Madame Guastalla. The model appealed to me so much that I took a photograph. When the preparations for the 1st European Congress for Perinatal Medicine were under way in 1967, we were looking for a suitable symbol to be put on the program cover. Then the Maternité Statue came to mind. Through Professor Finkbeiner I contacted Madame Guastalla and obtained permission to use a photograph of the Maternité Statue for the Congress Program. Shortly after the European Congress, plans were started for the 2nd German Congress for Perinatal Medicine which was due to take place from 26th to 28th June 1968. During the course of these preparations I met Mr Freiesleben, then a member of the board of directors of the Humana Milchwerke, and suggested to him that this company should donate a prize to the German Society of Perinatal Medicine. He thought this was a good idea and shortly afterwards we received a positive response. As the model appealed to us and had already proved very popular as the emblem at the European Congress, I contacted Madame Guastalla once again to obtain permission to use the statue for the prize. I was aware that Madame Guastalla had a smaller copy of the Maternité Statue in her possession in addition to one about 1.50 m high. The discussions proved difficult as the artist would only allow the small statue to be awarded as a prize, if the large statue was

purchased. We were greatly interested in obtaining the large statue for our Institute of Perinatal Medicine in Berlin, then in the planning stage, but we did not have a sponsor. Therefore we could not make a binding commitment. Then, after several discussions, Madame Guastalla agreed to allow the small statue to be used as the prize, whereby we had to assure her of our serious intention to purchase the large statue when the Institute was completed. Since then the small bronze statue has been awarded annually by the German Society of Perinatal Medicine. From 1976, with permission of the then board of the German Society, it has also served as the Maternité Prize of the European Society of Perinatal Medicine, which is awarded every other year. I received the first bronze cast of the Maternité Statue at the first presentation donated by Humana Milchwerke in 1969 in recognition of my efforts concerning the inauguration of the prize and for my services to perinatal medicine. This first cast bears the inscription 'Parenti medicinae perinatalis'.

In 1989 we made enquiries about the whereabouts and destiny of the artist and of the life-size statue. My colleague J. Melchior and his co-worker Madame Bernard, both from Paris, and both faithful participants at our Berlin congresses for perinatal medicine, were able, after searching for a long time, to find out the following details: Madame Helena Guastalla died in 1983. Her works of art are to be found in the Museum de Meudon in Paris. The life-size original of our Maternité Prize is also there and has been named 'the third child'.