

GALERIE
LA FOREST DIVONNE
PARIS+BRUSSELS

CATHERINE FRANÇOIS
Singularités

EXHIBITION
from 24 February to 16 April 2022

PREVIEW
24 February 5pm - 9pm



Catherine François, *Catherine François, Tube en verre, 2021*

BRUSSELS

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Catherine François, *Cri à la Bouteille Jaune*,
Bronze et plastique de la mer, H 32 x L 22
x l 53 cm

1. PRESS RELEASE

Catherine François « Singularités » Du 24 mars au 14 mai 2022

Du 24 mars au 14 mai, La Galerie La Forest Divonne présente *Singularités*, une exposition des nouvelles sculptures de Catherine François.

Grande randonneuse des plages de la mer du Nord, Catherine François y ramasse les déchets de plastique, de bois, de verre, que les marées rejettent sur le rivage. Ces débris de l'activité humaine, que la mer nous rend, inspirent l'artiste, qui en fait des œuvres, en les associant à son matériau de prédilection : le bronze. Le résultat : une quarantaine de têtes étonnantes, aux expressions singulières, inspirées par ces rebuts glanés au bord de l'eau. Une balle de tennis devient un œil, un morceau de plastique, une langue, le safran d'un bateau, l'arrête d'un nez, ou ce bidon jaune, le cri puissant d'un homme face à la mise en péril de la nature. Car si Catherine François le dit autant que possible avec humour, cette exposition doit résonner comme un cri d'alerte sur le comportement de l'homme dans son environnement.

Catherine François a toujours ressenti le besoin d'exprimer par ses œuvres le message qu'elle lit dans la Nature, au gré de ses marches et des multitudes de photos et de vidéos qu'elle y prend. Croisement d'énergies, messages presque transparents comme ce gant de plastique échoué dont les doigts indiquent la mer. Si ses précédentes sculptures faisaient voir la beauté de la nature en transcrivant ses formes, l'accumulation des déchets pousse Catherine François à une expression plus franche, car comme elle le dit, la situation actuelle, est « trash ». Un mot passé dans le langage courant pour signifier la violence et l'urgence, et qui désigne aussi en anglais, les détritiques, les restes, les déchets...

Pour autant les sculptures récentes de Catherine François se tiennent toujours sur la ligne de crête, et la violence qu'elle ressent, elle l'exprime avec humour et fantaisie. Ces nouvelles œuvres sont l'occasion de créer tout un nouveau répertoire de formes, extraordinairement créatif, inventif et novateur. Catherine François, dont on connaît les magnifiques bronzes abstraits renouvelle à nouveau en profondeur son travail de sculpteur. Elle ne s'installe jamais dans un système mais pousse sans cesse plus loin, comme le manifeste l'impressionnante monographie parue cet hiver chez Prisme Editions, que nous présenterons à la galerie. Elle retrace 30 ans de sculpture, depuis les œuvres plus figuratives des débuts, vers l'abstraction et les assemblages de matières, avec le verre ou la résine, qui annonçaient le recyclage récent des rebuts de toutes sortes de matériaux produits par l'homme. Au travers de ces pages, et dans la diversité des périodes successives de l'artiste, on trouve cette ligne directrice qui s'affirme au fil du temps : se faire la chambre d'écho des messages de la nature. La plus célèbre de ses œuvres, le « Tomorrow 's Man » installé face à la mer sur un des brise-lames de Knokke, ne disait-il pas déjà en 2009, la vanité de l'homme face aux éléments ? Sa fragilité ? Et l'impérieuse nécessité de faire partie de la Nature plutôt que d'en disposer ?

2. EDITO

On the beach in Le Zoute, children take a break between two sandcastles to stroke Catherine François' best-known sculpture, *Tomorrow Man*, mounted on a breakwater – or rather, a tear-breaker, as Brel once said. Parents snap photographs of smiling faces standing beside the patinated, saltwater-greened bronze.

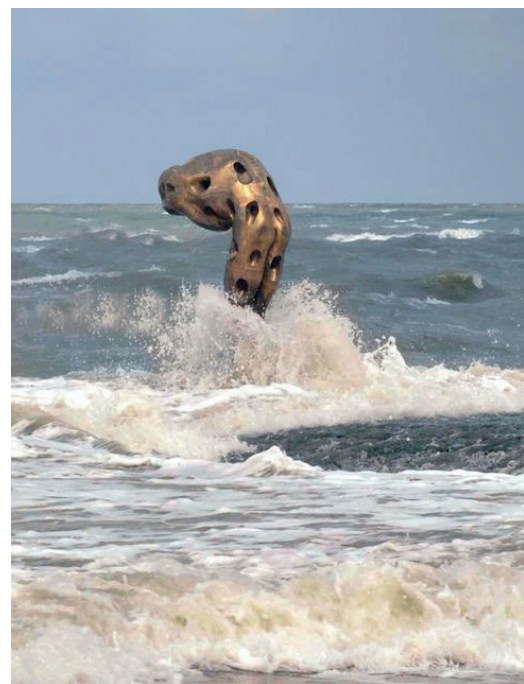
As a sort of “twin” of Catherine François, the Man from the Future bends over, his pierced and punctured body arching in a last effort to withstand the never-ending rolling of waves and the relentless rise of the tides.

This confrontation with the sea is a hopeless act of love. The sea always wins. Already once, the sculpture was overpowered by the waves, knocked down, broken, but Catherine François, just like Sisyphus, replaced it, urging it to pursue this amorous struggle.

Underlying Catherine François and her soft voice lies a powerful determination to reconnect with the forces of the world, with the energies that shape it. She acknowledges the urgency and – alas – the dark outcome that threatens the world with global warming and the extinction of species. In her latest works, the artist has collected all the debris that the sea has spewed forth from our consumerist waste – the bits of wood, plastic, and metal that litter our beaches once they have poisoned our oceans – to transform them into deformed heads: self-portraits of universal predators.

Despite the disparities between both women's works, there is a sense of kinship between Catherine François and the renowned post-war English sculptor Barbara Hepworth, for whom she feels a sincere admiration. As a contemporary of Henri Moore, Arp, and Brancusi and alongside her husband Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth drew her inspiration from the patterns of nature. Her sculptures sometimes took the shape of a wave or a rock carved by the wind, with the taut strings in the middle that became, she said, “the tension I felt between myself and the sea, the wind or the hills.”

She loved the Cornish nature, the sea, the landscapes, the rocks: “carving,” she said – and Catherine François would agree – “has its own logic. Just like the waves on the sand have theirs. I am part of the landscape, a seascape whose origins go back hundreds of thousands of years. I have a kind of sculptural relationship with it. I think of the works as objects which rise out of the land or the sea, mysteriously.”



Catherine François, *Tomorrow's Man*,
Bronze, 2009

Catherine François focuses on monumentality and intimacy, representation and the form purified by the action of the wind and water, using both a sense of release and control, in the tradition of the artisan.

Relentlessly, the artist strives to join together the forces that shape the world. Did all sculptors – including the greatest, from Michelangelo to Rodin – fashion their own sculptures, or did they simply succeed in extracting the exquisite form that was secretly hiding deep inside the block of stone?

Are we expected to be the archaeologists uncovering what is hidden from our eyes, or will art and beauty spring from our imagination alone?

Catherine François' abstract sculptures try to extract the morphogenesis and beauty of things from the visible world to better offer them to our blind eyes.

Mathematicians also constantly wonder if the equations governing the world exist and should be found like hidden treasures, or if they are mere mental sculptures...

In a constant effort to blend dreams with reason, the renowned mathematician René Thom sought to find equations to determine the shape of a wing, the ripples in the sand on the beach, and the pattern of a breaking wave: “At a time where so many scholars are calculating, is it not desirable that some, who can, dream?” he used to say. And quoting Paul Valéry: “Life has no time to wait for rigour.”

Alexandre Grothendieck, another great mathematician, added: “What else have I done in my past as a mathematician, except to follow, “to dream” to the end, to their most manifest, most reliable, irrefutable manifestation, the shreds of dreams peeling themselves off one by one from a heavy and dense fabric of mists?”

In her sculptures, Catherine François tries to peel away the shreds of dreams from a heavy and dense fabric of mists, lifting the veil from a fragment of this world: powerful discs, ropes, metal swirls, and spinning tops, wave-like formations that emerge from the infinite, hollow seashell shapes or round and sensual human forms, bronze wings that try to connect the earth to the sky.

Catherine François wants to capture the rustling of things, that which we feel without properly seeing it in the course of our short existences. In her sculptures, the artist freezes the space-time continuum between our birth and our demise, in that glowing passage that marks the boundary between the blackness of before and the upcoming darkness.

Nature inspires her as much as humans alarm her. As Barbara Hepworth once said: “Only when man intervenes does the landscape become as shapeless and ugly as an old, cracked pillow”. “I rarely draw what I see – I draw what I feel in my body. Sculpting is a three-dimensional projection of primitive feeling: touch, texture, size and scale, hardness and warmth, evocation and compulsion to move, live, and love. The landscape is strong – it has bones and flesh and skin and hair. It has age and history and a principle behind its evolution.”

Catherine François' sculpture aspires to fuse the sensation of the world and the presence of man.

Guy DUPLAT, *Monographie Catherine François*, Prisme Editions, 2021, p. 6-7

3. CATHERINE FRANÇOIS'S BIOGRAPHY



Catherine François
Born in 1963 - Lives and works in Brussels

The Belgian sculptor Catherine François (born in 1963) is known for her often monumental bronzes. If there is a guideline in the work of Catherine François over the past ten years, it is a cross or rather a crossing, a meeting, moreover, intersecting lines, Catherine François collects them. She captures them everywhere, all the time, in pictures first. She probably has hundreds, maybe thousands of them. Meetings - or shocks - are everywhere for those who know how to see them. And Catherine François is a sounding board - paradoxically, she, whose silhouette rather evokes the reed in the wind, long and thin. Her apparent fragility hides a great strength, nature to which she listens, feels and vibrates. This force is seen applied to bronze, to this forging material, which she sculpts, encircles, polishes.

SOLO SHOWS

- 2022 Galerie La Forest Divonne, Brussels
- 2019 *Waves*, Galerie La Forest Divonne, Brussels
- 2017 Zedes Art Gallery, Brussels
- 2014 Maruani Mercier Gallery, Brussels
- 2013 Maruani-Noirhomme Gallery, Knokke le Zoute
- 2012 *Restrospective (bis)*, David and Alice van Buuren Museum, Brussels
- 2010 Maruani-Noirhomme Gallery, Knokke le Zoute
- 2009 Zedes Gallery, Bruxelles Delen Bank, Anvers
- 2007 Retrospective, David and Alice van Buuren Museum, Brussels
- 2006 Zedes Gallery, Bruxelles Daniel Besseische Gallery, Courchevel
- 2005 Daniel Besseische Gallery, Genève
- 2004 Zedes Gallery, Bruxelles Argo Gallery, Knokke le Zoute
- 2003 Zedes Gallery, Brussels
- 2001 Berko Gallery, Knokke le Zoute
Damasquine Gallery, Brussels
Arthus Gallery, Brussels
- 2000 Gemeentschapscentrum op Weule, Brussels

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2021 Belgian Art & Design Fair, Kunst aan zet, Galerie La Forest Divonne, Gand
La Biennale Paris, Galerie La Forest Divonne, Paris

2020 *Ensemble Ailleurs*, Galerie La Forest Divonne, Brussels

2019 Brafa Art Fair 2019, Galerie Boon, Brussels

2018 *Summer Show*, Galerie La Forest Divonne, Brussels

2018 Brafa Art Fair, Espace de la Banque Delen and Galerie Boon, Brussels

2017 *Aeroplastics*, Brussels

2013 Miami, Art Basel Miami Design

2011 Art Brussels, Maruani-Noirhomme Gallery, Brussels

2009 Brafa Art Fair, Maruani-Noirhomme Gallery, Brussels

PUBLIC COMMISSIONS

Sculpture *Big Hole*, Domaine de Peyrassol

Sculpture *Tomorrow Man Made by the Sea*, Knokke Le Zoute



Catherine François, *Confined*, Bronze et déchets rejetés par la mer et l'océan, 2020, H 40 x L 35 x l 64 cm

3. PRACTICAL INFORMATIONS

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24 February to 16 April 2022

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« Je considère mes œuvres comme des objets qui surgissent de la mer, mystérieusement ». Catherine François



Catherine François, *Smash*, 2021