

**GALERIE**  
LA FOREST DIVONNE  
PARIS+BRUSSELS

**CATHERINE FRANÇOIS**  
*Singularités*

**EXHIBITION**  
from 24 March to 14 May 2022



Catherine François, *Smile*, Bronze and wood, 44 x 27 x 27 cm, 2021

**BRUSSELS**

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Catherine François - La Forest Divonne ©E Crooÿ

# 1. FOREWORD

## Une foule bigarée

Pour l'exposition «Singularités», Catherine François invite les visiteurs à déambuler parmi une foule d'œuvres d'art. Les 50 sculptures rassemblées pour l'exposition sont autant de personnages, de toutes formes, dans toutes les directions et toutes les attitudes. Elles disent la singularité des êtres et des destinées, tout en exprimant le plaisir de créer et la force de l'art. Les sculptures, faites de bronze et de matériaux de récupération, sont toutes placées à hauteur d'homme, sur des socles en carton ou en tuyaux de chantiers, elles deviennent des silhouettes qui se mêlent aux visiteurs...

Jean de Malherbe, directeur de la Galerie la Forest Divonne Bruxelles



Catherine François - La Forest Divonne ©E Crooy

## 2. PRESS RELEASE

### Catherine François « Singularités » From March 24 to May 14 2022

**From March 24 to May 14, Galerie La Forest Divonne presents *Singularités*, an exhibition of new sculptures by Catherine François.**

A great surveyor of the world's beaches, Catherine François collects the plastic, wood and glass waste that the tides throw up on the shore. These debris of human activity, that the sea returns to us, inspire the artist, who makes works of art out of them, by associating them with her favorite material: bronze. The result: about forty astonishing heads, with singular expressions, inspired by these scraps gleaned from the water's edge. A tennis ball becomes an eye, a piece of plastic, a tongue, the rudder of a boat, the bridge of a nose, or this yellow can, the powerful cry of a man facing the endangerment of nature. Because, as Catherine François always says with humor, this exhibition should warn us. And these works, based on reuse and recycling, outline the path of a positive and playful ecology.

Catherine François has always felt the need to express through her works the message she reads in Nature, through her walks and the multitude of photos and videos she takes there. Crossroads of energies, almost transparent messages like this beached plastic glove whose fingers point to the sea. If her previous sculptures showed the beauty of nature by transcribing its forms, the accumulation of waste pushes Catherine François to a more frank expression, because as she says, the current situation is «trash». A word passed in the current language to mean the violence and the urgency, and which also indicates in English, the detritus, the remains, the waste...

However, the recent sculptures of Catherine François are always on the crest line, and the violence she feels, she expresses with humor and fantasy. These new works are an opportunity to create a whole new repertoire of forms, extraordinarily creative, inventive and innovative. Catherine François, whose magnificent abstract bronzes are well known, is once again renewing her work as a sculptor in depth. She never settles into a system but constantly pushes further, as shown in the impressive monograph published this winter by Prisme Editions, which we will present at the gallery. It retraces 30 years of sculpture, from the more figurative works of the early days, to abstraction and the assembling of materials, with glass or resin, which announced the recent recycling of the scraps of all kinds of materials produced by man. Throughout these pages, and in the diversity of the successive periods of the artist, we find this guideline that asserts itself over time: to be the echo chamber of the messages of nature. The most famous of his works, the «Tomorrow's Man» installed facing the sea on one of the breakwaters of Knokke, did it not already say in 2009, the vanity of man facing the elements? His fragility? And the imperative need to be part of Nature rather than to dispose of it?

### 3. EDITO

On the beach in Le Zoute, children take a break between two sandcastles to stroke Catherine François' best-known sculpture, *Tomorrow's 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.

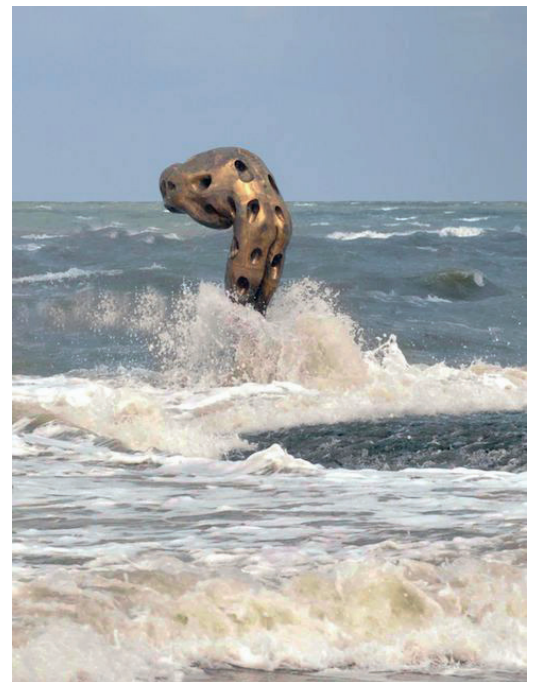
As a sort of “twin” of Catherine François, the Man from the Future bends over, his pierced and punctured body arching in a last effort to withstand the never-ending rolling of waves and the relentless rise of the tides.

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

## 4. 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's Man Made by the Sea*, Knokke Le Zoute

Catherine François, *Tube en verre*, Platinum, glass, wood,  
57 x 42 x 35 cm, 2021





## 4. PRACTICAL INFORMATIONS

**Singularités - Catherine François**  
24 March to 14 May 2022

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



Catherine François, *Smash*, bronze and tennis ball, 36 x 18 x 24 cm, 2021