

GERMAINE RICHIER LA MÉDITERRANÉENNE



FRICHE DE L'ESCALETTE
ARCHITECTURE NATURE SCULPTURE

GALERIE 54 / ERIC TOUCHALEAUME
ART + ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

GERMAINE RICHIER LA MÉDITERRANÉENNE

Catalogue published for the exhibition
Germaine Richier la Méditerranéenne
presented at the Friche de l'Escalette
from 1 July to 30 August 2024
and weekends in September.



Germaine Richier... the name spontaneously calls up for me the Mediterranean, ever since the real *Revelation* experienced a few decades ago in front of four of her slender and strong silhouettes, anchored as if for eternity on the parapet of the terrace at the Picasso museum in Antibes, against the azure depth of the sea.

So that is the slant of this exhibition – reveal the *magical* character of Richier's world, so charged with reminiscences of her Provençal childhood, by presenting some of her works in osmosis with nature as we see it in a *calanque* setting.

This may sound run-of-the-mill, but in publications about her very few photos of her works show them out of doors, and even less in natural surroundings. Yet, as the critic Alain Jouffroy wrote: '*Germaine Richier often had her works photographed in front of trees, or in a tangle of branches (...)*' Only a few very fine pictures by Brassäi, Agnès Varda, Luc Joubert... were taken in the overgrown garden of her Paris studio avenue de Châtillon, in the Camargue region, or in the Provençal countryside.

To remedy this shortfall and adopt – in all modesty – a different viewpoint from that of the superb retrospective held last year at the

Pompidou Centre in Paris, and at the Musée Fabre in Montpellier*, the catalogue of this exhibition favours images paired with a biographical text by Olivier Cena and quotes chosen for the most part from her contemporaries - writers, critics, poets, artists... accompanying a selection of thirteen creatures, humans or hybrids, carefully stage set amid the ruins of l'Escalette overgrown by *maquis*.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to leave the sculptures standing out in the open, but visitors will be able to admire them on-site, each one mounted on a platform of undressed timber planks, in a spacious hangar – its shade cut by shafts of sunlight filtered by the wooden shutters that cover its openings – and in a patio surrounded by high walls, amid peaceful and typically Mediterranean surroundings.

Here's hoping that this presentation of Richier's sculpture, considered in its fundamental relationship with all that is human, in its crossovers with forms of nature, and permeated by the belief in the pantheistic forces that inhabit the hidden world, will constitute *an initiation to mysteries*** - unforgettable for visitor and reader alike, without in any way detracting from its timeless character.

Eric Touchaleaume

Germaine Richier beside *Water* in her studio, 1954
© photo Denise Colomb, Charenton-le-Pont,
Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie

*- *Germaine Richier, rétrospective* »
Centre Georges Pompidou from 01/03/2023 to 12/06/2023
and musée Fabre from 12/07/2023 to 05/11/2023.
** Jean Cassou

The Leaf and The Foolish Virgin
© photo François Fernandez





SCULPTURE FROM THE BODY

OLIVIER CENA

Tormented human figures, frightening grasshoppers... as a pupil of Bourdelle, Germaine Richier learnt to give form to all that is living, driven by a devouring passion.

In photographs of her, Germaine Richier is rarely smiling. She didn't like to pose. (...) The star system wasn't her thing. The few photographs we have of her young, in the late 1920s when she studying sculpture in Bourdelle's studio in Paris, show a charming and shy young woman, slim, dark, with an Art déco hair-do – short, square, very structured. (...) Bourdelle called her 'my Nightingale', because she would sing while she was sculpting.

She always kept that short square cut but less and less structured as time went by – sober in dress, Germaine Richier showed (...) a face that was serious, (and) concentrated. Her friends, borrowing the title of one of her works from 1949, nicknamed her The Hurricane (...), a name that expresses her force and her commitment: her passion.

'Mornings, she would throw herself into her studio like a person leaping into the sea because there was need to do so. The matter of sculpture was her reason for being, there was nothing else.' said authoress Dominique Rolin.

Her former assistant, the sculptress Claude Mary (1929-2016), confirms: *'Germaine was sculpture above all. Directly. With fire, and at basis with only one single subject.'* Germaine Richier, sculptress then, and uniquely so.

By her own testimony it was a passion that began early, in Provence where she was born in 1902. (...) She didn't like school much, preferring the countryside, where she observed insects – the praying mantises, ants and grasshoppers that she was to sculpt later on – and she liked

tinkering. *'I liked to work with a trowel, cement, anything to do with masonry, and I think that I already had a bent for sculpture too.'* she said. And then, at the age of twelve, she went to Arles, where she discovered art: the cathedral of Saint-Trophime, its magnificent Romanesque cloister and its sculptures, *'among the most beautiful even thinking of Italy'*, she was to write much later.

But her family, *« de blai et de vignô »*, as she described them in Provençal, couldn't fathom her lack of interest in a career. Far less the folly of enrolling at the school of fine arts in Montpellier when she was 18.

Just after her death in 1959, a fellow schoolmate, Gaston Poulain, reminisced in *Les Lettres françaises*: *'She was so pretty with her short hair a little tousled, thrown back a bit the way wild thyme grows in our garrigues! And she was a real live wire in the middle of us all! She didn't dress like other girls. She wore a little bolero the same blue as her skirt. [...] She was enthusiasm personified.'*

And enthusiasm was what this little country girl needed when she came to Paris on her own in 1926. She had just finished sculpting *Youth*, her diploma project, which attracted some attention but is now lost. She had trained in the studio of

Louis-Jacques Guigues (1873-1943, a former pupil of Rodin), a sculptor whose personality she liked, and with whom she learnt direct cutting, but what she wanted now was the teaching of a master.

And it was to be Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929). At the time this one-time collaborator of Rodin was famous worldwide. He was teaching at the Grande Chaumière in Paris, but would only rarely accept students in his private studio. On the recommendation of the Montpellier architect, Henri Favier, Germaine Richier was enrolled at the Grande Chaumière, where she soon caught Bourdelle's attention. *'You are a great sculptor'*, the master told her, and took her into his own studio, where she remained until his death.

Besides enthusiasm and passion, loyalty was another of Germaine Richier's qualities.

With Bourdelle she learnt sculpture working from a model, a technique she remained attached to all her life. *'She needed to feel bodies'*, said her niece Maine Durieu, *'fat, thin, even old, deformed, lined and worn out by the fangs and claws of time; skin, broad hips, slender legs, elongated arms, deformed fingers reaching out, projecting.'*

Later on it was to become a ritual: every morning around 9 a model would come to the studio. Usually, one model for one sculpture. (...) Nardone was an exception though. This former model for Auguste Rodin (for *The Kiss* and *Balzac*) posed for a lot of works: *Man walking* (1945), *The Storm* and *The Eagle* (1948), *The Ogre* (1949), *The Hydra* and *The Pentacle* (1954), *The Mountain* (1956). Why Nardone? *'He had everything that Germaine liked in sculpture'*, said Claude Mary, *'beauty and power of forms, drama, humanity'*.

At Bourdelle's, she also crossed paths with Alberto Giacometti, who having trained in the studio from 1922 to 1925, dropped in now and then to salute his old master. But the Swiss sculptor was never a friend at the time, as Germaine Richier said *'he belonged to the other clan'*, meaning surrealism, from which Giacometti was soon to break away.

A great deal has been written about these two giants of sculpture: some accuse Richier of having borrowed from Giacometti (which is true), others say that it was the other way round (which is also true).

It would have been odd if two artists of their dimension, and nearly the same age (Giacometti was born in 1901) had not influenced one another.

But in 1929, Germaine Richier remained indifferent to surrealism and preferred to apply Bourdelle's classic method: triangulation. This technique consists in tracing lines on the model's body and then transferring them, using a pair of compasses and a plumb line, to the clay. Her first works (*Bust of Christ*, 1931, *Loretto*, 1934, *La Regodias*, 1938) are thus highly figurative. But the compass came to deviate, bodies and faces were deformed, surfaces became uneven – which at times led to incomprehension –, as for example in 1951 when a band of Christian fundamentalists, scandalized by Richier's freedom, caused her *Christ* to be removed from the church at Assy - but only temporarily.

'All of my sculptures, even those most imagined, always start from something real, from an organic truth', said Germaine Richier. *'Imagination needs a starting point. Only then can it enter fully into poetry. I invent more easily by looking at nature, its presence makes me independent.'*

Invention proceeds by deformation then, or as she herself said, transformation. The artist experiments by disfiguring. The extraordinary variety of heads on her sculptures testifies to this. Her research began when she was moved by the casts of burnt bodies made at Pompei. Later, little by little she began to organize her sculpture around emptiness, around what Georges Limbour called *'a more subtle matter'*: it was her great contribution to the art of her century.

She shaped a full body before starting to hollow it out, scoring it, tearing it, so that as she said *'it will have a changing and living look'*. Because all of Germaine Richier's sculptures are alive. She talked to them, was concerned about how they felt when there was a change in the studio.

'In front of one of Germaine Richier's sculptures you feel that it's internal, exactly as you would in front of a living person', said César, who revered his elder. Face to face with *The Mantis, large* (1946), this giant insect with a woman's breasts, the viewer experiences a blend of admiration and fear.

There are the slender legs (which were to influence Louise Bourgeois's *Spider*) and the pent-up violence expressed by the tensions in the modelling, something fragile and yet powerful, alive and yet morbid, that makes us keep our distance. And there we are: *'The more I live, the more I'm certain that only humankind counts'*, wrote Germaine Richier.



Germaine Richier
in front of *Tauromachy*
in the studio garden.
© photo Louis-Rene Astre, 1956



'So she served an apprenticeship, direct or indirect, for the two great styles (Rodin and Bourdelle) that preceded her generation. Germaine Richier is most certainly a long way from both her tutelary masters. But they are the ones who opened her eyes, who *taught her to see* so to speak.

They passed on to her the deep and imperative meaning of statuary; the sense of the effigy, of the attitude, of positioning in space, of the vertical stance of the figure, the organic monumentality of the *statue*.'

Pierre Restany







The Foolish Virgin, 1946





The Foolish Virgin, The Leaf and The Forest
in the studio garden.
© photo Luc Joubert, 1953

‘Now that time has passed, we can see that Germaine Richier’s approach corresponded to the logic of her instinct for statuary. It was by combining the violence of expressionist language with the imaginative mystery of surrealist form that she was able to capture and materialize both the drama and the dream of her era. It is between drama and dream that the entire scope of her work unfolds, the character types of this gallery of statues, the series of figures that range from the extreme human to the extreme hybrid, animal or vegetable, of expressionism torn by wild fantasy. The big expressionist effigies *The Storm, The Ogre, The Hurricane* which date from 1947-1949 constitute the high point of an erratic vein that opened with pieces from 1945 and 1946 such as *The Man-Forest* and *The Forest*, and was taken up again in 1954 with *The Pentacle* and *The Foolish Virgin*. They translate the innate emotional depths of the artist, her tendency towards pantheistic effusion, which is precisely one of the characteristic traits of expressionist sculpture. The osmosis between humankind-nature is complete: it is this organic relationship that fixes so to speak the metabolism of the statue, the torment of its flesh, its attitude and its stance. Germaine Richier’s big effigies portray beings of flesh devoured by space and conditioned by the elements that surround them, the forest, the tempest, the storm. These effigies are at once beings and things: they illustrate both the consciousness of the forest and the forest itself, the impetuous violence of the hurricane and the hurricane *per se*. That is why they are so striking, lying in wait, ready to spring out, fixed in the split-second of a gesture that seizes force and truth. By the assurance of posture, the treatment of matter, the impact of attitude and the exactness of proportions, these pieces constitute pure masterworks of contemporary statuary.’

Pierre Restany



‘Germaine Richier often had her works photographed in front of trees or in a tangle of branches, or even lying on the ground in a bed of dead leaves and mud, like those left behind by a storm.

Again, the idea is that of a natural field, painted or sculpted, the idea of making the sculpture participate in what surrounds it, in circulating life, the idea of transforming the world by calling on it to contribute to the work of art, the idea of putting an end to the eternal divorce between the thing created by humankind and the thing created by the gods, in short, an architect’s idea, which leads her to place her works in a landscape of which they would be both the interpreters and the emanation. There is also the secret wish for a total art, where sculpture, painting, trees, stones, earth and sky enhance one another in a visual symphony all for the benefit of humankind. The grandeur of an ambition such as this will appeal especially to people who believe in the possibilities of radical changes in life and the world that reside intrinsically in every work of art inspired by the gods of the depths.’

Alain Jouffroy





The Man-Forest, large 1945/46





‘The thing that strikes us first with Germaine Richier is the faultless unity that she formed with her work, their fundamental coincidence. Few artists have given the example of such a total adherence of the creator to her work: her sculptures detached themselves from her as if they were living extensions, each one of them was a second nature. And indeed, this girl from Arles produced, in spite of what has sometimes been said, the sculpture of a southerner. It was under the sun of the Midi that she encountered the cicadas and mantises that she began to dialogue with as of her childhood, and which she would translate, at human scale and tormented by hallucinating mutations, from the museum of natural history to the museum of art.

Even her most fantastic or baroque productions, those near to a certain expressionnism (...) have something of the sonorous laughter of a Provençal woman. Just as her most morbid pieces retain a trace of the robust love of life revealed by her intense regard. But even more than being southern, her work is Mediterranean: what it has that moves us most is perhaps that over and above the strident drone of cicadas or the fragrances of the South, it has the profound rhythms of a rediscovered Latin identity. (...)

One last opportunity was given to experience it, at the Château Grimaldi in Antibes, for the exhibition of summer 1959, the end of which Germaine Richier was never to see, by the shores of the Mediterranean where her life’s work began and to which she returned, having described an exemplary orb’.

Michel Conil-Lacoste



The Forest, 1946





‘(...) the feverish attention that she gives to everything she sees, to everything she touches, causes her to be one with the earth, crystals, bark, roots – as if they belonged to humankind, and not just to the mineral and vegetable kingdoms. She makes her figures authentic carriers of nature, that identify completely with the elements, landscapes and animals. In this sense Germaine Richier is the great sculptor of metamorphosis.’

Alain Jouffroy



'She was wind, water, lightning and the forest tree. She used to say *My pets come quick and see* in her deep, slightly husky voice, as patinaed as her bronzes.'
Dominique Rolin

Germaine Richier in her Paris studio, 1948
© photo Emmy Andriess (detail)
Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence, 2023



‘Germaine Richier (...) is a *force of nature*. And this force is manifestly positive, she is forever bringing to birth what is good and vigorously maintaining it in her entourage. As well, although it in no way explains her character, we might add that Richier comes from an ancient soil, near the Mediterranean, and so it comes spontaneously to her (...) in harmony with the earth that has sustained humankind for such a long time. You just cannot ignore, when you observe her living (or working) and when you see her serene bearing, that she possesses to the utmost the virtues inherited from balanced foods like olive and wine, that her hand and foot have felt the touch of marble, sand and limestone, that the taste of salt, the sound of waves and the scent of pines have been familiar to her since her early childhood.’
André Pieyre de Mandiargues







‘People always say: you have to create a world. The artist has to have a universe. Otherwise, nothing happens. No one’s vision is changed. Germaine Richier’s sculptures can play this fatal role. They overwhelm, they irritate, they surprise; they live. This life, this dramatic tension that inhabits them, this power of evocation, can even nurture the desire to protect oneself from their invasive power, against their terrible presence. In each of them the maximum of expressive intensity is reached. They capture the most pathetic moments of a being haunted by the image of destruction. Because not one of these sculptures is entire, intact or smooth: they all seem to have been spewed up from a volcano. (...) In this way Germaine Richier seeks to maintain the balance of the human figure, and at the same time reveal the unknown world – at times terrifying – that every human carries inside.’

Alain Jouffroy





'We are in effect here in the pure domain of the imaginary (...) works that are wholly animated by secret interior forces. (...) Such is the art of Germaine Richier, a sculptor who, it should be said, was very competently trained in her calling and practises it as seriously as an artisan who knows the materials and tools of his or her trade. A highly intelligent woman of solid Provençal stock, who from her sun-drenched land redolent with the scents of herbs has received as a gift the most robust virtues of all that is vital. But at the same she feels that she is in contact with dark spiritual energies and the dreams of collective consciousness. Between her skilled practice and her lyricism then there is a tension that introduces torment and that also gives her art its substance and its value. (...) Germaine Richier is the most complete artist there is, possessed as she is of all the mastery of technique and gifted with a deeply moving and thoroughly authentic poetic imagination. (...) Her work is an initiation to mysteries. (...) There are hidden truths, expressed in other modes of apprehension, those of imagination, dream, organic communion, poetry. With spiritual techniques such as these her powerful hands practise the art of sculpting. In doing so they extend its power, since Germaine Richier has been able to produce, for our unease and our enchantment, an exceptional body of works, charged with profound wonders, one of the most original of our times.'

Jean Cassou

Shepherd from the Landes, 1951
all rights reserved exhibition catalogue Galerie Creuzevault, January 1960
Photographer not named



The Ant, 1953





‘She represents Water as a seated woman, head and shoulders inside a jug the handles of which depict her hair and ears; but the paunch of this jug has burst, so that the bosom, stomach and the whole body are as if drenched by the heavy and impetuous rush of a waterfall; the legs alone are spindly as if woven from strands of wet weed. (...)’
Alain Jouffroy

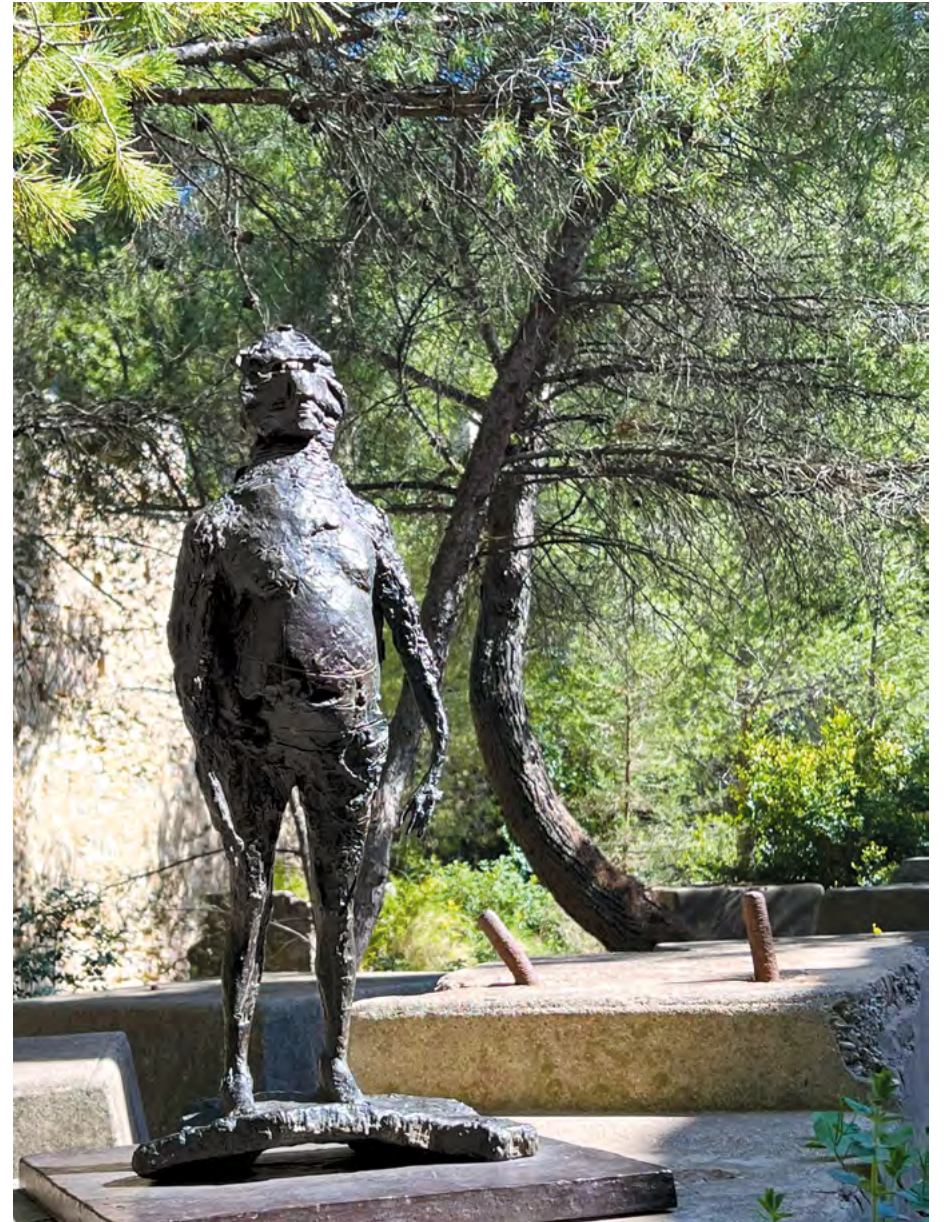








Man of night, 1954



The Pentacle, 1954





‘(...) I think that there will always be sculptors with strong characters, who carry it inside them. Germaine didn’t need Bourdelle or anyone else to be possessed of that presence, that terrible tension. It was there in Alberto Giacometti, it was there in Picasso, it was there in Germaine.

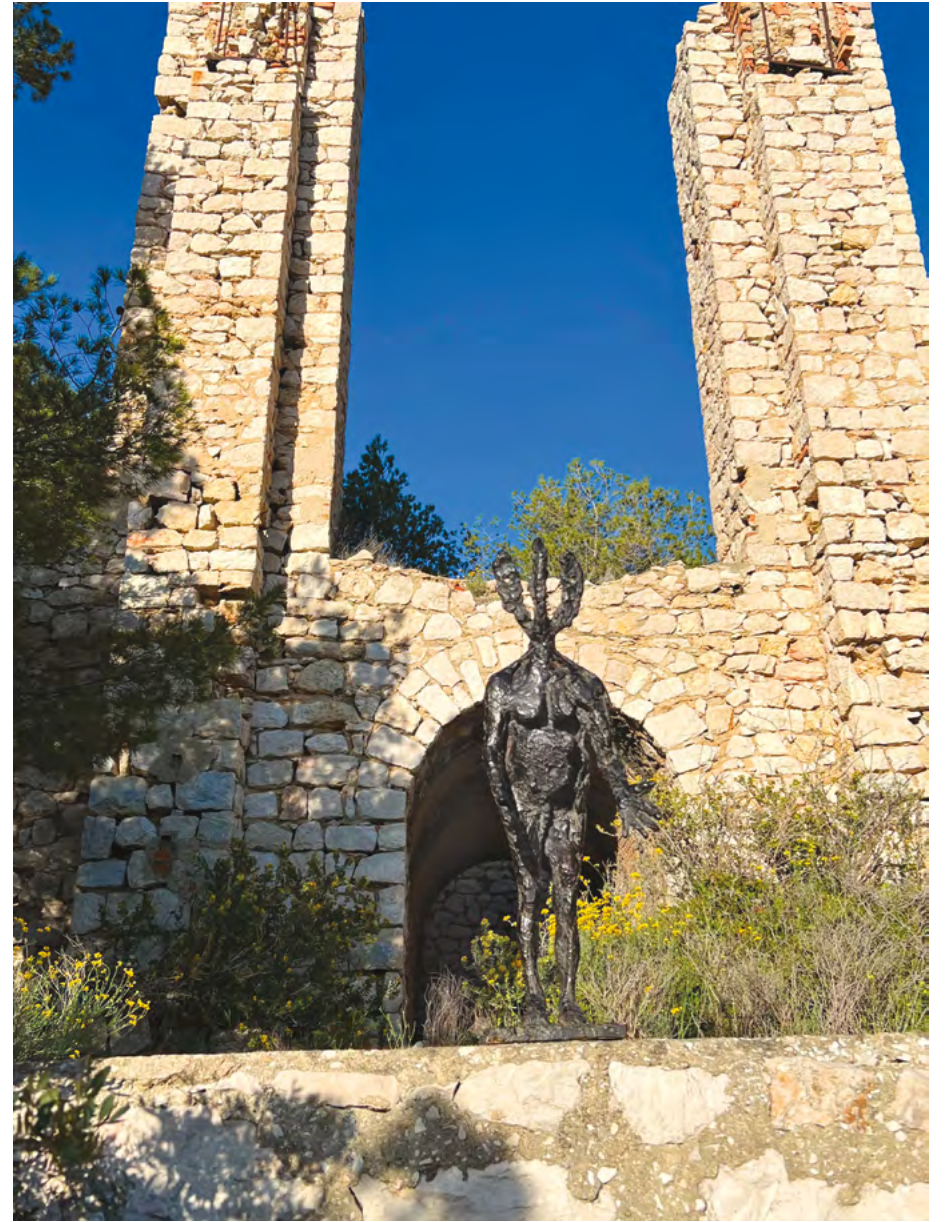
I don’t worry about knowing whether they’re avant-garde or not. Any more than I am when I go back to Rome to see Marcus Aurelius... The only thing that interests me is that presence, which hasn’t got a name and which you feel with your whole body when you approach it... As time passes it’s what resists the most, what holds up best. That is why art will never go out of fashion. We’ll always feel it in our sinews.’

César



The Hydra, 1954







The Hydra and The Seed
The Seed, 1955









‘The palaces of Venice, like the sculptures of Germaine Richier, are contaminated by time; we might even say that like them they are fragments torn from space-time; because Germaine Richier is always intent on putting the work of time into the space of her sculptures.

She is fond of repeating: When I find a form, I destroy it.(...)

In doing so she precedes time in its work of ruining; she wants to become - in herself and consciously - her own time. All her sculptures are already, today, what they might be a thousand years on, insofar as they will survive fire, or the deforming pressures of cataclysms that are always possible. (...)

They thus constitute an extraordinary synthesis of the imaginary past of a work that is in reality new, surprised to be occupying a place in our world, but which already has the dislocated look of objects exhumed from Vesuvian ashes and lava, from the present of the act of creation, the clearest mirror of the creator’s instant of sensitivity, and of the apocalyptic and hypothetical future of which they are the portents. (...) Germaine Richier exults in this violence, these ruptures, in this angularity of broken branches that she makes her own, as for example in one of her recent sculptures: *The Mountain*. She exults in the same way as we do when we see a ruin overgrown by grasses, or when we find a rock that seems to have been thrown down onto the earth haphazard, or when we discover something that is erratic, eroded, and lovingly violated by life. For her, life penetrates by holes, folds, the thin veins of lightning.’

Alain Jouffroy



'I like what is tense, wiry, spare,
olive trees weathered by wind,
brittle wood... I feel more for a burnt
out trunk than an apple tree in flower...'
Germaine Richier

Don Quichotte and the windmill
in the Provençal countryside
© photo Agnès Varda, 1956



The Runner, 1955





Torso I, 1934

Bronze, numbered model,
founder Susse
108 × 51 × 34 cm

Base cut from a block of Cassis limestone previously used, suggesting an antique block. (Contemporary adaptation).

Torso I, a work of the artist's youth that shows her maturity, is part of a series of studies for Loretto, a young boy standing done in the fine classical manner of the 1930s, which was that of sculptors like Belmondo or Despiau who were both in vogue at the time.

And yet its fragmentary character inspired by an antique torso appears to be far less 'dated' than the entire figure.



The Foolish Virgin, 1946

Bronze, exhibition model,
founder Susse
135 × 62 × 61 cm

Base cut from Soignies stone chiselled by the sculptor Eugène Dodeigne, a friend and occasional collaborator of Richier.

This nude, which is by no means as classical as it seems at first sight, evokes the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins as told in the Gospel of Saint Matthew.

By their lack of foresight the Foolish Virgins miss the arrival of the bridegroom, and when they return with their lamps full, finding the door of the marriage feast hall shut. they call:

'Lord, Lord, open the door for us.'
But the bridegroom replies:
'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you. Watch then, for you know neither the day nor the hour.'

So this poor Foolish Virgin has the look of one who will wait forever for the bridegroom.

The skin of the bronze is finely worked in creases and bumps, on which remain visible the hatching of cuts made in the clay by the tip of the knife used to trace the triangulation coordinates taken with a pair of compasses from the live model, testifying to the workmanship that gives the statue such assurance.

The Foolish Virgin, The Man-Forest, The Seed and The Leaf, form the quatuor standing on the terrace of the Picasso museum in Antibes



The Man-Forest, large 1945/46

Bronze, exhibition model,
founder Susse
95 × 52 × 50 cm

When she was in Switzerland during the war, one day while walking in a forest in the Valais region Germaine Richier picked up a few branches and leaves. For the first time they entered into the elaboration of one of her sculptures. It was to be *The Man-Forest*.

Critics often remarked on this important innovation: *'Has sufficient notice been taken of the silvan character of her work? Do you recall how The Man-Forest stretches a ligneous arm out for the birds, hesitating between the human and the vegetable? Standing in the middle of crossed paths in a high copse, with splashes of light filtered by the leaves, small solar discs, no other monument could join past to present better than this completely new simulacrum of Priapus.'*

André Pieyre de Mandiargues



The Forest, 1946

Bronze, exhibition model,
founder Susse
118 × 29 × 31,5 cm

The Forest too is composed of plant-life elements, the left arm being clearly made as a curved branch. In this work Germaine Richier calls on her Provençal roots, as witnesses a letter to her mother dated 1946: *'D' like Kikou [her brother René] to send me those branches I asked for, knotty as sinewy arms. (...)* *The olive strikes me as being the best tree for it, but at La Palud you might find something original and authentic.*



The Town, 1951

Bronze, exhibition model,
founder Susse
135 × 62 × 61 cm

The elegance of *The Town* can only be matched by that of *The Leaf* (1948), but it departs from classicism by the elongation of the silhouette and the disturbing reduction to the extreme of the head, which evokes that of a praying mantis.



Le Griffu, 1952

Bronze, exhibition model,
founder Susse
89 × 89 × 85 cm

'I like what is tense, spare, wiry.'
Le Griffu is a perfect match
for this statement by Germaine
Richier.

During the creation of
Le Griffu she asked her
photographer friend Luc
Joubert to bring back from
Arles a picture of the effigy
of *La Tarasque* – a sort of
dragon in Provençal folklore
– hung from the ceiling in the
musée Arlaten. The original
plaster cast of *Le Griffu* was to
be hung from the ceiling of her
studio.



The Ant, 1953

Bronze, exhibition model,
founder Susse
99 × 88 × 66 cm

Like *Le Griffu* *The Ant* has
wires running between its
extremities that enhance the
elegance of the composition.

*'The mesh of straight wires
that at times accompany
the figure, the animal, or the
figure-animal defines an
intermediate space that is a
protective zone, a supplement
of presence and affirmation. It
is not the abstract definition of
a linear environment, a spidery
conceptualizing of form, but well
and truly a protective system that
stresses contours and subtends
postures.'*

Pierre Restany



Water, 1953/54

Bronze, exhibition model,
founder Susse
146 × 63 × 101 cm

Water owes its name to its neck
which was made with the head
of an amphora picked up on a
beach in Camargue. It might
have been entitled 'Out of the
waters' so evocative is it of the
statue of an ancient goddess,
like the ones to be seen at the
Piraeus or Bardo museums,
emerging from a sunken wreck,
with seaweed-like limbs set on
a terrace, as Richier has taken
care to represent.



Man of night, 1954

Bronze, exhibition model,
founder Susse
73 × 82 × 30 cm

*'Germaine Richier has
undertaken to develop another
theme, which she calls 'Men of
night', materializing the dark
forces that have already inspired
some ten of her works. These
sculptures in bronze (...) have
surfaces that are smoother, more
taut and of a different matter,
with a patina that is darker
(than usual). Their sobriety and
their sculptural synthesis, the
result of form that is fuller, confer
on these pieces a poetic character
that is capable of determining in
the mind of the viewer a sort of
vague malaise, disquiet or even
anguish.'*

Denys Chevalier



The Pentacle, 1954

Bronze, exhibition model,
founder Susse
80 × 36 × 23 cm

Nardone, who posed for
Rodin's *Balzac*, posed for many
of Germaine Richier's finest
works, such as *The Storm*, *The
Pentacle* and *The Hydra*. All of
these pieces have a particular
force that results from the
artist's fascination for the
model.

*'Near the big glowing stove a
naked man was standing. (...)
He was very old, with a huge
sagging belly, his penis grey, the
scar of his belly button askew
and his legs withered, but he kept
perfectly still in spite of the slight
trembling that agitated him. The
model, absorbed in his job, was
experiencing martyrdom, yet he
was already a statue, even more
of a statue than the bronze or
plaster works that surrounded
him, like hard and patient
phantoms. And Germaine
Richier would call out:
'Isn't this fine, my pets?'
Dominique Rolin*



The Hydra, 1954

Bronze, exhibition model,
founder Susse
79 × 28 × 32 cm

Germaine Richier couldn't care
less for the texts and recreates
her own mythology with a
Hydra that has a plant-life
head made up of four pierced
palm fronds, a far cry from
the Hydra of Lerna with
its multiple serpent heads
described in Greek mythology.

*'These effigies are both beings
and things. (...) That is why
they are so striking, lying in
wait, ready to spring out, fixed
in the split-second of a gesture
that seizes force and truth. By
the assurance of posture, the
treatment of matter, the impact
of attitude and the exactness
of proportions, these pieces
constitute pure masterworks
of contemporary statuary.'*
Pierre Restany



The Seed, 1955

Bronze, exhibition model,
founder Susse
145 × 33 × 36 cm

'She doesn't deform (...) but she re-forms, she transforms (...) She desintegrates animal, vegetable, mineral, to re-found them as physical entities that reassemble in their inter-crossing all the better to show the inevitable participation of one and the other. The Seed is a woman whose head is a giant seed (...) it's entirely metaphoric, but also pantheistic.'

Alain Jouffroy



The Runner, 1955

Bronze, exhibition model,
founder Susse
205 × 54 × 94 cm

The thin and streamlined morphology of *The Runner* is that of a long-distance or marathon runner. He is alive and perspiring from intense effort, seen from behind it looks as if he is about to pitch forward, an effect that captures perfectly the dynamic imbalance of running.

This sculpture originated as a public commission destined for the Jean Bouin stadium - but *The Runner* was never installed there.



Bibliographic references

pages 7-10

Olivier Cena, « La sculpture à corps perdu », *Télérama* 1st March 2023, article for the retrospective at the Pompidou Centre.
Quotes taken from two works:
Laurence Durieu, *Germaine Richier. L'Ouragane*, publisher Fage.
Valerie Da Costa, *Germaine Richier. Un art entre deux mondes*, publisher Norma.

Pages 4, 5

Exhibition catalogue *Germaine Richier, la magicienne*, Musée Picasso, Antibes, 6 October 2019 - 26 January 2020.

Pages 14, 21, 86, 87

First publication: Pierre Restany, « Germaine Richier: le grand art de la statuaire », *L'Œil*, n°279, October 1978, p. 5.

Page 65

Alain Jouffroy, « Germaine Richier. L'Ouragane oubliée », interview with César, *Connaissances des arts*, n°320, October 1978, p. 93-95.

Page 29

First publication: Michel Conil-Lacoste, « Germaine Richier », in Robert Maillard (editor), *Nouveau dictionnaire de la sculpture moderne*, Paris, Hazan, Paris, 1960, p. 250-252.

Page 85

André Pieyre de Mandiargues, *Germaine Richier*, Brussels, 1959.

Selected bibliography

Laurence Durieu
Germaine Richier, L'Ouragane, publisher Fage, 2023

Ariane Coulondre
Regards sur Germaine Richier, Textes critiques, publisher Centre Pompidou 2023.

Exhibition catalogue *Germaine Richier*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, & Musée Fabre, Montpellier, publisher Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2023.

Pages 23, 77, 79, 88

First publication: Alain Jouffroy, « Germaine Richier ou la recherche d'une nouvelle image de l'homme », *Preuves*, January 1957.

Pages 33, 43, 52

First publication: Alain Jouffroy, « Au Musée d'art moderne: Germaine Richier », *Arts*, 10-16 October 1956. © Fusako Jouffroy.

Pages 35, 87

First publication: Dominique Rolin, « Germaine Richier ou la main d'ombre », *Carrefour*, 10 October 1956, p. 7.

Denys Chevalier, « Un grand sculpteur, Germaine Richier », *Prestige français et mondanités*, n°19, Paris, September 1956.

Page 47

First publication: Jean Cassou, « Germaine Richier », in *Germaine Richier*, ex. cat., Paris, Musée national d'art moderne, éditions des Musées nationaux, 1956, pp. 5-6.

Page 37

First publication: André Pieyre de Mandiargues, « Germaine Richier », *Le Disque vert*, n°3, July - August 1953.

Exhibition catalogue
Germaine Richier. Retrospective, Fondation Maeght, 1996.

Exhibition catalogue
Germaine Richier 1904-1959, Galerie Creuzevault, Paris, 1966.

Thanks

The Friche de l'Escalette/Eric Touchaleaume would like to extend special thanks to:

Maine Durieu †, niece of Germaine Richier and distinguished dealer in primitive arts at Saint-Germain-des-Près, who in the 1990s first enabled us to acquire a work by Germaine Richier.

Colette Creuzevault †, my gallery neighbour rue Mazarine for many years, whose memories of youth I liked to listen to, since her father Henri Creuzevault had exhibited Germaine Richier's work in 1959 and again in 1966, in his avenue Matignon gallery.

Marie Martin-Raget & Laurence Durieu for their valuable help and precise knowledge of the work of their grand-aunt.

Olivier Céna for the generous permission to use his fine text on the artist.
All the writers, critics, poets, artists... whose quotes we have borrowed.
All the photographers who recorded for all time the artist and her work with so much sensitivity, whose works we have borrowed.

Martial Vigo
and the team at Galerie 54 in Paris.

Elliot Touchaleaume
and the team at Friche de l'Escalette in Marseilles.

Christian Baraja and Erik Lasalle,
photographers.

Helena Ichbiah and Jean-Charles Abrial
of the Ich&Kar graphic creation studio.

Ronald Corlette Theuil, english text

Le Parc national des Calanques de Marseille.

The CIQ de l'Escalette and its President René Costaglioli.

HEAD OF PUBLICATION
Éric Touchaleaume

CREDITS FOR RECENT PHOTOS
© C.Baraja - E.Touchaleaume / Archives Galerie 54 - Friche de l'Escalette 2024.

FOR WORKS BY GERMAINE RICHIER
© ADAGP Paris 2024

DESIGN *Sch&Kar*



THE AIMS OF THE PROJECT MAKE THE FRICHE DE L'ESCALETTE A CULTURAL VENUE.

Slowly but surely the Friche de l'Escalette is becoming part of the summer cultural scene in Marseilles, inviting the general public to discover a unique industrial heritage site coupled with visits of exhibitions of light-weight architectures and sculptures.

Conserving landmark industrial architecture.

The site is outstanding for its terrain, architecture and historic significance; it is in a fair state of conservation and it is unusual for the south of France, which was much less industrialized than the north and the east. As the site of an old lead factory, the Friche de l'Escalette bears a double testimony that can still be traced today, first by the type of industry - metal extraction, and second as a reminder of the intense industrial activity that grew up along the coast south of Marseilles in the 19th c., from Madrague de Montredon to Callelongue.

The builders of this plant, who remain nameless, adapted the various phases of the extraction process to the difficult terrain. Everything was purpose-designed: the buildings were perfectly integrated to the changing ground line, and even today – with no roofs and ruined walls - they are like an outgrowth of the rocky hillside. Colonnades, basins, solid stone walls opened by arcades and oculi bring to mind the Neo-classicism of Ledoux, in particular his salt mine at Arc

et Senans, with its brick-and-stone ovens, tunnels and rampant flues, an architectural set that is astonishing by its complexity and quality.

The factory operated from 1851 to 1925, growing by stages around the existing installations. Industrial heritage sites that date back to the mid-19th century are very rare, most of them having changed beyond all recognition. But even in its ruined state, at l'Escalette the process of metal extraction can still be traced today, even by the general public. Although the project is a private initiative, since the site is part of the Parc National des Calanques there are many constraints.

There can be nothing heavy-handed – we are bound to hold to archaeological procedure. On the high ground, the ruins will be kept as they are, consolidated to ensure conservation. Lower down on the site, the huge spaces of the old workshops, the metal frames of which were dismantled during the Occupation, have been used since 2021 for open-air exhibitions. In time they will be roofed over

to provide year-round space for exhibitions open to the public, for artists in residence, and for creation and restoration workshops dedicated to works specifically suited to the site. As for the *Buvette-épicerie de l'Escalette*, which operated here from 1930 to the 1970s, it will be born again as the *Bistrot de l'Escalette* to provide refreshments for visitors and hikers.

Preserving plant-life specific to ruins.

The feeling of strangeness that we experience as we walk about amid these romantic and mysterious ruins must be preserved.

To this end, contrary to all the rules for protecting masonry and architecture, insofar as is possible the plant-life that has grown over the old walls in the past century will be kept, at least the most remarkable species. The fascinating process by which plants relentlessly colonize old stonework will be part of the site experience, as in some of the temples at Angkor Wat. Reinforcements and metal clamps will be inserted where needed by skilled professionals, to protect parts made fragile by spreading roots.

Presenting exhibitions of light-weight architecture 'The philosophy of the cabanon'

Every summer an exhibition will be mounted in partnership with Galerie 54 / Eric Touchaleaume; the site will be open to the public July/August, and

weekends in September.

Above all, the organizers would like to preserve the poetic dimension of the Friche, and the 'philosophy of the cabanon' spirit so dear to the people of Marseilles... as it was to Jean Prouvé and his companions: Charlotte Perriand, Pierre Jeanneret and Le Corbusier, who spent his holidays in a cabanon at Roquebrune.

As well as exhibitions of light-weight structures designed by Jean Prouvé and other pioneers, another aspect of the project to be implemented once the site is properly laid out will be an international competition on the theme of the cabanon. These examples of vernacular architecture embody the spontaneous poetry of cabins built by fishermen and gardeners - a far cry from standardization using whatever materials come to hand.

Submissions will be made by architects and designers, but also by artists, responding to the same criteria of creativity, light weight, nomadism and ecology... In 2022 Marjolaine Dégremont anticipated this initiative with her *Cabanes perchées* set.

Exhibiting modern and contemporary sculptures

Sculptures and installations in phase with the site's identity, architecture and nature will be mounted at l'Escalette every summer. In time, the Friche will become a permanent venue for sculpture.

Previous exhibitions

2016 **JEAN PROUVÉ , HABITAT TROPICAL DU CAMEROUN**

Marjolaine Dégremont, *Touching the sky*
Vincent Scali, *Fragments*.

2017 **UTOPIE PLASTIC**

Max Bill, *Pavillon-Skulptur II*

2018 **JEAN PROUVÉ , NORD-SUD**

Parvine Curie, Stahly, Lardeur,
Haber, Coulentianos, *Sculptures*

2019 **JEAN PROUVÉ FOR LIVING**

Myriam Mihindou, *Transmissions*
(Exhibited in partnership with Galerie Maïa Muller.
This work was purchased by the Pompidou Centre in 2021).

2020 **L'ÉTÉ DE LA FORÊT**

François Stahly, *L'été de la forêt*
Myriam Mihindou, *Rakus et Savons*
Pierre Tual, *Reliefs*

2021 **SPIRITS OF PLACES**

Héloïse Bariol, *Claustra*
Gerard Traquandi, *Terres baroques*
Adrien Vescovi, *Soleil blanc*
Yonel Lebovici, *Bungalow du pêcheur*

2022 **POETIC REACTION OBJECTS**

Marjolaine Dégremont, *Cabanes perchées*
Baptiste & Jaïna, *Formes Molles*
Guy Bareff, *Tour des vents*
Lilian Daubisse, *La Bête endormie*

2023 **ANGLES OF VISION**

Richard Baquié, *Epsilon*
Jean Amado, François Stahly, *Sculpture d'architecte*



FRICHE DE L'ESCALETTE
ARCHITECTURE NATURE SCULPTURE

EXHIBITION SUMMER 2024
PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



GALERIE 54 / ÉRIC TOUCHALEAUME
ART + ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

FRICHE DE L'ESCALETTE
ROUTE DES GOUDES
IMPASSE DE L'ESCALETTE
13008 MARSEILLE

friche-escalette.com

GALERIE 54 / ÉRIC TOUCHALEAUME
L'APPARTEMENT DU COLLECTIONNEUR
4 RUE MALLET-STEVENS
75016 PARIS

galerie54.com

20 €

ISBN 978-2-9546701-8-8



9 782954 670188