

TEMPLON



Press release

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PRUNE NOURRY

Phoenix Project

4 September – 23 October 2021



Extract from the short film by Vincent Lorca and Prune Nourry, 2021

Following her 2019 *Catharsis* exhibition at Galerie Templon, Prune Nourry is unveiling her new *Phoenix* project at the Parisian gallery.

Phoenix revives the tradition of portraiture and explores the intimate relationship between artist and model. Prune Nourry invited eight visually impaired people to pose in her studio. Blindfolded, without ever seeing them – not before, during or after the project – she created a bust of each model, simply through touching and listening.

The models come from vastly different backgrounds. Some are blind since birth, others lost their sight through an accident or illness. All have however one thing in common: they have succeeded in overcoming their disability through their profession or voluntary work. Prune Nourry began by modelling the portraits in clay before moulding and casting them in fired clay and then firing them using the traditional technique known as Raku. Originally from Japan, the technique involves immersing the burning sculpture in ash as soon as it comes out the kiln. Like a phoenix rising from its ashes, each portrait thus becomes a metaphor for rebirth.

Prune Nourry has still not seen the portraits with anything other than her hands. Plunged into total darkness, the show invites visitors to share the same experience as the artist. Following a carefully marked-out exhibition itinerary, based on standard guidance systems for the blind and visually

impaired, everyone is invited to discover the eight works using their sense of touch. Thanks to tactile guide paths and a rope stretched between the busts, visitors are free to explore each of the sculptures with their hands. Recordings of conversations between the artist and her models are also played above each work, creating the sensation of immersion in the intimacy of the studio and the long posing sessions.

An experimental short film by Vincent Lorca and Prune Nourry features halfway through the exhibition. The film, which is accessible through audio description, takes visitors deeper into the world of the visually impaired. Without ever revealing faces or works, it puts the focus on the material and on hands as well as the complicity between the artist and her models.

The artist uses the walls to present new works inspired by the magnificent technique of the books at the Centre des Monuments Nationaux for the blind and visually impaired, and embossed with the help of a printer specialized in Braille. The pieces represent the models' hands, their lifelines acting as another form of symbolic portraits. Here we find some of the artist's recurring symbols: the hand as a tool and the mould as matrix.

In parallel to the exhibition, Prune Nourry's book *Aux Amazones*, a touching and inspiring testimony of her illness with a preface by Angelina Jolie, will be released on 22 September 2021 by Editions Marabout (Hachette).

Born in 1985 in Paris, Prune Nourry lives and works in New York and Paris. In her projects, the artist raises ethical questions related to the notion of balance in the broadest sense: the body and healing, the demographic imbalance due to gender selection and scientific excesses, the ecosystem and the interdependence between living species.

Her artistic approach combines sculpture, installations, performances and video. One of her iconic works is the army of *Terracotta Daughters*, a group of 108 sculptures inspired by the famous Xi'an warriors. She took her army on a world tour between 2013 and 2015, from Paris to Shanghai, Zurich, New York and Mexico City, before burying it in China where it will stay until 2030. Produced in 2019, her film *Serendipity* premiered at the Berlin Film Festival and opened the MoMa DOC Fortnight documentary film festival and Tribeca Film Festival and shown as part of the Art Basel film programme.

The first French artist to be invited to exhibit by the *Bon Marché Rive Gauche* in Paris, she created a series of emblematic works during lockdown including the monumental installation *Amazone Érogène*.