

TEMPLON



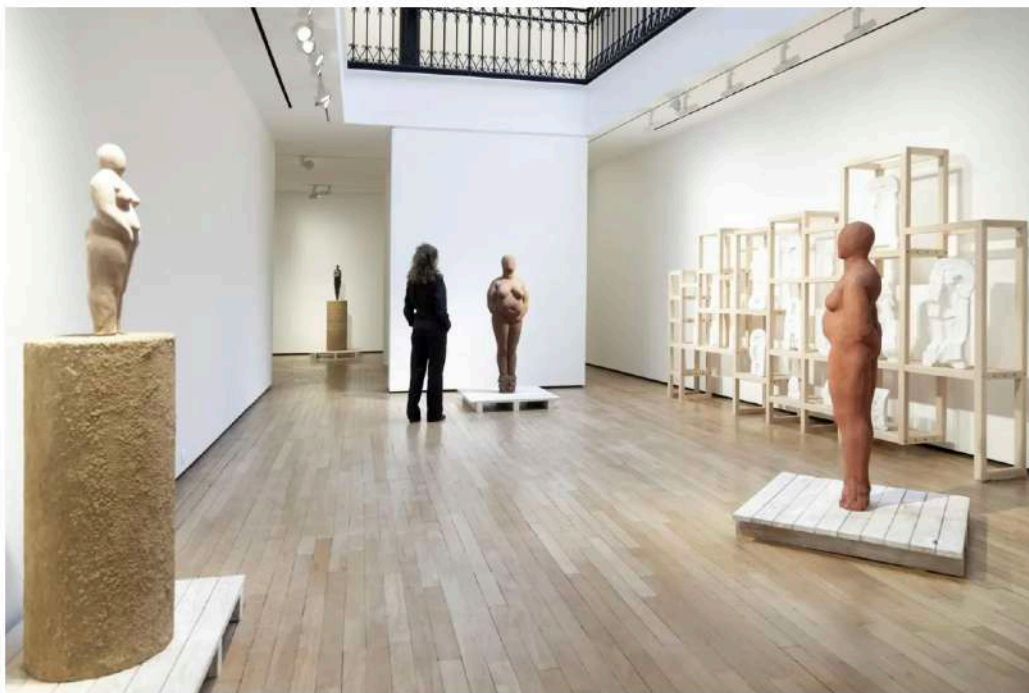
PRUNE NOURRY

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French Artist Prune Nourry Turns Female Trauma Survivors Into Modern-Day Venuses

Through her thought-provoking practice, New York-based artist Prune Nourry challenges perceptions of femininity, the sacred and the body's resilience, as seen in her new exhibition in Paris.

By Y-Jean Mun-Delsalle



Prune Nourry's Venus exhibition at Templon gallery in Paris PHOTO COURTESY OF TEMPLON

Merging anthropology, archeology and medical research and addressing themes of fertility, genetic selection and cultural identity through sculpture, installation and performance, [Prune Nourry](#) gained international recognition with projects like “Terracotta Daughters”, inspired by China’s Terracotta Warriors, and “Amazon”, a deeply personal work reflecting on her battle with breast cancer. The French artist frequently collaborates with scientists and craftspeople, using traditional techniques to create contemporary narratives.

Now Nourry's new solo show "Venus", on view through March 1, 2025, at [Templon gallery](#) in Paris, explores the female form through sculpture. The project, developed in collaboration with gynecologist-obstetrician Dr. Ghada Hatem, founder of the Maison des Femmes support center for women in difficulty or victims of violence in Saint-Denis in the suburbs of Paris, features eight women who posed nude, confronting cultural taboos or personal traumas.



Prune Nourry's temporary studio at Villa D. in Saint-Denis PHOTO ELÉA-JEANNE SCHMITTER

During a 2024 residency at Villa D. in Saint-Denis, a former shelter for young girls transformed into an art center, Nourry sculpted these women's portraits in clay. Inspired by their unique stories and diverse body types, she created sculptures, life-size or small-scale, in the spirit of Paleolithic Venuses of the Gravettian period, asking her models to strike the same poses as the prehistoric statues. They were subsequently molded before being cast in terracotta or bronze coated with earth pigments and clay "skins".

The exhibition also includes 30 molds produced in cultural operator [GrandPalaisRmn](#)'s molding workshop in Saint-Denis, featuring a series of hybrid Venuses and an installation following their evolution in art history from the Paleolithic period to the 19th century, based on existing molds in its wide-ranging collection. A documentary by Vincent Lorca, screened in the gallery's basement, captures Nourry's creative process.

Following its Parisian debut, "Venus" will travel to the Paul Éluard Museum in Saint-Denis from March to September 2025, forming a link with Nourry's 108 "Vénus Dionysiennes" public commission referencing history's earliest representations of women, which will be permanently installed in 2026 at the new Kengo Kuma-designed [Saint-Denis – Pleyel metro station](#) for the [Grand Paris Express](#), under the artistic and cultural direction of José-Manuel Gonçalves with the [Centquatre](#) public cultural center in Paris and Eva Albarran & Co. agency.

These ancient and contemporary Venuses serve as a powerful reminder that, despite their diverse forms, origins and the varied hues of the clay that shape them, we are all born from the same earth – and to the earth, we will one day return. Alongside the exhibition is the release of Nourry's new monograph, *Corpus*, a 250-page bilingual French/English volume showcasing striking visuals of her work, a conversation with Catherine Grenier and a foreword by George Lucas. A book signing will take place at Templon gallery (28 rue du Grenier-Saint-Lazare, 75003 Paris) on February 13, 2025 at 6pm. Nourry opens up about her creative process.



Render of Prune Nourry's permanent installation at Saint-Denis – Pleyel metro station for the Grand Paris Express PHOTO COURTESY OF PRUNE NOURRY STUDIO

Do you have a clear idea of what an artwork will look like from the beginning, or do you follow the trail to see where it leads?

It really depends. I never really make drawings. I'm more in my head, having a 3-D image of sculptures, but for larger projects, it's always the fact of getting to that place. It can be a real place, it can be a country, it can be a city, it can be an actual studio, a craftsman to work with or it can be an imaginary place, but the fact of going there and being in action, and action brings action, so I would say it's all about the process. You never know exactly where you're going to arrive before you do the whole journey.

In 2016, you were diagnosed with breast cancer and you started filming a documentary that would become *Serendipity*. Was it a conscious act to start filming or a way to be in action?

Creativity, finally, and art, it's all about the process, so most of the time, you don't know where it's going to lead you. You just start doing things and then you see, and it's about the people you meet along the way that feeds your creativity, it's about whatever signs you read that finally were always there. For that project, serendipity was the key word because in fact I was kind of collecting during the process of having surgery, having all the medical treatments. I started to collect images, videos, photos, but I realized little by little that it had so many links with all the projects I had done before. I was just collecting these images because filming was leading me to be proactive, to be in action, and the fact of saying "action" to myself, while I was pressing "Rec" on the camera, was helping me also to create a bond with all the nurses and the doctors because they weren't used to that, so suddenly it was turning all this sad situation into a game, exchange, fun, something a bit outside the box, for them and for me.



Prune Nourry, *Vénus (Allumata)*, 2024, sculpture with earthenware pots, 29 1/2 x 7 x 7 3/4 in. PHOTO COURTESY OF TEMPLON

You went from being an anthropologist, from creating from the outside and from people that you met to becoming the subject of your art. How difficult was it for you to accept that?

It was more than hard because normally, I was the one filming and I was interested in the subjects in front of me. I didn't have the impression I was talking about myself, even if all the projects I've been working on are still inside me because I wouldn't work on them if they didn't resonate in a very strong way, but I felt like an anthropologist or a sociologist, looking with a kind of objectivity, where in fact, the cancer made me realize that an artist cannot be absolutely objective. You are subjective because you transform, digest whatever happens to you, whatever you see, whatever you feel, whatever you understand from the world, you digest it and you transform it to get it out of you and offer it to others to then appropriate it with their own eyes. So it's really a kind of transfer: you see something, you feel something and you get it inside you, then you get it out, and you give it to others. And they take it inside themselves and they digest it and they will pass it on. But to me, art is that kind of exchange; it's very strong, it's very important.

What advice would you give to someone who is trying to use catharsis in their creative journey?

For me, it's the same idea of music. It's how, when you have a question in front of you, and you don't know how to answer it, get back to your inner string and see how it resonates. If it sounds clear, if it sounds right, if that voice inside you sounds like the right one, that means you have the answer.



Prune Nourry in the Saint-Denis studio in 2024 · PHOTO ELEA-JEANNE SCHMITTER