

## **OTHILIA VERDURMEN, from monumental myths to human sculptures and touchable art print**

*"I have been working as an autonomous artist for thirty years and my whole life I was busy with space-filling installations, made from mixed materials (including textiles, steel, plastic, knitted copper wire, felt) that convey a story through a structure in scenes. The sculpture, soundscape, light and film enter into a merger in such an installation and create a landscape, an alienating world. The most famous is the Fire Bird/ Phoenix that has been exhibited in the Groninger Museum in 2011. Phoenix is an installation based on a myth about the indestructibility of life and the mystery of death, the rise from the ashes. This was followed by a second multimedia light artwork Penelope and Odysseus, which I exhibited in Rijksmuseum Twenthe/TwentseWelle in 2016".*

### **A new challenge**

My new line focuses on primal mass. In my development as an artist that is a big revolution. While I strived earlier that the story was enveloping in soundscapes, monumentality and lighting sequences, I am looking for the story to be put together in a human sculpture.

I am looking for abstraction and freedom in my sculptures. Although I loved the alienating worlds a lot, the world in which I changed museum rooms, I can still embrace my new development as a challenging fate.

A characteristic of material art is the struggle, the compact dance with gravity. A form seems to live from the inside, if the forces keep each other in balance and they can bear their own weight.

It is precisely the softer materials that constantly give you a challenge. All art is ultimately about the big themes, love, loss, death and hope. Similarly about our fears and desires. I would like to make the world a little more beautiful.

### **Making myths tangible and experienced**

"When I was young I was attracted to magical stories of primitive cultures. I saw in them a symbolic way of depicting and expressing which stages a life runs in reaching maturity and fulfillment.

It fascinated me that the stories made similar themes around the world accessible in refined sculptures, without wanting to be logical.

There is room for the inexplicable, because the myth remains consistent in its symbolic language, which means that her revelations can be very profound, depending on the person who stands with it.

Myths became an inexhaustible source for me, which took me richly on a journey through what moves the human soul. As an artist I wanted to graft my work on myths and try to make them tangible and experienced. I wanted to make a world in which you could feel something of this wealth with others.

We share it with each other, because the stages you move through are equal to every person. They are only reflected in other sculptures.

Myths are therefore the underground nerve frame that connects us in the middle of the beating heart of life. I saw a lot of value in the wondering way with which a child regards the world and I thought about how an adult could add something to it and how I could do that through my art projects.

My initiative for the projects meant that I needed a long period of time to deepen a theme as thoroughly as possible. I was looking for a subject that could fascinate me deeply. Events from my personal life were so widened and widened in universal subjects from mythology. The deeper the concentration was, the richer the harvest for the project.

### **From three and two-dimensional works**

All my life I have focused on three-dimensional monumental work. While I remember that I have always done everything to avoid the flat surface or the straight line. Now, however, I discovered that my obsession for spatiality no longer bothered me at all when I expressed myself in a two-dimensional surface.

There were worlds on Gobelins (Wall Velvets) and again with touchable materials. It is actually as if you are surrounded by a skin and you are in an organ. And so I can say that I was always interested in the inner landscape and I wanted to touch.

The richness of the myths and my aim to get them as close as possible to this time and among people, has challenged me to look for different materials and develop myself all my life. Just as the myth is a mirror that makes you see something else at varying moments, depending on your own development.

### **The importance of format**

The format of a sculpture is very important. Walking around it creates a poem of light changes and change that thrills. A journey from sculpture to sculpture to suddenly get lost in forgotten stories and find what was lost. The size ensures that it is impossible to visually contain the image at one glance and thus has the promise of an adventure. In my development as an artist that is a big change.

While I strived before that the story was enveloping in sound, monumentality and lighting sequence to grow into a common experience, I am looking for the story in a sculpture and to leave it to visual interaction.

The value of the sculpture is in its interaction with the viewer and the quiet life flows and looks for her run naturally in the person who wants to open up.

Here and there, a large sculpture will stand alone and give you a glimpse into the soul. Here and there I am looking for the tension between poles and you will be pulled into sculptures of intimacy.

### **Sculptures made mixed materials**

My material, a kind of paper pulp mixed with glue, amongst others, feels like bread dough. A primordial substance. The process to edit it has the property that requires long-term hand and skin contact, kneading and shapes, hardening and adding again before a more solid form is created.

This takes a lot of time to grow an image. I have to look for that life with every hand movement, which later shows that the encounters with the light and the surface are full of excitement and questions.

The material is really a choice, because it gives me the opportunity to go through various sensations. First it is malleable and I have to approach it physically through many hand movements. It has unpredictable moisture outputs, so that it continues to ask for hand contact.

Then, after it has hardened, it can be sanded and planed, forming from outside can begin.

A sculpture is therefore never finished, but I think that is good because working on it strengthens the expression. The longer I spent time with the image, live with it, the more life gets into it so that it can resonate with others."