

WANG KEPING

Metamorphoses

January 15 - March 12, 2022

91, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, 75008 - Paris



Si près deux cents ans, 2019
 Wood carving / Cypress, 210 x 110 x 50 cm (82^{11/16} x 43^{5/16} x 19^{11/16} in.)
 Photo credit: Aline WANG
 Courtesy of the artist and the Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is delighted to present Chinese artist Wang Keping's work, at its rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré location for the first time. He had previously been the subject of two solo exhibitions, in Paris and Brussels, in 2018.

Concurrently, Flammarion editions will publish an important monograph about Wang Keping. In this volume, curator Virginie Perdrisot-Cassan and artist Ai Weiwei retrace the artistic journey of an artist who was, in 1979, a founding member of the "Stars" movement, before becoming the author of a body of work that is considered today to be a major contribution to contemporary sculpture.

Metamorphoses, Wang Keping's site-specific exhibition, unveils the artist's most recent body of work: a group of eight majestic, fire-patinated cypress-wood sculptures. This never-before-seen corpus is the product of three years of work, marking a creative renewal in the life of the 73-year-old sculptor, since moving to his Vendée studio in the spring of 2019.

Located between the beaches of the Atlantic Ocean and the national forest of Longeville, an old naval warehouse has been transformed into a creative hearth, allowing Wang Keping to work on a new scale and to carve his sculptures out of very large logs – century-old cypress and oak trees – in a hand-to-hand struggle, where human manipulation is measured up against the power of nature.

A product of this frontality, *Cybèle à la robe*, placed in the center of the gallery, offers us the metamorphosis of a tortuous tree that sets itself in motion in order to become a grandiose feminine body. Walking around it, we discover the different facets of this imposing effigy, sculpted in the round, revealing a face's expressiveness, a silhouette's determination, the grace of a chignon, the elegance of a kimono. The woman reveals the sculptor's virtuosity, his ability to transform a tree's crevices, remnants of shoots and branches, into sumptuous details evoking the draped peploses of ancient sculpture. Next to it, the *Femme-Cyclope* stares at us with its single, mirror-glossy eye, emitting an identical telluric presence.

At the back of the gallery, against a white wall, *Si près deux cents ans*, depicts the lithe hermaphrodite body of two lovers who have fused with each other, the rich organic material of the centenary cypress fleshing out the embrace of the woman and man, who seems to disappear within the breast of his lover. In this display of the perennity of love, the couple generates a diffuse emotion.

Sculpted in high relief, *Léda et le Cygne* proposes another embrace. The artist's predilection for birds is present here in the form of a graceful swan, which evokes Jupiter transforming in order to be with his mistress. As in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the alluringly writhing, long-necked animal exudes eroticism. The artist, however, remains in the realm of evocation with this poetic vision that shows us, somewhat loosely, the metamorphosis of the tree into swan then of the swan into man.

A nurturing woman, the noble *Pomone*, whose name pays homage to Maillol, resembles a goddess of seasons. With her apple as headdress, she conjures up the fertility of nature, while, on either side of the gallery, *L'Origine du monde*, *Maternité* and *Femme Ping*, with their tall, totem-like silhouettes, illustrate the more primitive dimension of Wang Keping's work, his ceaselessly renewed quest for simplicity and purity.

“Wang Keping’s sculptures are intimately linked to his own body and his instinct. His inspiration is unrelated to his education,” indicates Ai Weiwei in the preface of the new Wang Keping monograph, published by Flammarion . “He uses the natural and original form of primitive materials to create an oeuvre that defies classification, that expresses his subconscious under an apparent resemblance, and that gives free rein to his indelible erotic imagination. The brutality of his works is evident. In the domain of sculpture-carving, sculptors that hold a candle to Wang Keping are few and far between. His work is integral and autonomous. He has created his own system.”

The ultimate testimony of this is the gallery of powerful women created by the sculptor, who has reached artistic maturity and has been invited to exhibit in the gardens of the Musée Rodin (spring 2022) and at the Musée Guimet (Carte Blanche, fall-winter 2022-2023).

¹ BUFFARD, Anne-Laure, PERDRISOT-CASSAN, Virginie et WANG, Aline, *Wang Keping*, Paris, Flammarion, 2021.

Born in 1949, near Beijing, Wang Keping lives and works in Paris (France).

Wang Keping’s French and international career has been marked by important solo institutional exhibitions and monumental installations. In 1989, the Asia University Museum of Modern Art in Taichung (Taiwan) gave him his first solo exhibition; followed, in 1990, by the Chinese Modern Art Center of Osaka (Japan); then, in 1993, by the Aidekman Art Center in Boston (USA); in 1994, by the Museum für Kunsthandwerk in Frankfurt (Germany); in 1997, by the HKUST Center for Arts in Hong Kong (China) and the He Xiangning Art Museum in Shenzhen (China); in 2008, by the Musée d’art asiatique in Nice (France); in 2009, by the He Xiangning Art Museum in Shenzhen (China); in 2010, by the Musée Zadkine in Paris (France). In 2013, the Ullens Center for Contemporary Arts (UCCA, Beijing) hosted his first major retrospective in China. In 2018, he installed *LOLO*, a monumental sculpture, during the inauguration of the Fondation Carmignac in Porquerolles (France); in 2020, he was exhibited at the Domaine de Chaumont-sur-Loire (France); in 2021, Wang Keping realized for the Domaine des Étangs in Massignac (France) a sculpture measuring over four meters tall, *la Vénus de l’Étang*.

In 2022, Wang Keping will have a particularly busy year, with the publication of an important monograph, and a solo exhibition at the Musée Rodin in Paris (France) followed by a Carte Blanche at the Musée Guimet in Paris (France).

Wang Keping has also been invited to take part in numerous, significant group exhibitions, many of which have underlined the importance of his work in the history of modern and contemporary art. These include shows held: in 1983, at the Brooklyn Museum (USA); in 1990, at the Chapelle Saint-Louis de la Salpêtrière, in Paris (France); in 1996, at the Centre Pompidou, in Paris (France); in 1998, at the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart (Germany); in 1999, at the Modern Art Museum in Chengdu (China); in 2001, at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (United Kingdom); in 2005, at the Kunstmuseum in Bern (Switzerland); in 2007, at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, in Copenhagen (Denmark); in 2008, at the Today Art Museum in Beijing (China), and at the Musée Maillol, in Paris (France); in 2011, at the China Institute of New York (USA) and at the Musée Cernuschi in Paris (France); in 2013, at the Asia Society, in Hong Kong (China); in 2016, at the Biennale of Busan (South Korea), at the M+ in Hong Kong (China) and at the Centre d’Art et de Nature du Domaine de Chaumont-sur-Loire (France) where his monumental sculptures were exhibited; and more recently, in 2019, at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (United Kingdom). In 2021, some of Wang Keping’s historic works will be exhibited to celebrate the inauguration of the new M+ Museum in Hong Kong.

Wang Keping’s works are held in numerous, internationally renowned private and public collections including, in France, the Centre Pompidou and the Musée Cernuschi (Paris), the Centre d’Art et de Nature du Domaine de Chaumont-sur-Loire, the collections of the City of Paris and those of the Seine-Saint-Denis department; in the United Kingdom, the Ashmolean Museum (Oxford); in the United States, the Aidekman Art Center (Boston); in China, the M+ Museum (Hong Kong) and the He Xiangning Art Museum (Shenzhen); in Taiwan, the Museum of Modern Art (Taichung); in Japan, the Museum of Asian Contemporary Art (Osaka); and in South Korea, the Olympic Sculpture Park (Seoul). In 2016, twenty-seven years after the Centre Pompidou exhibited *Silence*, Wang Keping’s work, titled *Étreinte*, was acquired by the Musée d’art Moderne/Centre Pompidou thanks to the generosity of its International Circle Global members.

Wang Keping has been represented by Galerie Nathalie Obadia Paris/Brussels, since 2017.



Cybèle à la robe, 2019
Wood carving / Cypress, 185 x 100 x 110 cm (72 7/8 x 39 3/8 x 43 5/16 in.)
Photo credit : Aline WANG Courtesy of the artist and the Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

Paris Saint-Honoré

Mickalene Thomas
Beyond the Pleasure Principle
October 7 - December 18, 2021

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri

Laura Henno
Radical Devotion
November 11 - December 31, 2021

Brussels

Shahpour Pouyan
Methinks these be devils three
November 6 - December 18, 2021

Sarkis
7 jours 7 nuits
January 5 - January 12, 2022

Agnès Varda
*Calder, Richier, Schlegel, Székely
par Agnès Varda*
January 14 - March 5, 2022

Patrick Faigenbaum
Photographies, 1974 - 2020
January 18 - March 5, 2022

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