

Lou-Brice Léonard is a sculptor and filmmaker. He was born in Versailles in France in 1980 and now lives and works in Paris.

He studied cinema and then aesthetic art at the Sorbonne University in Paris. Since 1998 he has directed several short film which have often received festival acclaim. These include "Remains" in 2005 and "Every day is a small life" in 2014, both of which were released worldwide and received many awards (70 festivals in 25 countries). In parallel to his work in the audio-visual field, Lou-Brice Léonard also sculpts fragmented female forms created initially in clay and then in cement and glass. As a teenager, Lou-Brice spent much of his time visiting the national museums in Paris to observe and recreate ancient sculptures. This allowed him to develop a very precise modeling technique. Subsequently, as a student, he came into contact with the work of contemporary artists such as Giuseppe Penone, which sparked his desire to research the materials themselves. Clay in particular fascinates him as he looks for auto formed features such as those found in minerals in their natural state.

Technique

The model: the first task is to find a model, this is an essential step which can take several weeks. The intention is not to represent real women, as though painting a portrait, nor to portray a perfect body which would be implausible and unrealistic. The challenge therefore is to find a model who radiates powerful sensuality, grace, and energy. If these qualities are present, the sculptor can develop a feminine ideal based on a realistic interpretation of a striking individual.

Modeling: an initial sculpture is made from clay in the traditional way, based on photos of the model (16 photos of the body through 360 degrees). This step, the most arduous, takes between 150 hours and 200 hours.

Molding: a plaster mold is made from the baked clay sculpture. Depending on the pose, the molds can be composed of 5 to 40 sections and can take up to one month of work.

Casting: this is the shortest stage (one to two days), but also the most delicate. The challenge is to convey visual fragility in a sculpture that is made from very robust materials.

Naming: Each sculpture bears the name of an ancient goddess Ishtar, Hathor, Nut, Venus...

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Artistic Approach

Since 2002, Lou-Brice Léonard has been working with clay to exploit its retractable drying property, which allows him to produce natural tears. The sculptures are then finally sanded; leaving only a body that appears to emerge from the material itself, without a trace of the sculpture's hand.

In 2013, he began experimenting with cement and glass, materials that have always conveyed to him notions of hardness and of cold, reflecting our dehumanized and impersonal society. According to the artist, our bodies experience the omnipresence of concrete and glass, relentless and inert, as a form of aggression. He feels the need to transform these substances by giving them sensitivity, sensuality and femininity. He discovered how to trace their mineral origins so that glass becomes quartz crystal again and cement changes back to limestone ready to receive the imprint of living things...this process of restoration introduces humanity, gentleness and grace to materials that we experience as a form of daily violence. Violence that the artist attributes to male domination.

For many tens of thousands of years in prehistoric and ancient times gods were female rather than male. Male domination wiped out the ancient goddesses. However, these goddesses still live on in our collective unconsciousness, and it is often artists who diligently represent, if not the goddesses, at least a feminine ideal, a sovereign femininity. The sculptor Lou-Brice Léonard decided to give them a presence using the emblematic materials of our time. This incarnation remains somewhat ethereal, in other words fragmented, fragile, incomplete, ephemeral ... And it is precisely this ephemeral quality that the artist is striving to capture.

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