

Nadine VERGUES

The Whole Story...



«Le Moi et le Ça»

# Sommaire

Preface -	5
A sensational turn of events -	6
Poetic ? Political ! -	9
Projects and Wishes -	11
Dates and places -	18



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*Everything that has sense can be written in history.  
Nothing has more sense than the life and works of Nadine Vergues.*



*Début de vie à l'atelier*

## Preface

She is at one with the earth. She shares the authenticity, simplicity, sincerity, and wisdom of rural people. Her parents worked with materials and created containers which 'enveloped' people: her father, who was a carpenter, built the wooden framework of houses, and her mother made clothes and knitted. Nadine Vergues also uses materials, but she creates the contents which emerge inside; supple materials rather like her mother used, and in turn, shapes them with tools used by her father. But what is this substance like? It's not a noble substance she would have to venerate. Oh no! It's a waste material with no shape, with which she alone is able to detect the soul and take on the challenge. Challenges are her speciality. In her mind, nothing is ever a lost cause; she knows from experience.

Being a rebellious child, education did not suit her. But Eliane Beaupuy-Manciet, holder of the 'Grand Prix de Rome' and headmistress of the School of Fine Arts in Sète, noticed her talent when she was only sixteen. So Nadine eagerly set to work. After Sète she went to the School of Fine arts in Toulouse. Later, life was going to present other challenges, which she always met with success. There is so much to do for other people, so much to do for children. So she decided she was going to look after those who had been wounded by life or that society had rejected, the ones who ultimately were to become foster children. Putting her artistic life aside, she became a foster parent, but her inner pursuit remained.

## A sensational turn of events

One day, on a beautiful day, a windy day, a rainy day, her whole life was to be changed by a strange encounter - in the middle of a pile of industrial rubbish!

"One day, by chance", she says, "I came across a piece of industrial felt, the stuff you use, among other things, to insulate cars. This discovery came as a shock, and I realized that day that I was to be a sculptor. All I had to do was to find out how to use this rough, rudimentary substance. It was love at first sight. I developed a new vocabulary and a technique. Adapting the tools that are usually used for iron and wood, a soldering iron became my right hand. I would burn, distort and corrode the felt, mistreat and slash it, and using automatic gestures I would create a story. Since then, inhabited by an irrepressible frenzy of creation, I have worked tirelessly. Today, this substance holds no secrets to me; the war is no longer between the two of us, we are allied for the best. The war is now against time and I have to catch up."



*«Métamorphes» installation variable de plusieurs pièces de taille humaine*



*«Lampedusa», novembre 2013*

## Poetic ? Political !

Nadine Vergues sees what other people don't see. Where others see an object, trash, dirt or depression, she sees life, potential, hope. From out of the rubbish she makes ghostly beings emerge, who tell of their suffering, solitude, revolt, sharing and love. She gives a voice to armies of humans who have been reduced to silence. Her work is eminently political, she fights against misguided beliefs and clichés. It's impossible to tie her down or give her a label. She uses textiles, yes, but industrial textiles, and moulds them with a welder's tools. Her sculptures are imposing and yet light. Light? Yes, but not fragile, and also resistant in every sense of the term, for they will resist to fashion, to time, and to the transience of a moment.

"Every day I dig deep into my heart," says Nadine. "I am profoundly sincere in every act and each item I make, without being deceitful or condescending to anyone or to anything. I am free and authentic."

Nadine Vergue's creation expresses the power which is buried in the hearts of people, the revolt of the excluded and degraded who use their hands and creative energy to express themselves. It's not surprising that people in other continents are interested in her work and that her sculptures are to be sent abroad; they speak to the universal soul and the heart of humanity.



*«Le Sang des Femmes», pièce n°3 de la série Féminités,  
sculpture 160 cm*

## Nadine Vergues and her works of art. Projects and Wishes

The huge workshop in the Aveyron is ever expanding with imposing works of art which are going to be sent to exhibitions all over the world. Nadine Vergues, who exposes her works by means of grand artistic scenes, would also like them to interact with performing arts, creating scenery for ballet, theatre and perhaps even operatic theatre. Who knows, art gallery managers or film directors may become fascinated by the evocative power and modernity of her work, and seduced by this sturdy, light, and easily transportable material.





«Les effacés», 80 cm x 80 cm



«Edmond», 80 cm x 70 cm



«Autoportrait à l'oiseau», hauteur 60 cm

## In the beginning

In the beginning there was childhood and children's drawings, presenting huge round heads, or even impossible square shapes, stuck on to unstructured bodies with unfinished limbs, thrown into movement on an undefined page where they play with their dreams.

These felt figures are rather like children's drawings, so why do we have this solemn feeling when we look at them? Now the children have grown up and become kings or dancers. A few of them smile, others have surreptitiously taken up arms against the adult world. Here we can see one, two or three women who have broken their silence with a gun, for who could guess that this long thin protrusion clasped between the curved shape of crossed arms is in fact a weapon? Is Nadine Vergues, with her fine blond features, conscious of the powerful impact she has, and the impossibility of pigeon-holing her work? Disregarding the soft femininity of cloth, she gets

hold of a piece of rough, industrial felt, cuts and burns it with a soldering iron and makes holes in it with a thermic paint stripper. Then she melts a coloured plastic supermarket bag over it by using a clothes iron with the same precision as the stroke of a paintbrush. The overall effect leads us to believe that the figure has been painted. With the minute detail of a lace-maker, she brings these faces and bodies to life by embroidering here and there a purple eye, a smiling V of an orange mouth, or sews on a collar using a beautiful red-ochre coloured thread like that of a tattoo, or creates the effect of a shadow slanting along the body from the head. When the light is reflected on these statues, it brings out the embossed patterns of the burns, which sometimes form a lock of curly hair sticking out of the raw wool, or may give the effect of a crumbling facade. The mixing of different materials gives a greater dimension to the colours. Here we can see the embroidery forming waves of tiny stitches, cross stitches and long straight ones. Opposition is omnipresent; hard



«Coudre et Recoudre», hauteur 50 cm

and soft, abstract and real, feminine and masculine. These enigmatically opposed figures who have escaped from their childhood unnerve you and yet make you feel at ease, leaving the third dimension invisible. This third dimension may be a happy, carefree world and serious at the same time, where a child's memory is confronted by the adult mind. Here again, we may be able to detect a melted bead of plastic, like a lump of black earth, forming vague portraits. Other sculptures have the pure lines of a Renaissance sketch, or represent a Pompeian veiled face, whereas these ghostly hallucinating figures remind us of the ink drawings of a drugged Michaux, showing a slight smile or with frightfully serene faces with no outlines. So many different faces of men and women, whom we know nothing about, who come back to our memories from nowhere as if in a dream.

Now look at these statues. The black tribe has travelled far, from the beginning of time. There are three big figures, bigger than us, and six little ones. Their

long supple bodies with no arms or legs, narrow out to form necks which are mounted by heads with no skulls, looking rather like chalices. The bodies are animated by opposing movements, like human sponges that the wind could move in all directions. At the base, three formless beings have returned to their original state; seed, foetus, amoeba or ectoplasm.

Here are other statues, their hole-ridden bodies are like wire meshing, letting through the light giving an effect of transparency, toying with one's imagination as to what could be behind. Yet there is no doubt whatsoever that these bodies belong to humanity. They are riveted to the ground with their heads in the clouds. They have the will to go forth, indulging in everything that is alive, patiently welded one to one like a string of words narrating a love story.

*Geneviève Brun*  
*Exhibition "Le Vieux Moulin" Millau,*  
*June 2010*



«Bellicorne», tâches et encres, série



«Quatre encres de Chine sur zinc oxydé», 25 cm x 100 cm / pièce

## Her life is a Magnificat

She said 'yes' to living on a bare hillside on the edge of 'The Grand Causse'; she turned it into a warm, welcoming place full of life which some would call a little paradise. She said 'yes' to restoring an old wind-beaten sheep shed, forgotten by men, forgotten by time, and she turned it into an amazing bright workshop where there is no time or values.

If you feel tired and stressed, and you are lucky enough to be able to visit this place, you can sense the pacifying sedate souls of the shepherds. They knew how to enjoy each present moment, accepted the fleeting seasons and savoured the fruit of their harvest.

So when she brings in new pieces of felt left over from our industries because they are too small, impaired or simply have been forgotten at the back of a warehouse somewhere, she ushers them like guests, and surrounds them with fine objects of the past which portray the ingenuity, the kindness and the beauty of those who proceeded us. As she glances over them her mind says 'yes', yes to the fostering, yes to hope, yes to life itself.

What a magnificent future she gives to this otherwise rejected material, as she transfigures each piece with the physical, the material, the intellectual and the spiritual. Speedily and yet with great patience, she humbly creates works of art which come out of the depth of everyday life.

Sometimes it takes her a long time to design her creations, but armed with a welding iron, a punching press, a slicer and a thermic paint stripper, she pierces, heats, cuts out, surrounds with threads, sews and unpicks, puts together and separates, like a creature, transforming the rejected felt, using even the end-of-roll left overs. Miracles come forth from her working hands; metamorphoses impossible to classify, sturdy and yet delicate, pictures sculpted into the material which bare the humane message of their creator. While all of these faces respectfully stare at us, they whisper "Choose! Choose your hillside, choose your sheep shed, choose your road, choose your life. If you you take me in, I'll be your guest, the one who delights you all, the one who is grateful."

So if ever you come across one of Nadine's works of art, say, with all the love you feel inside, "Yes!"

*Laetitia Crahay, Ze Art Galerie.*

## Dates and places

### 2016

Cultural Centre of Agen  
in March and April  
Gourdon, a chapel, in May  
ART BUSAN, international Art Fair  
of Seoul, (Korea) in May  
Séance de dédicace,  
galerie Carré d'Artistes de Séoul,  
from 23th to 26th June  
Espace Culturel de Rignac,  
in Juillet and August  
ArtQuercy, Caussade, in August  
Salon Outsider Demin, in August  
Art3f Bruxelles, in September  
Salon d'Automne Paris, in October  
Servian (Aude) in November

### 2015

Les Hivernales de Bonsécours  
L'Usine à Zabou, Evreux in April  
Délires de l'ère Am Arts, Chartres  
Espace Gibert, Lézignan-Corbières in  
June  
Guest at the franco-brazilian week in  
Sao Paulo  
ART BUSAN, international Art Fair of  
Seoul, (Korea)  
Personal exhibition at Yes Art Gallery,  
Belgium  
Art3f Lyon and Montpellier

### 2014

L'Aiguille en Fête with Ze-Art Gallery  
Lille Art Fair with the gallery of Nicole  
Gogart  
Bann'Art Festival of strange art in  
Bannes, Ardèche  
Biennial of Contemporary Art in  
Chateauneuf in Thymerais

### 2013

Lille Art Fair with the gallery of Nicole  
Gogart  
Chateau de Fumel in August  
Selection for Artextures  
Yes Art Gallery in Sint-Idesbald, Belgium  
Espace Culturel, Millau  
Culturel Centre, Rieupeyroux

### 2012

Lille Art Fair with the gallery of Nicole  
Gogart  
BJ Artgallery, Paris in June  
Clavreul Gallery, Paris, in August  
GOGAT Gallery, Aigues-Mortes in  
September  
Art Gent, Belgium with Ze Art Gallery

### 2011

Selection Artextures; itinerant  
exhibitions  
Biennale WTA-Aire in Mexico  
Autres Mathilde in Caen, Calvados  
IRMACC, St Etienne in the Loire  
"Dessiner la dentelle", Calais, Pas de  
Calais  
St-Art, Strasbourg with the Gogart  
Gallery

### 2010

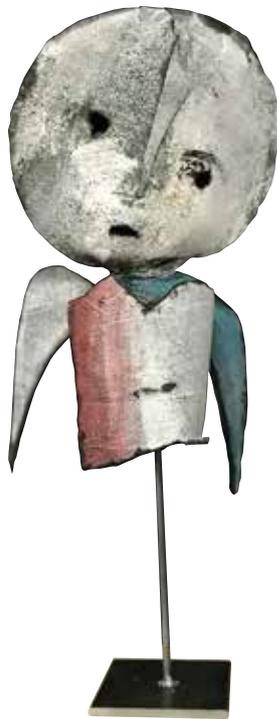
Commande of the Jean Boudou  
Museum  
Personal exhibition at Le Vieu Moulin,  
Millau, Aveyron



«Bata clan», sculpture murale, 190 cm 19



*«Je crois que les œuvres d'art ont cette vocation de lutter contre la mélancolie :  
c'est de là qu'elles viennent et c'est là qu'elles retournent.»*  
Alice FERNEY



*«Envie d'un ange»*



*«Mon canard», hauteur 70 cm*

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