

TEMPLON

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PRUNE NOURRY

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French Artist Prune Nourry to Stage Major Exhibition at Paris's Petit Palais in October.

Arun Kakar

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Portrait of Prune Nourry. © Aurelia Casse. Courtesy of Petit Palais.

Paris museum Petit Palais has invited French artist Prune Nourry to take over its galleries for “Visionaries,” an exhibition opening October 20th and running through January 24, 2027. The show will unfold across the Petit Palais’s permanent collection galleries, its outer esplanade, and its gardens, creating a dialogue between Nourry’s new work and the museum’s holdings.

The exhibition grows out of a year-long research project in which three art historians compiled the writings and photographic portraits of 18 women sculptors from the late 19th and early 20th centuries who have been overlooked by official art history. Among them are Käthe Kollwitz, Nancy Elizabeth Prophet, Hélène Bertaux, Jane Poupelet, Consuelo de Saint-Exupéry, Selma Hortense Burke, Daria Gamsaragan, and Sarah Bernhardt.

Inspired by their work and the strength of their commitment, Nourry sculpted a portrait of each – some 18 new busts ranging from around two to 11 feet in height – working primarily in plaster. The material resonates with the Petit Palais collection, in which nearly 70 percent of sculptures are studio plasters: casts that were never intended for museums, yet have outlasted the bronze versions they document.

The show begins on the museum's forecourt with *Mothership*, a hybrid figure suspended between a pregnant woman and the rusted hull of a ship. Inside the sculpture gallery of the North Pavilion, the eighteen portraits animate the memory of the sculptors they represent. Presented throughout the display are some twenty earlier works from Nourry's "Holy Daughters" and "Venus" series, in scales running from around eight inches to 90 feet, alongside a recurring motif: white marble eyes with black pupils embedded in Nourry's plaster busts and in the pedestals of the museum's own works alike, prompting a visual comparison across the eras the collection spans.



Prune Nourry
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US\$50,000–US\$60,000

The exhibition addresses a structural gap in the Petit Palais's own holdings: of all the works in its collection, barely four percent were made by women, and only four female sculptors are represented.

Born in Paris in 1985, Nourry lives and works between Paris and New York. A graduate in wood sculpture from the École Boulle, she works across sculpture, installation, and performance, combining fieldwork with specialists in genetics, sociology, anthropology and archaeology to develop projects that raise ethical questions about the body, demographic imbalance, and the interdependence of living species.

Clay is the core of Nourry's practice, though she regularly collaborates with craftspeople to explore new materials and techniques. She is perhaps best known for "Terracotta Daughters," an army of sculpted adolescent girls, directly referencing the buried warriors of Xi'an. The works toured Shanghai, Paris, New York, and Mexico City between 2013 and 2015, before being buried in an undisclosed location in China where they await excavation in 2030.

In 2016, Nourry was diagnosed with breast cancer, an experience that redirected her practice inward; her 2019 documentary *Serendipity*, executive produced by Angelina Jolie and Darren Aronofsky, premiered at the Berlinale and opened MoMA's Doc Fortnight festival. She is represented by Galerie Templon. ■



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Arun Kakar is Artsy's senior art market editor focused on explaining and unpacking the commercial art world. Before he joined Artsy in late 2022, he held staff positions at titles including the New Statesman, Spear's Magazine, and Management Today, among others. He holds a BA in philosophy from the University of York and lives in Central London.