

STATEMENTS BY ALAIN KIRILI
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“LIGHTING THE FUSE” AFTER THE APPROPRIATION

After all, I am stranger, I am different
Because I'm interested in art and in its
Entirety, I have the impression I belong
to a tradition. I paint something experienced.

Willem de Kooning

1. My sculpture as a whole in an autobiographical affirmation, an intimate three-dimensional diary: the sculpture “Génération” is a constantly updated catalogue of my work.
2. My sculpture is not nostalgic, but I am guided by tradition. Each work is wrought from the statuary tradition. North America is David Smith. As early as 1965 I knew it was necessary to understand the obstacles he had had to overcome : American Puritanism.
3. The verticality of Giacometti and Barnett Newman, the contrasts of tradition between Julio Gonzalez and David Smith are one of the explanations of my work.
4. To live as a foreigner in New York is to discover that huge ocean of the Reformation, I realize the exact extent of being French. I cannot be assimilated.
The “crystal clear” light of New York provides a new vision of my bronzes “Grande Nudité”; after the gardens of the Rodin Museum in Paris they have gone to Fifth Avenue. This light is a blade which sharpens the roundness of the contours. For Matisse it is the light of the Italian primitives, for me it is that of a hymn to verticality, to life: an energy, a breath, an art of living. Matisse's remark comes to mind : “People will say I flatter the Americans, as it was said that I let my beard grow to please the Russians”.
5. There's a kind of bliss in no longer being in the pioneering period of abstract sculpture. Today I am assuming a heritage which gives me a non-militant ease: I can switch subjectively from the modeled to the constructed, from sculpture in the round to assemblage. I am discovering a splendid space of liberty.
6. Modeling is the most subjective form of art. The earth made flesh can be felt like a body. The baked clay has a moving tenderness. I like communicating

- the sensations of a living model in the studio. This presence is the essential condition for life in my sculptures. No photographic reproduction can replace it. It's precisely because I am abstract, not in the usual sense, that the presence of the living model as a dialogue is primordial in my work. De Kooning says that the flesh was the reason oil painting was invented. The flesh was equally what made us want to model clay and forge metal.
7. I have a passion for femininity and grace: "Lighting the fuse" after the appropriation.
 8. I like variety but not eclecticism, it's a question of personal implication in the work. Derision, morbidity, parody, what a bore! That's all there is. So I am unclassifiable recalcitrant being in an age heading towards an asexual, uniform world.
 9. My sculptures are not object but presences, living bodies. Since 1972, I have gradually come to realize that my work can be looked at rhythm from all angles. This is not a naturalistic or anthropomorphic structure. It's an order of the subconscious linked to the rhythm of my impulsive output. The attack is frontal, quick, and aggressive, and is spread around the frame. I am therefore restoring the marvelous specificity of the art of sculpture: an absolute need of convolution about the work to perceive all its effects. I am a sculptor of statues.
 10. Very young, I was warned: "Kirili, don't smile, it's not credible in the art world". It was in Paris though, where seriousness attempts to crush everything.
 11. Although on one is interested in it anymore, sexuality and art is the fundamental question at the source of my creation. Our age prefers commentaries, concepts, sociologism, the immaterial, chastity, even a romantic death delirium! Anything but incarnation, pleasure. I won't be forgiven for that. Fine !
I escape in our cathedrals, in Rome, India, to salute the great liturgies which offer us the greatest art. Discovering the Hindu yoni / lingam sculptures was a wonderful thing, an encouragement. Sivaism has taught me that a plinth is a female organ which requires a lingam to become God. The femininity and virility of Sivan sculpture is worshipped by 700 million believers. Here is a new chapter for Georges Bataille's book " Les larmes d'Eros" – There is no Thanatos in my sculpture.
 12. The 18th Century is present in my work. My clay pieces are ecstatic, frivolous. To soothe the body through pleasure is sculpture's challenge to seriousness and boredom. Plaster is provocatively, mischievously white, thanks to its shivers of color. It is French. I have sculpted what can only be said in the French language, which is the erotic reference condemned today by a violently repressive worldwide consensus.
 13. My forged aluminum pieces, burnt and coal-blackened are bellowing gothic explosions. The hammered iron is given a rhythm by sensually embossing the metal into soft meditative signs, akin sometimes to processions of

- mouners (?). Deep down I am neither modern nor contemporary. I sail freely in time. According to my mood and the need I feel, I meet Sluter, Fragonard, Carpeaux or Rodin. I feel no biological restraint. Historical mockery and amnesia belong to civilizations which are breaking away from traditions, or rejecting it, which usually ends up in cynicism, in confusion of forms, in total darkness. At such a time we are from Beaudelaire's "Phares" and we enter a modern barbarity which takes over in art. Daring to think against it condemns one to solitude.
14. "Who is afraid of verticality?" is the question raised as a condition of my survival. And my answer is in my work and the title of a sculpture by David Smith : "Bye Bye, Puritan landscape".
 15. As has been ably shown by Robert Rosenblum, a great art stream born of aesthetic of the sublime is linked to a northern romantic tradition. The notions of space, the privileged place, and nature were central in the heroic age of Abstract Expressionism. Heroic because it was the only period in American art which can compete with the great Europeans of the 20th Century. Newman's title "Vir Heroicus Sublimis" sums that up well. I'll never forget the conflict he had with Panofsky, as Newman defines well the freedom and integrity of the artist faced with the constant arrogance of art historians who are ready to deride a great artist for a false problem of translation: the serious minds have no idea of the importance of work such as Newman's. All that remains true today. I want absolute experience to be sublimely incarnate and not, as Newman said : "To me, the sense of place has not only a mystery but has that sense of metaphysical fact". In fact, I want to bring the sublime back to the Greeks and Dionysos.
 16. I am convinced that it is through the aesthetic and moral values of the French tradition that art will be relieved of its yoke of seriousness and derision. I am for "luxe, calme et volupté". I will conclude with the Sade's phrase: " And be sure I am your ever non-humble, non-obedient, non-servant, in other words your friend".

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