

IRINA RASQUINET
VALEUR REFUGE

Exhibition: April 1 to June 1, 2021



Irina Rasquinet
Mères veilleuses, 2021
Fiberglass and epoxy paint
145 x ø50 cm et 83 x ø30 cm x 2

For the inaugural exhibition of the Virginie Louvet gallery's new showroom, on 34 rue de Penthièvre in the 8th arrondissement of Paris, Irina Rasquinet presents "Valeur refuge", in which she stays true to her passion for word play, as she confronts the paradoxes of our crumbling world through language. The title's ambiguous word association epitomizes her poetic work, alluding to both the quantitative aspect of finance and a hidden place in the mountain where a tormented human soul may find appeasement.

The artist's installations and sculptures—from her mother lodes to golden leads, an amber sun, a rhinestoned heart made of earth, small parts of a doll's china tea set stacked together—echo each other with fantasy and passion. While Nature struggles and suffers, light fully recovers its power as it reflects on a constellation of objects covered in gold, fiberglass, and crystals. Like a child mixing potions and building treehouses, Irina Rasquinet never stops dreaming. As she embraces her imagination, she breathes life into decaying elements and items she assembles, providing strength to her audience.

While an unprecedented pandemic resonates like a call to order and puts humanity to the test, we turn back to Nature as the source of life, a way for salvation, while the big cities are on lockdown. Raised in a Russian region divided by conflicts and dialects, Irina countered the material void of her childhood, deprived of toys and color, by finding refuge in Nature. Through her works, the Chechnya-born artist seeks to rediscover a form of innocence she was denied and refuses to grow up and lose her innate sense of wonder.

Her creative inspiration? Fragile pieces, fragments of very poor material she collects and covers to offer them a new destiny that defies time. Like the leafless wintry boughs thrown into the salt mines of Salzburg that arise to the surface covered in blazing crystals, Irina reignites dead branches, bringing them back to life. But unlike Stendhal's analogy, the twigs she collected after a storm in December 1999, right after leaving her homeland, never lose their crystals. They are reborn, mighty and sacred, taking their revenge on the past.

Layer after layer, Irina heals the wounds and aches of the past, creating protective pieces, such as her *Mères Veilleuses*, watchful matryoshkas with Japanese lines, covered in blue lacquer, or *Féminité du bois*. A nod to the caduceus, an attribute of the Greek god Hermes, this 2.8m high metal statue shows the dance of planets twirling to the sound of drums played by Siberian shamans, in communion with the universe. And as one cannot move forward without love, the artist carves and fixes hearts with a sense of urgency, like in her spectacular rugged magma, suspended between heaven and earth, that she wrapped in vines—a reference to the rings of Saturn that remind us of its solitary gravitation.

With alternating gravity and lightheartedness, Irina Rasquinet's world makes her audience look within themselves and shows us how, by reconnecting with the earth, we can rise to a place of thoughtfulness and sensibility.

Pauline Weber

Born in 1974 in Chechnya, Irina Rasquinet lives and works in Paris.

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