

For the most part of his artistic career, Romain Langlois studied human anatomy in order to reflect it in his work. In recent years, however, he turned to nature, dedicating his sculptures not just to its forms, but to its complex processes as well. Indeed, the versatile talent of this French artist lies in his ability to bind substance and reality, evoking the beauty of the world around us in an almost alchemist manner. Whether it's bronze, crystal, silver, stone, bismuth or wood, his sculpture employs materials that reveal the inner forces of elements like boulders, branches, trunks, rocks; luring us in to discover their secret life, their power, existence, emotion. Since 2013, Romain Langlois has also been collaborating with Eric Papon, a master of a rare process of crystallization of calcium carbonate called petrification, and together they have given life to breathtaking pieces at Les Fontaines pétrifiantes de Saint-Nectaire in France. This operation takes months and constant observation by the two craftsmen, resulting in extraordinary forms, shapes, colors that would otherwise take thousands of years for nature to create. In his interview for Widewalls, Romain Langlois talks about this intriguing process, his inspiration and the future of his mesmerizing sculpture.



Romain Langlois – Space Attraction, 2015

Romain Langlois – Becoming an Artist

Widewalls: It is impressive, what you managed to achieve learning to make art by yourself. Were there any moments you wished you enrolled for an artistic training? How challenging was it to do it on your own?

Romain Langlois: The art of sculpture is hundreds even thousands of years old. The different sculptures that have survived are proof and echoes of representations and beliefs of the different societies which produced them. Also each and every age has produced its masters. To be self taught is to recognize this heritage and to recognize that which constitutes the substance of this practice: to bestow upon a slab of bronze or stone a latent energy capable of resonating for centuries and millennia. This is one of the teachings of sculpture.

Now as far as going about it alone is concerned that requires you to exercise your own critical point of view, and a strong will to work tirelessly and to learn, learn ever relearning. That's how the memory and the knowledge of the gesture are instilled.

To be self taught is also to teach your own body to 'recognize', to establish a delicate connection towards the material and about the representation. Consequently it is a long and laborious process during which every setback is very much a learning experience. You can't put a price on that. The masters I have great esteem for no longer teach; you'll sometimes find one up in the mountains sculpting a few metamorphic rocks... Sculpture is an art which only happens when the body falls in line between the subject and the substance. And in this regard I feel I've followed the most wonderful of paths.

Widewalls: From sculpting faces and human bodies, you turned to portraying nature and its elements. Did they prove to be more satisfying, more interesting?

RL: Ultimately what I am looking for is to reveal the 'quintessence' of human being. I've understood that to achieve this it's not always enough just to put the human being at the centre of the representation. At times we need to look at what is going on around the subject, in his near environment. For there we find a human being's mirror, something that by reciprocity and interdependence he is nurturing with nature.

My sculptures only tell, reveal. In themselves they're of little importance. What's interesting to me is the effect that they generate, because belonging to our reality is brought to the fore in moments of doubt. What I show in rocks for example also reveals a part of our very substance. By a role of interdependence, what impacts one thing manifest itself in another.