

GHYSLAINE & SYLVAIN STAËLENS

(b. 1960 and 1968, Paris, France)

Ghyslaine and Sylvain Staëlens first became an artistic team in 1996, when the two self-taught artists decided to move into the remote countryside of D'Auvergne. This volcanic region provided them with plenty of materials with which to create sculpture, bas-relief, masks, figurines, totems, and crucifixes. The floating wood, roots, and rusted metals that they found there soon became indispensable to their work.

Starting from sophisticated assemblies of tree branches and roots, the couple manufactures creations that give rise to animal and human forms. Often the figures are embedded with nails and wires and oxidized to give the appearance of rusted metal, which they use in reference to the various mental entities that stimulate us or torment us. For the artists, the flexible and solid wire symbolizes attachment, the barbed wire and the nails symbolize suffering, and the branches represent discipline, rigor, and control of the spirit.

Visible from the house/studio is the Notre Dame de Claviers Chapel, built before 1109 from the same volcanic stone as used in their sculptures. In it is a crucifix and fourteen stone Stations of the Cross, some of them carved by a nineteenth century hermit named Francois Lesmarie. It was definitely a formative influence. There was also a very famous carving of a dark-skinned Virgin in the chapel, later removed to another location. But the robed influence of that dark figure has never left their town of Jailhac or the imaginations of the Staëlens. She is one of their muses. Nearby is the Bois de Jailhac. The Staëlens call it "the forest".

"When we arrived in Auvergne we were so surrounded by Catholicism we absorbed the crucifixion, religious souls, and with time, years in Auvergne we begin to form characters in harmony with the forest and the volcanos, hunters, sentinels, sentries, horsemen, mysterious people, tough, fighting for their survival. All our sculptures are connected to each other from the very beginning when we started."

The work of the Staëlens is a perfect example for us of artists who dig deep within themselves to find the roots of their own cultures without ripping off imagery of other cultures. They copy nothing, they reinvent themselves through the inspiration of the forest and history around them. For us, they have found a place in their art that taps into a spiritual universalism, a respect for all cultures, and a retelling of the magic of their own very European roots.

Solo Exhibitions:

2020: Ghyslaine & Sylvain Staëlens, Chapelle Saint-Libéral, Musée Labenche, Brive-la-Gaillarde, France

2019: Ghyslaine et Sylvain STAËLENS, Galerie Licence IV, Lyon, France

MÁSCARAS: The Other Faces of Mexico, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY

2018: Les Guardians, Médiathèque du Pays de Mauriac, Mauriac, France

Sur la trace des Staëlens, La Pierre Noire, Champagnac, France

2015: Forest Amuletum: New Sculpture by Ghyslaine and Sylvain Staëlens, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York

2013: Ghyslaine et Sylvain Staëlens, Galerie Balthazar, Clermont-Ferrand, France

2012: Ghyslaine et Sylvain Staëlens, Halle Saint Pierre, Paris, France

Ghyslaine & Sylvain Staëlens, Maison du Passeur, Herblay, France

2008: Ghyslaine et Sylvain STAËLENS, Les Nouveaux Troubadours, Saint-Sever-du-Moustier, France

Selected Group Exhibitions:

2023: Exposition Ghyslaine et Sylvain Staëlens & David Daoud, Christine Colon Gallery, Liège, Belgium
The Go-Betweens: New Work by Christine Sefolosa, and Ghyslaine and Sylvain Staëlens, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY

2022: Outsider Art Fair, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York
Errances, Bruno Matthys Gallery, Bruxelles

2021: Super-Rough, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York
Depuis Notre Terre, Point Rouge Gallery, Saint Rémy de Provence
Winter Spotlight, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York

2020: Les Voleurs De Feu, Cérès Franco Cooperative-Museum, Montolieu, France
Together, Gustavo Giacosa, Méjanès Library Galerie Zola, Aix en Provence, France
Outsider Art Fair, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY

2019: Soul Matter, Le Radeau-Lavoir, St-Léger-le-Guébécois, France
Outsider Art Fair, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
Silent Noises, Galerie Point Rouge, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France
Mavericks II, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
Accordance, Chapelle Sainte Anne, Tours, France
La Forêt est Silence, respirez !, organized by Souchaud Art Project, Centre de Recherche Archéologique Européen de Bibracte, Glux-en-Glenne, France
Exposition Matière d'Âme, Le Radeau-Lavoir, Saint-Léger-le-Guébécois, France
St'Art, Galerie Pol Lemantais, Strasbourg, France

2018: Les Guardians, Médiathèque du Pays de Mauriac, Mauriac, France
St-Art Art Fair, represented by Galerie Pol Lemétais, Strasbourg, France
Montpellier Art Fair, represented by Galerie Pol Lemétais, Montpellier, France
Outsider Art Fair, represented by Galerie Pol Lemétais, Paris, France

- Fantasmagories, Galerie Ferme de la Chapelle Lancy, Geneva, Switzerland
 Outsider Art Fair, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
 Sympathetic Magic, curated by Elisa Decker, Westbeth Gallery, New York, NY
 Rings Around the Moon, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
 Welcoming the Two Faced Rider, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
 Étrange, Château de Taurines, Centrés, France
 Hommage à Paul Amar, Musée des Arts Buissonniers, Saint-Sever-de-Moustier, France
 Chemins de Traverse, Maison des Arts Solange-Baudoux, Evreux, France
- 2017: Resist, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
 Outsider Art Fair, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
 Woven World, Schick Gallery Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY
 From Outsider Art to Lowbrow Art, Galerie Grand'Rue, Poitiers, France
 L'internationale des Visionnaires, La Coopérative-Collection Cérés Franco, Montolieu, France
 Mina Mond, Musée des Arts Buissonniers, Saint-Sever-du-Moustier, France
 Tout l'été, Galerie Licence IV, Lyon, France
 Explorateurs et Jardins Perdus, Souchaud Art Project, Les Galeries de la Tour, Lyon, France
 Outsider Art Fair, represented by Galerie Pol Lemétais, Paris, France
 St-Art Art Fair, represented by Galerie Pol Lemétais, Strasbourg, France
 Another Christmas sur la canal Saint Martin, with Galerie Pol Lemétais, Galerie Polysémie, and
 Galerie M, at Galerie B&B, Paris, France
 Origin, La Caverne du Pont d'Arc, Vallon-Pont d'Arc, France
- 2016: Takashi Murakami's Superflat Collection: From Shōhaku and Rosanjin to Anselm Kiefer, Yokohama
 Museum of Art, Yokohama, Japan
 Outsider Art Fair, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
 Hiding in the Bushes Outsider Art from France, Thierry Goldberg Gallery, New York, NY
 Maverick!, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
 Sculptures de l'Art Brut, Galerie J.P. Ritsch-Fisch, Strasbourg
 Folk Art, Art Brut, Art Singulier, Galerie Grand'Rue, Poitiers, France and Galerie-Librairie Nicaise, Paris,
 France
 Trajectoire VIII - dans le cadre de Parcours des Mondes 2016, Galerie Frédéric Moisan, Paris, France
 St-Art Art Fair, represented by Galerie Pol Lemétais, Strasbourg, France
 Winter Spotlight: Visionary Edge, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
 Les Arts Buissonniers, Musée des Arts Buissonniers, Saint-Sever-du-Moustier, France
- 2015: St-Art Art Fair, represented by Galerie Jean Greset, Strasbourg, France
 Outsider Art Fair, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, Paris, France
 In Dreams Begin Responsibilities: 30 Years at Cavin-Morris, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York
 Art Paris Art Fair, represented by JP Ritsch-Fisch Gallery, Paris, France
 The Metro Show, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York
 Outsider Art Fair, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York
 Les Art Buissonniers, Halle Saint Pierre, Paris, France
 Rhizome: New Growth at Cavin-Morris Gallery, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY

- 2014: The Metro Show, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York
Praisesongs for the Numinous, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York
Outsider Art Fair, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York
Mycelium, génie savant-génie brut, Art Contemporain Abbaye d'Auberive, Auberive, France
Freshet : Old Loves, New Directions & Japan, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
The Outsiders, Galerie Grand-Rue et Musée des Arts Buissonniers, Poitiers, France
Les Arts Buissonniers, Musée des Arts Buissonniers, Saint-Sever-du-Moustier, France
St-Art Art Fair, Mes Arts Buissonniers, Strasbourg, France
Indomptés de L'Art #2, Galerie Jean Greset, Besançon, France
Solange KNOPF, Gérard NICOLLET, Huston RIPLEY, Ghysleine et Sylvain Staë lens, organized by La
Galerie Polysémie and Nadie Servant, Galerie B&B, Paris, France
- 2013: The Metro Show, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
Outsider Art Fair, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
Restless III - a Mix, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
Âmes sensibles, Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie, Les Ecuries. Aurillac, France
Jardins Secrets, Galerie le Cœur au Ventre, Lyon, France
Outsider Art Fair, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
Faceshifting - Masking the Spirits, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
- 2012: OUTSIDERS, Au-dessous des Volcans, Chapelle Marmontel, Mauriac, France
Restless, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY
Les Arts Buissonniers, Musée des Arts Buissonniers, Saint-Sever-du-Moustier, France
Ghysleine et Sylvain Staë lens avec Joël Lorand, Galerie Espace Eqart, Marciac, France
Biennale de l'Art Partagé, Rives, France
Sortie de Terre, Espace Korova, Lyon, France
Assemblages, Musée des Arts Buissonniers, Médiathèque de Capdenac-Gare, Capdenac-Gare, France
- 2011: OUTSIDERS, Au-dessous des Volcans, Chapelle Marmontel, Mauriac, France
Le Centre d'Art L'Art en Marche, Musée de l'Art en Marche, Lapalisse, France
Biennale de l'Art Partagé, Grenoble, France
- 2010: Ouverture de la Saison, Biz'Art-Biz'Art, Le Vaudioux, France
OUTSIDERS, Au-dessous des Volcans, Chapelle Marmontel, Mauriac, France
Biennale de l'Art Partagé, Rives, France
Outsider Days, L'Art en Marche, Haarlem, The Netherlands
Force & Mouvement, Espace Miramar, Cannes, France
Expo 08, Hang-Art, Saffré, France
- 2009: Literacy for Fall, Galerie Susi Brunner, Zürich, Switzerland
Les Arts Buissonniers, Musée des Arts Buissonniers, Saint-Sever-du-Moustier, France
Exposition Collective, Galerie d'Art Contemporain AMAC, Chamalières, France
Expressionnismes, Le Polaris, Corbas, France
Antoine RIGAL Ghysleine et Sylvain STAËLENS, Galerie l'Art à Part, Ollioules, France

2008: Un Monde de Bruts, Maison Coubez, Saint-Sever-du-Mostier, France
L'Art en Marché, L'Espace Jean Monnet, Chamalières, France
Salon d'Automne, Espace Auteuil, Paris, France
MAC Paris Art Contemporain, Espace Champerret, Paris, France
De Outsider Kunst Dagen, Haarlem, The Netherlands

2007: Métamorphoses des Matériaux, Espace des Blancs Manteaux, Paris, France

Collections:

Collection Takashi Murakami, Japan
Musée de la Fabuloserie, Dicy, France
Musée de l'Art en Marche, Lapalisse, France
Musée des Arts Buissonniers, Saint-Sever-du-Moustier, France
American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY
Collection Blanchard-Hill, New York, NY
Takashi Murakami Collection, Tokyo, Japan
Audrey B. Heckler Collection, New York, NY
Collection Cérés Franco, Galerie d'Art Contemporain La Coopérative, Montolieu, France
Collection Suzi Brunner, Zürich, Switzerland
The Ashe'Collection, New York, NY

Publications:

500 artistes qui nous font rêver, Miroir de l'Art, 89, February 2018
The Hidden Art : 20th- and 21st-Century Self-Taught Artists from the Audrey B. Heckler Collection, text by Randall Morris, American Folk Art Museum, Skira, New York, NY, 2017
Takashi Murakami's Superflat Collection, exhibition catalogue, Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama, Japan, 2016
'An Ecosystem That's Not Quite in Control of Itself': Dealers Randall Morris and Shari Cavin on Their Collection of Self-Taught Art, New York Times, September 1, 2016
Forest Amuletum: New Sculpture by Ghyslaine and Sylvain Staëlens, exhibition catalog, text by Randall Morris, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY, 2015
Ghyslaine and Sylvain Staëlens, 10 Ans de Création, texts by Laurent Danchin, Jean-Michel Chesne, Nadine Servant and Randall Morris, 2015
Restless III! A Mix, exhibition catalog, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY, 2013
Restless!, exhibition catalog, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY, 2012