

« L'esprit, pour pénétrer jusqu'aux idées,  
perce plus difficilement à travers la dure écorce de la nature et de la vie  
qu'à travers les œuvres d'art ». Aristote

To the thematic, almost thetic issue of “women in art”, Caroline Tapernoux will not offer any complete answer; nor will she lay any head-on claim to such a thing; even less will she develop the issue in any formal way; any more than she will inevitably contest it. She will quite simply observe, in a general way, that over and above the difference between the sexes, there is a common artistic gesture, work-in-the-making that is at once joint and several, lending otherness to its vague idea—at least it is vague with regard to the relation that the artist has with his or her work.

But admitting one's insensitivity to this difference is not being indifferent to sensitivity [including feminine sensitivity, it should be said]. What is essentially underscored by Caroline Tapernoux's stance, straight away ruling out the differentiation between female and male, is neither a theoretical flight, nor a diplomatic solution; nor, needless to add, is it a muddling of genres. No, more significantly than this, it indicates that her viewpoint does not readily, in the case here in point, incorporate the sociological issues inherent to art understood in its history, by which we mean identity, machismo, feminism, protectionism, network, sectarianism, ostracism, emancipation... In a word, everything that is subject for discussion and/or argument. Rightly or wrongly stated—this is no longer the nub of the problem—these challenges do not interfere with the artist's work; all that matters for the artist is the creative act, and this is certainly what Caroline Tapernoux seems to display.

So what is left of the initial subject? What is left of “women in art”? The subject itself, is our reply. So it is no longer a matter of a subject as motif, but rather of a subject as person, of an emotive, incarnate subject: a woman, Caroline Tapernoux. She in her being there, she in her studio, in her life, she who tells us that, from her viewpoint, “the creative act is not masculine or feminine, it is a creative act, it is what matters to me and what helps me to be, it is relation to self, linkage within and without at the same time”. In her own words, “there is, in the studio space, a power of envelopment which unfurls.” This is what she dwells on and emphasizes. “This idea of envelope is dear to me, of paramount importance, it is a way of doing and making and being which is important to me, and which the studio gives me in an apt, significant and necessary way”, she adds. Enveloping, enveloping oneself, being enveloped, having oneself enveloped... Different registers, transitive and reflexive, active and passive, which all come together for her when art is in the making. This moment does not rule out femininity or masculinity: quite to the contrary, it includes them in each other, it merges them, and brings out just man, the human.

Artists [those who are deeply artistic] know, as André Gide explained, that “art comes about through addition, through pressure of superabundance. It starts precisely where living is not enough to express life.” Caroline Tapernoux does not explain art, she lives it. Art is her support, her base, her mooring in the world, her landmark [definitely in both meanings of the word: both marker and refuge]; it is a metaphysical metronome. When she talks about art, or

more precisely about creation, she is talking about herself, about herself as she suspects [herself], herself as she looks for [herself], herself as she sometimes loses [herself], and herself as she at times [re]finds [herself]. She talks privately. She talks of privacy with all the etymological aura that this superlative channels.<sup>1</sup> In the place where the poet writes: "Check yourself pinch your flesh be"<sup>2</sup>, Caroline Tapernoux creates pieces, sculpts materials; this is how she "pinches her flesh" and "checks" herself.

What, in the end of the day, is involved here? Understood as something to do with necessity and outlet, the act of creation targeted and intimately experienced by this Nîmes-based artist is akin to an avowed form of catharsis, a release—the way it is regulatory and necessary.<sup>3</sup> The Freudian designation of this work of conversion is, as we know, sublimation, a conversion of drives to an end other than sexual, and art is one such, elevating, a catalyst, a useful tool (French *outil*, which we might write "où-t-il"—literally "where-it", to considerably alter the meaning of its announcement and thereby draw close[r] to Caroline Tapernoux, and her privacy and intimacy, which we cannot enter, and even less desecrate).

Caroline Tapernoux goes to her studio the way others go on a retreat; she works to find an inner peace; and she strives to think of nothing. "The work of art is thus presented as a pillar of man's knowledge, and through it man can re-organize his own psychic space".<sup>4</sup> This is what takes precedence in this artist's work; this is what, de facto, puts feminineness off screen; it is infiniteness that is in the frame, with her.

"Thinking about nothing  
is having your soul fully to yourself.  
Thinking of nothing  
is to intimately experience  
the ebb and flow of life..."

« Ne penser à rien  
c'est avoir son âme pleinement à soi.  
Ne penser à rien  
c'est vivre intimement  
le flux et le reflux de la vie... »<sup>5</sup>

David Brunel  
Photographe plasticien  
Docteur en Études psychanalytiques et esthétique  
Enseignant en Sciences de l'art

1] What is innermost, in the very depths of a being, which closely links, and involves the secret life, the private domain, things secret. The prefix *in-* indicates inward movement [or the spatial, or temporal, position].

2] CHRISTIAN PRIGENT, *L'Âme*, P.O.L, 2000, p. 40.

3] And we do indeed mean the necessity of this doing and making, of this artistic gesture, as defined by Gilles Deleuze in his speech given at the FEMIS in March 1987, whose text, finally published in the magazine *Trafic* n°27 in autumn 1998 is titled : *Qu'est-ce que l'acte de création ?* [*What is the Creative Act ?*]

4] MURIELLE GAGNEBIN, *Pour une esthétique psychanalytique – L'artiste, stratège de l'inconscient*, Coll. Le fil rouge, PUF, 1994, p. 197.

5] FERNANDO PESSOA, *L'Ode triomphale & douze poèmes de la fin d'Alvaro de Campos*, trad. R. Hourcade et E. Hocquard, éd. Royaumont, 1986, ouvrage non paginé. - English translation by Simon Pleasance & Fronza Woods.