

## **G rard Xuriguera, art critic**

Direct carving—the gesture of removing in order to build—and the taste for the beauty of this profession, have not deserted the vocabulary of many sculptors. For example, on the strength of the achievements bequeathed by previous generations, Jean-Christophe Couradin’s practice does not refute the contribution of tradition, but adapts it for his own use. Coupled with a highly controlled technique, the sculptor has created a universe of his own from the properties of wood, already a sculpture in itself, and gives free rein to his inventiveness, in accordance with the founding laws of the wood’s structural arrangements.

The artist has chosen to challenge himself by using particularly hard and wilful woods, such as Pernambuco mahogany, Macassar ebony and Madagascar rosewood, where the treatment of the material, subjected to gouging, requires scrupulous attention. Herein follows a patient quest for the most refined form, veering towards the most radical simplification.

Cut away over and over again by small repeated touches, the original mass sees its contours thinned, its sides curve, its median axis widen or tighten, hollow grooves settle and thread in a spiral, slight conical bulges rise, undulations take shape, and overlapping sections come together, until the velvety curves and the logic of their sequences harmonize in the synthesis.

Here, there are no tapered endings or inappropriate perforations, nothing but rounded curves, swerves and rolls hemmed with a quiet sensuality, between fluidity and compactness, rusticity and preciousness, delicacy and robustness, allied to the rigor of the design.

There is no possible identification with any referent either, if not the ones in everyone’s imagination, but with something organic or mineral, Apollonian and Dionysian, barely interrupted by the inevitable changes of rhythm, which result in this stripped-down language, rich in charm and authenticity. Beyond these considerations, the dialogue established with this living, familiar material which seems to rise from the depths of memory, is above all a personal story, nourished from within.

In addition to the play of shadow and light, there are also silky mirages that modulate the texture of the surface, with its fragmented and elongated but never

disjointed shapes; others gathered in a fan and adorned with an unusually bright shade, add a diversity to the rendered work and its meaning.

Ultimately, the utterance or articulation culminates in its most admired expression, no bluntness alters the effusive vein of its carefully considered balance. On the contrary, one witnesses the vision of a true humanist, a master of his style and his impulses, who is aware, as Oscar Wilde pointed out, that "simple things are perhaps the last refuge of the complex."