

AK: *Very profound!*

LB: Very profound. People won't necessarily understand.

AK: *At some point this touches on the truth of sculpture.*

LB: But it's the opposite of aggression. It's a polarity between the tenderness that I express and the violence that is inside me.

AK: *I understand you very well. When I'm working the clay for my terra-cotta pieces, I express all sorts of violence. I bring out feminine forms in the modelling. The verticalities, on the other hand, are more hieratic.*

LB: This is to say that we're made of completely contrary elements, opposed elements; and this produces formidable tensions.

AK: *Often when I sculpt, the part that I finally free from the unconscious, the part that is repressed for me, is in some sense feminine. Let us talk now about the marble sculpture Cumul I of 1969, which is at the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris. When did you begin using marble?*

LB: 1967.

AK: *You went to Carrara several times, then.*

LB: First to Pietrasanta. I don't like Pietrasanta, though, because it's overtouristed, whereas Carrara is much more serious. The transition stems from the fact that the aggressive side of my nature liked the resistance of the stone. Wood is too soft a material, and above all it's perishable and offers no resistance. Whereas the resistance that must be overcome in stone is a stimulation; like the fact that puritans attract me sexually because they're a formidable challenge. It's almost a playing with the impossible.

AK: *Ha ha! I love that. And so marble is calming.*

LB: *It is a fight to the finish. So it is a challenge.*

AK: *This the extraordinary advantage of the art of statuary and of sculpture over painting.*

LB: Painting doesn't exist for me.

AK: *The resistance of the material allows all sorts of drives to be freed. It's true: when I forge my aluminum and it explodes, I can tell you that I'm very calm when I leave the studio afterward.*

LB: It's the physical aspect of sculpture.

AK: *Yes, and this marvelous truth of the resistance of materials.*

LB: There is a redemptive quality in this. That is, one has the right to be aggressive, one has the right to cut everything and break everything, and to do it for something useful, for something beautiful.

AK: *For something sublime. A word on the title Cumul.*

LB: The title *Cumul* comes from a system of clouds.

AK: *Ah yes! A very beautiful drawing goes with it, as well.*

LB: It's a system of clouds, and for me it's the study of clouds, of the sky, of the heavens; which is something very positive, very calming, and very verifiable, anticipated, and reliable. Consequently it is peace, the peaceful side of things.

AK: *There is a certain serenity.*

LB: It comes back all the time. In addition, there is a repetition, an *endless repetition* that is also something very calming.

AK: *And Clamart?*

LB: *Clamart* is very important for me because my grandparents and my parents are buried there. It's the family tomb.

AK: *And this absolutely magnificent sculpture that makes me think of Brancusi's Penguins, which is called Eye to Eye. It's at our friend Aggie Grand's, and is a very fine sculpture from 1970. Can you tell me something about its title, Eye to Eye?*

LB: Yes, it involves elements that *relate to each other*. In effect, elements that look at each other like little windows in a house.

AK: *And this extremely beautiful repetitive series entitled No March No. 72, which has all these elements—cylinders of a sort—and cuts that are sometimes oblique.*

LB: This work is in the open air, and that is very important. Because the rain cannot harm it.

AK: *It makes me think of my sculpture Commandment, which is a veritable field of varied elements. Your sculpture No March No. 72 is a grouping of cylinders in marble that rise up softly, and this becomes particularly beautiful when it is outside on the grass, in nature.*

LB: Moreover, they take very good care of it at the Storm King Art Center.

AK: *I had a similar experience when I installed my sculpture Grand Commandement Blanc in the Tuileries in Paris. To see the iron elements, which are painted white, outside the studio, on the grass, emphasizes the aspect of birth, of scriptural growth in three dimensions; and it does so in contrast to the vertical writing of the Obelisk, and at the side of the Orangerie and the Nymphéas.*

**W**e had decided that the interview had reached its conclusion at this point, when Louise Bourgeois asked me to record the following remark.

LB: I consider this interview with Alain Kirili to be very important because it's really the only occasion on which I have been given the chance to speak about this period and about the origin of the figures in wood, which are completely autobiographical and French in origin, and about my concerns with France. □

*Translated from the French by Philip Barnard.*

1. In this passage and in a number that follow, Louise Bourgeois's words are italicized to indicate that they were spoken in English rather than French.

2. An exhibition commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Pompidou Center, with a presentation of sixty artists.

3. The titles for the exhibition of 1949 are in English, those for the exhibition of 1950 in French. Thus the progression and adaptation in question moves toward an affirmation of the French titles.

4. Titles from the exhibition of 1949.

5. That is, only a few yards down the street from the Deux Magots.

6. One of the most important sculptures from this period, notable for the startling formal repetition of its composition.

*Alain Kirili is a sculptor who sometimes writes about art.*