



Photos: Heleen Rodiers

Mireille Liénard

EN | *La vie, mode d'emploi.* The title of Georges Perec's mosaic novel is an association that immediately springs to mind when we hear Mireille Liénard's (1963) story. As though the course the body and life sketch can create artistic branches that are inextricably linked to that life, and even find their origin and methodology in it. Perhaps the association springs too quickly, leading us to jump to illusory conclusions. The fact is that hemochromatosis, a disease which causes the body to absorb more iron than it can excrete, contains very attractive symbolism for two central aspects of the artistic practice of one of its bearers: Mireille Liénard – blood and metal, *le rouge et le noir*. Liénard was educated as a sculptor at La Cambre, where she specialised in metalwork. "As a vital element, red was added to black. It is life, but also death. It contains that whole ambivalent symbolism, which recurs in mythology, history, and philosophy." Mireille Liénard's art is dominated by the ambivalent. Her objects and installations always appear nuanced, as an intimate joining of the geometric and the organic; the hard and the soft. It is practically impossible to overlook the importance of transformations, metamorphoses, and duplication in Mireille Liénard's work and exhibitions. The abstraction that dominates her work formally, finds an equally universal counterpart in her themes: the language of mythology. "We continue to find those myths in our lives. Despite the fact that this mythology can be traced back to ancient Greece, it remains contemporary. You can link a Greek myth to

any and every topic of conversation. I do not consider that to be living in the past, but rather to connect the past to what we experience now. Those human truths are universal and timeless." Her fascination with Greek culture led Liénard to move to Greece immediately after her graduation from La Cambre. She lived there for thirteen years, and has been back in Brussels for almost six years now. Her studio, five minutes from her home, is divided over two floors, separated by a glass floor. When we visited, the place was very neat and tidy. "I'm leaving for Greece soon. The building will be renovated while I'm away." Two walls and part of the floor are covered with some of the 200 cushions that have returned from the exhibition *Multiplixité et multiples cités* (with Bob Verschuere), which was held at the Salle Saint-Georges in Mons. The artistic process of that project – through architecture, anatomy, philosophy, and mythology – is a good illustration of the interweaving of form and content in her work, and of the soul underlying the abstraction. In its abstract formal treatment of universal, timeless, and human themes, Liénard's work does not lend itself to quick or easy familiarisation: "It is very peculiar. People who don't know my work think it is very aggressive. People who do know it and dig a little deeper think it is incredibly erotic and organic." It is work that invites you to look more closely than a superficial glance and which ultimately leads to that one human truth, that one extremely valuable user manual for life: don't judge a book by its cover. **KURT SNOEKX**



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