



Interview

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As part of the European Waste Reduction Week (EWW), the REFESA group (Andorra) challenged sculptor Philippe Lavaill to turn the waste from its recycling plants into art.

The sculpture that REFESA group donated is called *Àngel Precibernètic* (Pre-cybernetic Angel) and is in a public place in the parish of Sant Julià de Loria, in Aixovall at the entrance to Túnel de la Tàpia, next to the river. It has been erected to recognize our ancestors and raise awareness of the need to reduce waste generation and the opportunity to recycle.

The sculpture will be inaugurated on November 25, 2022.

We spoke with the author, the sculptor Philippe Lavaill, who also masters other arts such as illustration, the creation of original jewelry, metal casting, screen printing, restoration, decoration and the making of trophies.

-What do your works transform?

-I am an illustrator. I illustrate personal and public feelings. My sculptures are of special value because I install them in the same place where I get the material to create them - from the recycling center. That is, I work with the material of the past to turn it into an instrument of the future. My latest sculpture is called *Pre-Cybernetic Angel*. Because we don't have cybernetics yet.

In the creation of this sculpture, materials such as iron, metals, computer boards and microchips were used. The angel is 4 meters tall. The counterweight of a cement-iron construction crane was used as the basis of the sculpture, which was thus given a second life. This is a prime example of a closed loop.

The creation of this sculpture is a recognition of our ancestors for all their contributions to our lives and a demonstration of what we can do for them.

Sculptures are milestones that open up new perspectives. I made my angel in the old style of the time when the iron was forged in the forge, with nostalgia for the intricate hard work of «smart hands» well done. This is a way that symbolizes pre-industrial



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Philippe Lavaill

Sculptor

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work. Everything, absolutely everything in this sculpture is made from recycled materials. The angel brings strength and gives us impulses so that we can prepare for a better future.

-How long did it take to create this sculpture?

-About 50 years.

-But it cannot be!

-Yeah ... I started thinking about the angel when I was working with Salvador Dalí. Dalí once told me: «To be global you must be ultra-local!» ... This is how the angel was born ... I have applied all my knowledge in this work.

-You say that sculpture is the art of dialogue with matter and essence. What does it mean?

-First, there is a thought. If the thought is transformed into shared values, the sculptor can transform those values. Thought is a floating idea; it is not defined. There is a dialogue with matter; iron allows me to have this dialogue.

I am a jeweler by education, a jeweler-metallurgist. I have tried many different materials, including oxidizable aluminum.

-What symbolism does your art have?

-I'm figurative. Some people have communication problems because they don't speak the same language. And art is an international language. There is an art of mystery. I want the one who looks at my sculptures to think about them and explain to me what they see in them. What meaning do they see in it? Because sculpture, as I said, is a common language.

-Animals are present in many of your sculptures. Is it symbolism or realism?

-As a person, I believe that we should protect animals. Animals are the founders of the Pyrenees, all the villages of the Pyrenees have their own legends associated with animals. Between man and animals, there has always been mutual understanding, struggle and very close communication. And all this was not so long ago! I tried to tell about the Pyrenees through my sculptures, through the animals that lived and shared these territories.

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-Your works and monuments are in Barcelona, Font Romeu (France), New York and Tokyo. What are these works?

-It doesn't make much sense to talk about works that are far away. It makes sense to talk about those works that are close enough to be seen.

-Okay ... In Japan, my work is dedicated to women and the beauty of the body. In New York, it's about a fight ...

-Are they in museums, in private galleries, or in open spaces?

-Some are in art galleries and others are in public places. I have many works in Font Romeu; they are all in the mountains.

I also created 11 sculptures about ancient crafts, which can be found in the forest of La Rabassa (Andorra). They explain the lives of robbers, turpentines, porters and smugglers. Here in Andorra, I also created sculptures dedicated to fishing to explain this tradition. These sculptures are located at the entrance to Val d'Incles. I also made a monument to *Purito* (famous Spanish cyclist Joaquim Rodriguez), which is in Sant Julia de Loria and Ice Lady (*la Dama de Gel*).

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«I work with the material of the past to turn it into an instrument of the future»

-Do you collaborate with other artists?

-I worked for ten years with Salvador Dalí, between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, in Cadaqués and Barcelona. I also worked for another ten years with the sculptor Apel·les Fenosa. I created small formats, large sculptures and monuments. The last was the reconstruction of all the props of an opera he had created with Coco Chanel. It was an extraordinary moment because we looked back on the 20s, 30s and 40s when everything came together.

Currently, I continue to collaborate with the Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation and the Fenosa Foundation.

-You learned in the workshop of your father, the jeweler Georges Lavaill. Have you ever made designer jewelry with metal? Now it is a fashion trend ...

-I make them and have made them before. Jewelry conveys desire. It is absolutely sublime, especially the stones with their symbology. We worked with Catalan garnet.

-And what do you prefer: creating

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large sculptures or small jewels?

-Aluminum is a very interesting material and allows me to do great things. It poses interesting technical challenges for me. But in general, I am a modest sculptor.

-Do you have students?

-If I have young fine arts students. Some people want to use 3D and matter to explain things.

-What do you think of contemporary art in general?

-The advantage of this Western society is that it has very wide freedom of expression. Everyone finds their own way of self-expression and to be decriminalized. Now you can do things that weren't possible before. There is no clear trend. People think very freely. Sometimes contemporary art seems vulgar, like our life, and one might even say frivolous. Art should touch the soul, carry a positive message and not have violence in it. Apel·les Fenosa once told me that we should only do what brings us good mornings. And that has always been one of my conditions.≡



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