

L'AMAZONE  
ÉROGÈNE



PRUNE NOURRY

FROM JANUARY 9 TO FEBRUARY 21, 2021



RIVE GAUCHE

## L'AMAZONE ÉROGÈNE PRUNE NOURRY

The artist Prune Nourry takes careful aim and hits a bull's eye at Le Bon Marché Rive Gauche

Prune Nourry is a rising figure in the international contemporary art scene who is mainly established in France and the United States. Her art encompasses sculpture, installation, performance or film at an equal level of talent. She has been given carte blanche to create a collection of works that she is installing in the huge spaces of Le Bon Marché Rive Gauche from January to February 2021.



PRUNE NOURRY, 2020 © LE BON MARCHÉ RIVE GAUCHE

# L'AMAZONE ÉROGÈNE - THE WORK AND ITS ORIGIN

Prune Nourry is an artist who works by project. The installation at Le Bon Marché Rive Gauche continues the *Catharsis* series in which the figure of the Amazon was featured by allowing the artist to experiment with a new scale, particularly thanks to the department store's wide open spaces. All of the works have been conceived specifically for Le Bon Marché and designed taking its unique architecture into consideration.

The exhibition will consist of a succession of sequences extending from the exterior of the store right to its heart.

First of all, it will benefit from an opening onto the city through the windows of the department store.

On rue de Sèvres, the figure of the Amazon will be directly evoked through the appearance of the bow and arrows. A bow with the profile of a breast will shoot its arrows (no less than 1800) from one end of the set of ten window displays towards a target in the shape of a breast, giving a dynamic to the long succession of windows. As the arrows fly across the window displays, they form geometric motifs inspired by the American minimalism current, particularly Sol LeWitt and Frank Stella. Those opening onto rue du Bac and rue de Babylone will combine the motif of a tree trunk showing the rings of its life around hearts of targets.

In addition to the multiple window displays that will enable many people to discover Prune Nourry's work at any time of day or night, Le Bon Marché is giving the artist the opportunity to continue her work into the vast open spaces in the store.

The "Entrée sur l'Art Contemporain" space at the corner of rue du Bac and rue de Babylone will give a second way in to the exhibition through a "making-of" and through clips shown from the film Prune Nourry made in 2019, *Serendipity*, in which the figure of the Amazon could already be seen..

However, it is under the glass roof of Le Bon Marché, which peaks 16 meters up, that the heart of the exhibition will be found. Hundreds of arrows (889 to be exact) in white wood and feathers will take flight under the glass roof, rising to the sky. Drawing a cloud, all point towards a four-meter breast-target overlooking the store's escalators. On the other side of the target, a bound bow, also monumental at 5 meters high, will provide a twin to the flight of arrows. It points its arrow towards a second suspended mirrored target. The edge of the bow, like that of the target, will present the outline of a breast, evoking the myth of the amazons. These warriors, unrivaled archers, were known as much for their courage as having one of their breasts removed to enable them to fire their arrows with more precision.

The installation offers an inspired and striking metaphor of breast cancer, which the artist has personally experienced recently in recent years. A true *catharsis* after her recovery, the installation continues on from the documentary film *Serendipity*, which Prune Nourry made in 2019 and which has been shown on movie screens in the United States as well as in France. The work also echoes other themes which have meaning for the artist, such as procreation. The cloud of arrows hurtling towards the target also evokes the millions of sperm that make their way to the egg during fertilization.

*L'Amazone Érogène* is a work that is sensitive and powerful, but also generous, offering several interpretations and ultimately showing itself to be full of hope. Inspired, in biographic terms, by an ordeal, the personal experience of breast cancer, the work pays tribute to life forces as well as women.

Prune Nourry wanted Daniel Pennac, her friend and partner, to put his pen to the exhibition catalog. The life of the artist and writer meet on several levels. Daniel Pennac wanted to celebrate these circumstances through a

letter that is both funny and moving, addressed to Prune Nourry and Amazons.

*L'Amazone Érogène* by Prune Nourry, text by Daniel Pennac, exhibition catalog Editions Zeug, Paris, 2020. €25, exclusively at Le Bon Marché Rive Gauche



L'AMAZONE ÉROGÈNE, WORK IN PROGRESS, 2020 © STUDIO PRUNE NOURRY

# QUESTIONS TO PRUNE NOURRY

## 1. CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE *L'AMAZONE ÉROGÈNE* AS THE TITLE OF YOUR EXHIBITION AT LE BON MARCHÉ?

In death, there is life! In the target being attacked by hundreds of arrows, we can see the disease, but also sperm in their race towards the egg. When I had breast cancer and my surgeon gave me several surgery options, the one that seemed the most appropriate in my case meant amputating my erogenous zone, breast and nipple. I thanked the heavens—and evolution!—that I have two! I became, like so many other women who have been through this ordeal, an amazon. I had the chance to have the choice. I decided to remove it to live, to rebuild as I wanted to, a young woman aged 31 with my desires and needs. The current work is a monumental version of the one that I made for my exhibition *Catharsis* at the Templon gallery in September 2019, bringing together a series of works on the universal hope of healing and fertility.

## 2. IN WHAT WAYS DID YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IRRIGATE YOUR WORK AS AN ARTIST?

This experience allowed me to move from being a sculptor to sculpture. You rebuild the body like you sculpt, the materials are just a bit more complicated! Before the illness, I thought I had an almost objective relationship compared to my subjects. Like an anthropologist. The tumor pushed me to look at myself more, like a piece of clay to transform. Without giving up my modesty, I was able to share what seemed to me to be universal and important, hoping that this could help other women and men who have had to follow the trite and extraordinary path of cancer. Through the series of works in *Catharsis* and my feature-length documentary *Serendipity*, but also through a book which will be published in 2021 by Marabout (Hachette). I took a lot of nourishment from the exchanges I've had with other people, neighbors as much as

researchers, people close to me or who I know on the other side of the world. I realized that the people I met and subjects I talked about always resonated in one way or another with who I was and what I believed in. There's a universal language in that.

## 3. YOUR WORK IS STRIKING THROUGH THE TENSIONS IT INTERPRETS, BUT ALSO BY THE NOTION OF BALANCE THAT IT EXUDES...

I've followed a common thread where a work led me to another for each of my projects. Through the illness, a connection that was invisible became apparent: all my projects are condensed in this same notion of catharsis and the search for balance, for the body, the mind, nature. I talk about this search for balance in my work as an artist, but I also try to put it into practice in my personal life as much as possible, as the two are inherently linked of course. It's simply the idea of being aligned with who you are and to respect who the other person is, with differences that enrich us.

## 4. HOW DID LE BON MARCHÉ'S GUIDELINE TO PROPOSE AN INSTALLATION FOCUSING ON THE COLOR WHITE GIVE DIRECTION TO THIS NEW PRESENTATION?

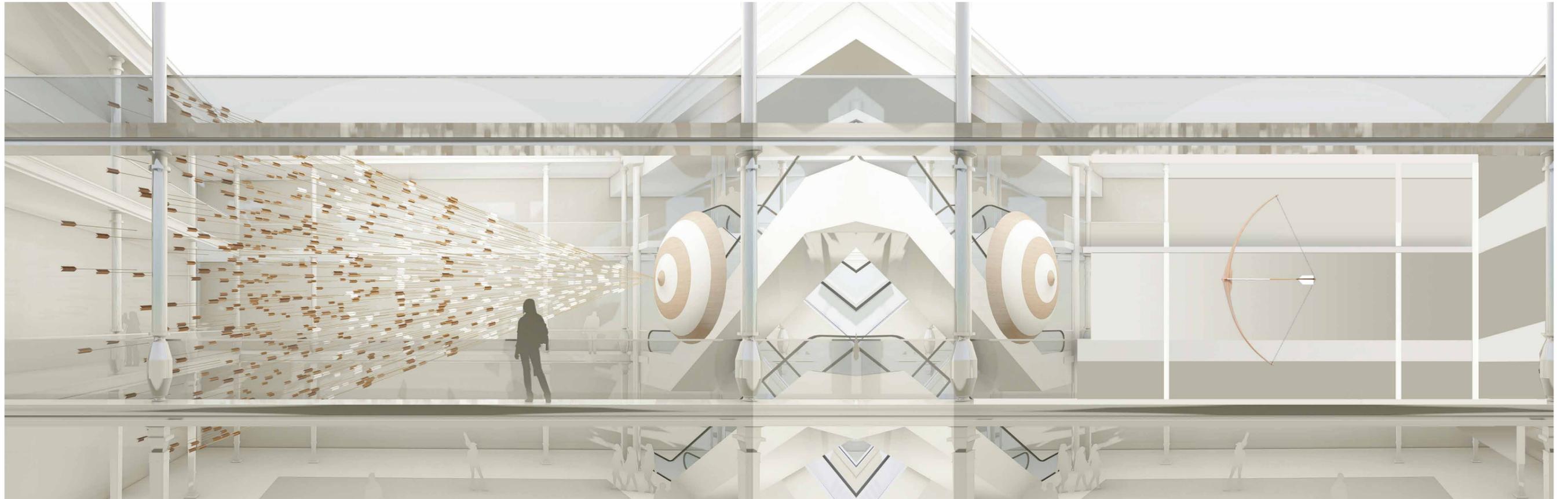
I'd already used white a lot in my work, whether that was with porcelain, laboratory glass... An entire project I did in India on the place of women and daughters, *Holy Daughters*, was designed around white, the color of milk, symbol of fertility. It is also a surgical color, clean as you would hope an operating theater to be, which I used for my projects on assisted reproduction. For this new project at Le Bon Marché, I chose to use real white feathers, like the ones archers use. They form what's like a ray of light towards the target.

## 5. IS THERE A MESSAGE, OR MORE, THAT YOU WANT TO CONVEY THROUGH THIS EXHIBITION?

When you go through a difficult experience, first of all you ask yourself, "Why me?". But very quickly, I preferred to transform it into "What do I do with it?". That was my survival instinct talking, maybe... I decided to take the illness on as a project, with the tools available to me and means of expression that is mine, sculpture. But it could be 1,000 other things depending on what you like and what you believe! It's also the idea of repairing through an artistic gesture, inspired by ex-votos. The idea that hope, creativity and proactivity are keys in the illness. And I'm happy to be able to share this message with as many people as possible thanks to the exhibition organized by Le Bon Marché.



PRUNE NOURRY IN THE WORKSHOP, 2020 © LE BON MARCHÉ RIVE GAUCHE



L'AMAZONE ÉROGÈNE, PROJECT FOR THE CENTRAL GLASS CEILINGS, 2020  
© L. LÉONARD, G. DROSSART / PRUNE NOURRY STUDIO

# QUESTIONS TO FRÉDÉRIC BODÉNES, ART AND IMAGE DIRECTOR AT LE BON MARCHÉ GROUP

## 1. HOW ARE ARTISTS CHOSEN EACH YEAR AND WHY WAS PRUNE NOURRY CHOSEN FOR 2021?

The selection of artists to which Le Bon Marché Rive Gauche gives carte blanche to each year first stems from an encounter with a work, a person, an approach. Our wish is first of all to offer our customers real emotion and discovery, to foster their encounter with art in an unexpected framework. This year in addition we are particularly happy to showcase a French artist.

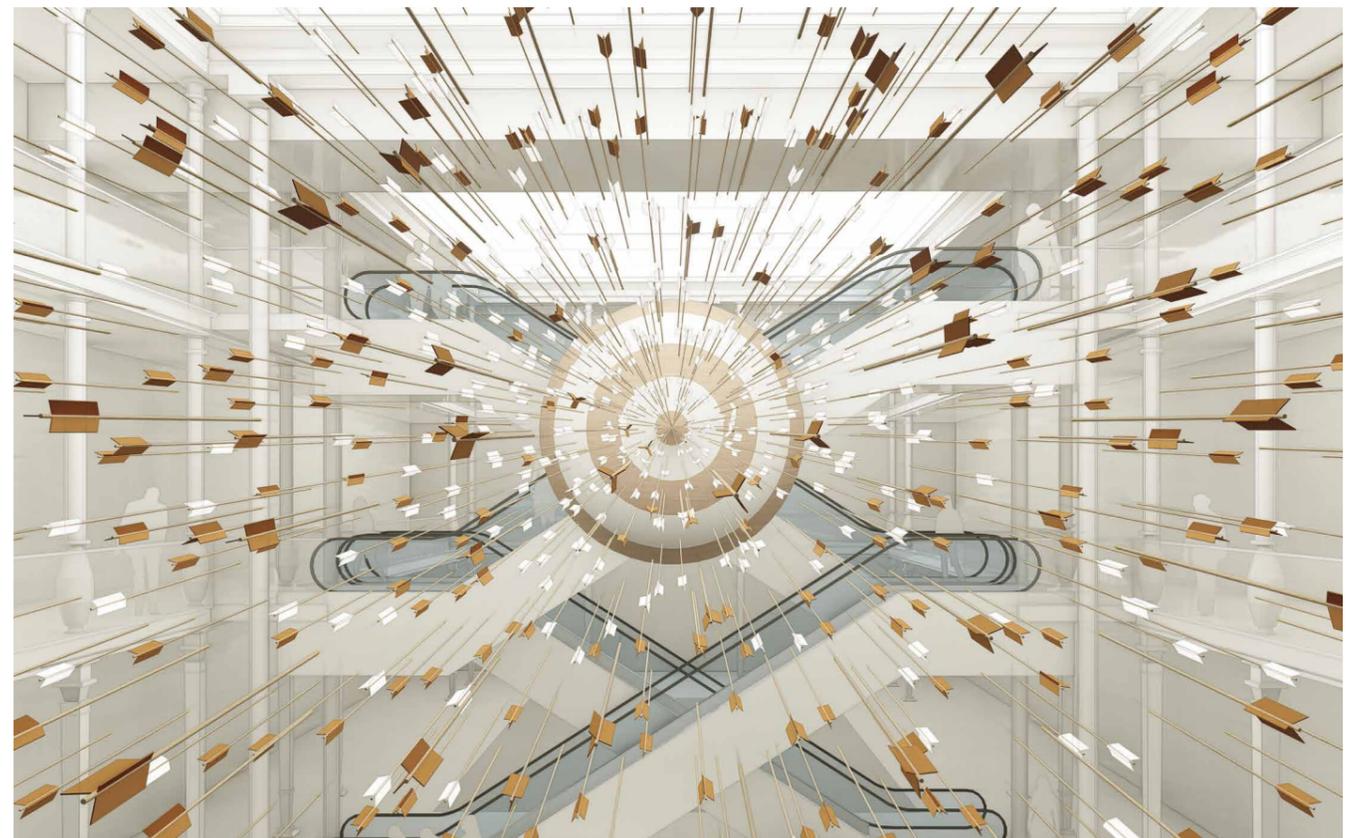
## 2. PRUNE NOURRY IS THE SIXTH ARTIST EXHIBITED AT LE BON MARCHÉ AS PART OF THE ANNUAL CARTES BLANCHES. WHAT LINES DO YOU SEE BEING TRACED THROUGH THE DIFFERENT CHOICES THAT HAVE BEEN MADE?

If our choice takes artists' talents into account more than anything, so as to offer an encounter that undeniably stems from contemporary art, it so happens that to this date, with Chiharu Shiota in 2017, then Joana Vasconcelos in 2019 and Prune Nourry in 2021, we have devoted precisely half of our programming to female artists. Without it having been a deliberate choice however.

Over the years, artists have created a lot of floating works, almost airy, we can really see how the space in Le Bon Marché Rive Gauche offers both creative constraints and opportunities to those that come into them.

## 3. THIS YEAR, SELECTING PRUNE NOURRY AND HER INTERVENTION *L'AMAZONE ÉROGÈNE*, A WORK THAT MAKES A DIRECT REFERENCE TO BREAST CANCER, INTRODUCES A CONTINUITY WITH LE BON MARCHÉ'S UNDERTAKING AND ALSO FITS MORE BROADLY WITH ITS SUPPORT OF CREATION...

Absolutely, support for contemporary art falls within an undertaking of Le Bon Marché in different actions that add up and combine. Our founder Aristide Boucicaut and his wife-gave much support to art in their time, but that was already complemented by other forms of undertakings. Le Bon Marché, it is a heritage that could be seen through its buildings, but also through the values that the founder of the department store left us. Allowing as many people as possible to have access to contemporary art is for us part of a real tradition. We are happy and proud to continue that today by still welcoming the artists of our time.



*L'AMAZONE ÉROGÈNE*, PROJECT FOR THE CENTRAL GLASS CEILINGS, 2020  
© L. LÉONARD, G. DROSSART / PRUNE NOURRY STUDIO

# BIOGRAPHY OF PRUNE NOURRY

Prune Nourry is a multidisciplinary artist, originally a sculptor, born in Paris in 1985. She graduated from the Ecole Boulle, and has been mainly based in New York since 2011.

The artist mainly works by projects – fifteen to date – which follow one another in time, all while frequently communicating with each other. From *Bébés Domestiques*, half-human, half-animal sculptures created in 2006, to *Catharsis* (still being shown at the moment) via *Procreative Dinner*, *In Vitro*, *Genesis*, *Holy Daughters*, *Sperm Bar*, *Holy River*, *Holy Holi*, *Terracotta Daughters*, *Archaeological Dinner*, *Imbalance*, *Process*, *Anima et Serendipity*, Prune Nourry has developed a rich work that examines the questions of life, selection, medical and the place of women in different cultures. Asia has particularly constituted a major source of inspiration in developing her work, whether that be India through *Holy Daughters*, *Holy River* and *Holy Holi*, or China, with its very noticeable reinterpretation of the Xi'an warriors with the features of a set of girls. Prune Nourry's approach is organized around themes related to bioethics (such as medicine, healing, genetic manipulations and embryo selection to the detriment of women in certain countries) and to the sacred. Struck as much by medicine as social sciences—and by anthropology in particular —, Prune Nourry continuously enriches her artistic practice with her personal experiences.

Represented by the Templon gallery in France and Belgium (last exhibitions, *Contemporary Archeology*, to Brussels in 2017, and *Catharsis*, at Paris in 2019), the artist benefited from several presentations that created an impact in institutions and public spaces. In Paris, a huge exhibition was devoted to Prune Nourry at the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques—Guimet in all of its rooms, in 2017 (*Holy*). In New York, the artist presented a monumental Amazon sculpture in 2018, on the plaza of the Standard, at the foot of the

High Line, a stone's throw from the Whitney Museum (*The Amazon*). Prune Nourry glass sculptures made a noticeable display at Glasstress, an exhibition organized in Murano simultaneously with the Venice biennale, in 2019. That same year, Prune Nourry made the film *Serendipity* articulating her creative work as a sculptor and artist with her intimate experience with illness through breast cancer.

To find out more about Prune Nourry's work, the artist's website goes into her work in depth and is richly illustrated. It can be seen at: [www.prunenourry.com](http://www.prunenourry.com)



SELF-DEFENSE, 2019. « CATHARSIS » EXHIBITION, GALERIE TEMPLON, PARIS.  
© B. HUET TUTTI / PRUNE NOURRY STUDIO

# LE BON MARCHÉ RIVE GAUCHE AND CONTEMPORARY ART

Le Bon Marché embodies the department store of arts and culture. 168 years ago, Aristide Boucicaut, founder of the first department store, Le Bon Marché, and modern retail, combined his passion for art with his business. With his wife Marguerite, he exhibited artists who had been refused at the Salon art event. Still today, Le Bon Marché Rive Gauche applies this uniqueness as a signature and carries on the heritage of its visionary founder by supporting renewed contemporary creation. The department store bought in 1984 by the LVMH group is highly invested in the cultural and artistic domain, and could not do other than cultivate its rich heritage supporting the art of its time. Le Bon Marché has designed, created and produced exclusive exhibitions since the 1990s. Fashion, design, photography, film, architecture, contemporary art, the full spectrum of creation is showcased in this way. In parallel the department store has started a collection of contemporary art, expanded with a collection of furniture more recently.

Today Le Bon Marché makes an even more in-depth commitment to contemporary art by following an original model: each year, it gives carte blanche to an internationally recognized artist. Carte blanche has a double meaning: the chosen artist is completely free to create their project, the only stipulation being that the color white be respected as a tribute to Aristide Boucicaut who invented the "white month" promotional period in January to showcase household linen.

Initiating the contemporary exhibitions program in 2016, Ai Weiwei had impressive fantastic creatures floating in the store, made of bamboo and tissue paper. One year later, Chiharu Shiota, magician of sculptures and installations in yarn, featured one hundred and fifty boats in a poetic armada. In 2018, Leandro Erlich, master of illusion, clouded perception of the department store's open spaces by combining sets of mirrors in false fitting

rooms, escalators seemingly transformed into a rollercoaster, and a celestial vault revealed on the ceiling. One year later, Joana Vasconcelos introduced a strange and mesmerizing aerial installation, a monumental and sprawling contemporary Valkyrie. Last year, with studio nendo and its designer Oki Sato, a foray was made into the confines of visual arts and design. A poetic vision of nature and rain was offered to those visiting Le Bon Marché.

Right at the beginning of 2021, following on from the five internationally renowned creators, Prune Nourry will take her place with a never-seen-before and monumental intervention. Like her predecessors, she willingly took on the request of Le Bon Marché to work with white, the only demand made of the artists retained. As the huge open spaces of the department store particularly lend themselves to aerial and monumental works, regulars will note the dialogue undertaken in time between *L'Amazone Érogène* by Prune Nourry and the interventions of artists that have used it as their playground in previous years.



Visuals available upon request

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