PIERRE MERLIER

Pierre Merlier was born in Toutry (21) in 1931. Very young, he began creating small sculptures. As a teenager, he settled in Auxerre to follow teachings from the sculptor François Brochet,* who was already a famous artist; Pierre Merlier's mission was to rough down outlines from wood, prior to the master's sculpture work.

He quickly freed himself from his teacher and showed in Paris beginning in 1954. During his Parisian exhibitions, he occasionally attended the Grande Chaumière academy which is a mythical place where he could freely draw and paint from models. The artist made many sketches there.

In 1956, he won the young Sculpture award in Paris. In 1979 he settled his studio inside an old mill in Escolives Sainte Camille, near Auxerre. Here, he relentlessly created, every day of the week.

"He had to create, it was compulsive" said his wife Michèle Merlier.

Pierre Merlier was a sculptor who wanted to be out of the ordinary. In the beginning, he created abstract sculptures when abstraction was not that popular, then he decided to move onto figurative sculpture by disowning abstraction, when figurative was faltering.

He became one prolific creator of one series of unique characters: among them historic characters like Charles de Gaulle or Hitler. He payed many tributes to distinguished artists like Otto Dix **, Georges Sand and Gustave Klimt, and created caricatural representations of "bankers" and "Bourgeois" ...

From wood material, Pierre Merlier brought life to one characters' tribe by mixing provocation, caricature and emotion.

Focusing his art on the body is ubiquitous for the sculptor: rangy sculptures with Modigliani's touch, solid-cast sculptures with a swollen belly, dressed Madone from top to toe... Pierre Merlier handled the hollow chisels as if it was a paintbrush.

Beginning in 2012, sculpture became a very demanding activity for the artist who was now square old. Therefore, he began to "paint as a sculptor".

He produced many painting series featuring characters' tribe in events, football matches, erotic moments...

We can easily recognize the face treatment already existing on his sculptures: elongated faces, bald heads and wide eyes....

Pierre Merlier died on July 25th 2017. He left behind him prolific works of art mixing wood sculptures, bronzes, drawings, engraving and paintings.

François Brochet* (1925-2001): French sculptor and painter. Mainly known by his 3 works of art which can be seen in Auxerre's streets Restif de la Bretonne, Marie Noël and Cadet Roussel

Otto Dix ** (1891-1969): German engraver and painter associated to the expressionist movement