



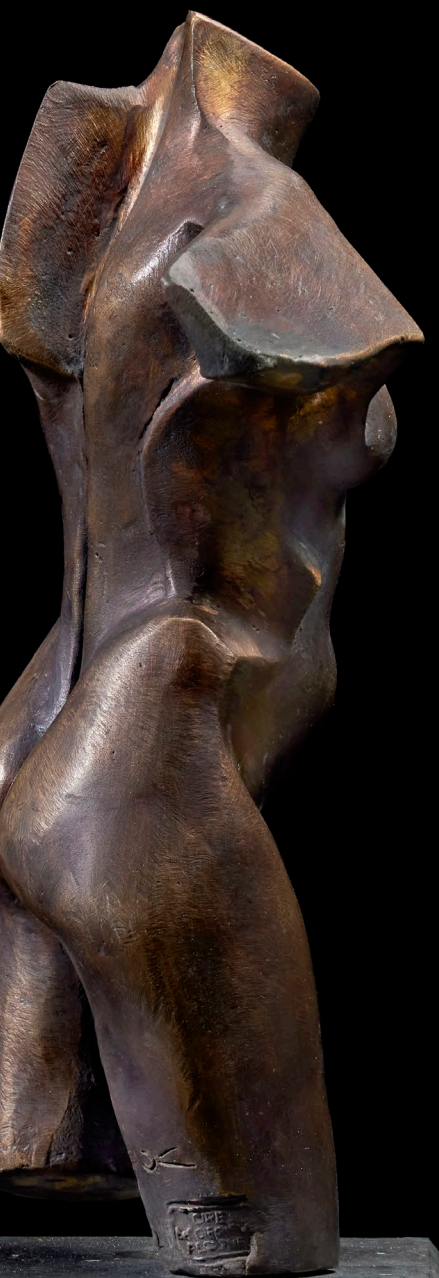
Lilith

Bronze 24 cm
stand in bluestone
12 cm x 13 cm x 9 cm

Georgette de Groote-Tanghe

Georgette de Groote-Tanghe belonged, together with other artists including Octaaf Landuyt, Jef Van Tuerenhout, Yves Rhayé, Camille d'Havé, René De Coninck and Herwig Driesschaert, to an important art movement in Flanders defined by art critics in the sixties as the "Fantastique Flamand". Her work consists of drawings, graphic work, paintings, enamel, sculptures in red copper and in bronze. Individual and group exhibitions in Belgium and abroad. Work bought by the Belgian State – Openbaar Kunstbezit – Museum of Gent – Museum of Courtrai – Embassy of the Netherlands – the Royal Palace – the Royal Military Academy – Flemish ministry of Culture. Works of art in private and public collections in Belgium and abroad. "The Guarded Gate" (bronze) is part of the collection of the SMAK museum in Gent.

Georgette de Groote-Tanghe is Laureate from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture et Arts Décoratifs (ENSAAD) Brussels-La Cambre. Multiple distinctions and prizes including the prix de la Critique Belge in 1968 and 1969.



Historical Approach

The name of Lilith has come down to us today through a rabbinic tradition according to which she was the first wife of the first man (Adam), taken directly from the earth, from the dust, like Adam himself. However, this female creature most likely goes back to texts reflecting Assyro-Babylonian traditions: she was thus an iconic figure in a pantheon of Mesopotamian demons.

Although she was created equal to man according to the biblical texts, her legend soon shows her rebelling against Adam's injunctions, at which point she is pursued by angels and indeed permanently expelled from paradise. She then becomes the symbol of absolute evil, vice, lust and greed; clearly, in this interpretation, she represents sensual abandon – the femme fatale, one might say. Naturally enough, astrology took up this figure and turned her into the black moon, the dark side of the psyche. In ancient times, she was also invoked by sorcerers who considered her to be the companion of Beelzebub.

In the Hebrew Bible the word Lilith is a hapax (a word used on just one occasion). The sole reference appears in the book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 34, verse 14. In this prophecy about the end of the kingdom of Edom, its territory is described as a desolate land, inhabited by various wild beasts and by Lilith. Most English translations do not keep the Hebrew word Lilith, but use expressions such as 'night creature', 'night demon', or even 'screech owl'. Isaiah 34, verse 14: 'Desert creatures will meet with hyenas, and wild goats will bleat to each other; there the night creatures [Lilith] will also lie down and find for themselves places of rest.'

Let us return for a moment to the biblical account in the first two chapters of Genesis. The story of the creation of Eve is well known in the Christian tradition, unlike the story of Lilith. Eve is created, according to tradition, from a rib of Adam. Genesis 2, verses 21, 22 and 23: 'So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man.'" Here the Hebrew plays on the words ishsha, 'woman' and ish, 'man' to explain women's supposed dependence on and submission to men.

In the other creation account, in the first chapter of Genesis, the text reads as follows: 'So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them' (Genesis 1, verse 27). And later: 'Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being' (Genesis 2, verse 7).

This double creation, 'male and female', positions the woman quite differently: in this tradition she is man's equal, drawn like him from the earth. And it is this first woman who is embodied in Lilith. Lilith has thus become, in our time at least, the image of a woman liberated from male control. As such, she has all the qualities to be the torchbearer for the demands of the feminist movement, giving women the status of parity and equality with men rather than subordination as before.

This sublimated image of woman seems to have motivated Georgette Tanghe-De Groot's decision to name her sculpture Lilith, at a time when feminism was not yet particularly fashionable and certainly not acknowledged as a necessary social development. There is much else that could be written about Lilith, with reference in particular to the arts – literature, music, cinema, painting and so on – but let us instead leave time to contemplate this bronze by Georgette Tanghe-De Groot.

-Robert Hostetter