

MONUMENTAL A MONUMENTAL INSTALLATION BY SOPHIE RYDER PLAZA, MAIN ENTRANCE OF THE GRAND PALAIS

The **MONUMENTAL** project is a collaboration between GOWEN Geneva, Art Paris and with the generous support of Gander & White, Maison Belmont and Obedir.



Presented by GOWEN Geneva, two monumental sculptures by Sophie Ryder, *Girl With Knees Up*, 2019, and *Sitting Minotaur*, 2020, will be installed outdoors in front of the main entrance of the Grand Palais, greeting visitors to the 27th edition of Art Paris.

The contemporary practice of acclaimed French-British artist **Sophie Ryder** (b. 1963 London) holds at its core the invention of singular, often playful and impassioned narratives frequently expressed through symbolic, grand-scale, sculptural works. Reflecting Ryder's unique artistic language and conceptual inquiry, two of the artist's most iconic sculptures, *Girl With Knees Up*, 2019 and *Sitting Minotaur*, 2020, are installed on the forecourt of the main entrance to the Grand Palais. Exploring the complexities of emotion through animal imagery, Ryder's work brings together an imaginary cast of characters with which she describes her life, relationships and experience as a human being. Drawing on mythology and the natural world, Ryder frequently melds forms to combine the attitudes and instincts of each.

► Sophie Ryder, *Sitting Minotaur*, 2020
Galvanized steel wire sculpture
6.7 x 5.48 x 5.79 m
Courtesy of the Artist and GOWEN. © Sophie Ryder



Fabricated with galvanised steel wire – a material which became an obsession of the artist after years of studying at the Royal Academy of Art in London and one of her primary means of expression – Ryder’s works have evolved in stature. Often up to 10 metres high, her works are powerful not only in scale but also in the manner – customarily through the elaboration of hybrid animal and human figures – in which they represent broad themes dealing with personal sentiment and circumstance such as family, sexuality, spirituality, or human experience.

From her series of monumental works produced over the past 30 years, ***Girl With Knees Up***, 2019 demonstrates Ryder’s fascination with hybrids. The archetypal Lady Hare has long occupied her imagination, and the human parts are based on the artist’s own body. Like wearing a mask, the persona of the hare, as with many of Ryder’s other characters, renders the figure’s identity fluid and enigmatic.

Sophie Ryder, *Girl With Knees Up*, 2019 ◀

Galvanized steel wire sculpture

6.096 x 2.90 x 4.71 m

Courtesy of the Artist and GOWEN. © Sophie Ryder





The image of the minotaur, something which stems from Ryder's studies in Greek mythology at school, reoccurs throughout the artist's oeuvre. With the Lady Hare, developed by Ryder as a companion to the minotaur, the two sculptures evoke the interplay between masculine and feminine energies. Generally viewed as a ferocious and violent creature feeding on man for sustenance, Ryder's minotaur is, in comparison, not threatening, but strong, loving and protective.

Immersing herself body and soul into the process of making on a monumental scale, the artist explores the physicality and spatial dimensions occupied by her work, something which the viewer may experience as they interact with Ryder's characters. Their anonymous, mysterious aspect offers entry into her unique world and perhaps, momentarily allowing the audience to become part of it. Often designed with public spaces in mind, the wire sculptures, in certain lights, take on a transparent aspect to reveal smaller figures inside. Just like the hare's ability to appear and disappear, Ryder's larger works, with their lightness and transparency, are animated by the sky passing through, giving them life.

This is the first collaboration between Sophie Ryder and GOWEN at Art Paris. The presentation reflects the gallery's unique curatorial approach to presenting singular works by artists experimenting in the wider contemporary field.



A talk with the artist will be organized on Thursday, April 3, 2025, from 3:00 pm to 4:15 pm, in the conference space of the fair (Stand B0) with art curator Jon Benington (discussion in English).

Sophie Ryder (b. 1963, London, England) studied Combined Arts at the Royal Academy of Arts from 1981-84, and was the youngest student after JMW Turner to be admitted. Her work has been shown worldwide including: Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK; Blickachsen, Germany; Frederik Meijer Sculpture Park, USA; Pilane, Sweden and Salisbury Cathedral, UK. In summer 2023, to celebrate the artist's 60th year, a series of Sophie Ryder events and exhibitions were held including open air sculpture at RHS Wisley and Chelsea Barracks, UK. The Lightbox gallery and museum in Woking, Surrey hosted a major retrospective entitled *All of Us* which included over 50 works spanning a career of 30 years.



► Sophie Ryder © MMXXIV Nick Harvey

Jon Benington, a freelance art curator, writer and speaker, grew up in Northern Ireland and is now based in Norwich. For much of his career he was Manager of the Victoria Art Gallery in Bath, where he oversaw the development of the permanent collection, all temporary exhibitions and the education programme. Artists he has worked with include Sophie Ryder, Paula Rego, Gillian Ayres, Ana Maria Pacheco, Shani Rhys James, Maggi Hambling, Grayson Perry, Kenneth Armitage, and Howard Hodgkin. Jon's numerous articles and books on 19th and 20th century art include monographs on Sophie Ryder (2001), Roderic O'Connor (1992 and 2018), John Kingerlee (2006), Sir Peter Scott (1989), Clifford and Rosemary Ellis (2018), Peter Brown NEAC (2008) and Barrington Tabb RWA (2006). He also acts as a consultant for many leading auction houses. To mark this monumental presentation, Jon Benington will be in conversation with Sophie Ryder.



► Jon Benington



About Gander & White

Founded in 1933, Gander & White prides itself as a one stop fine art logistics provider offering a full range of services to all sectors of the art market - from auction houses to commercial galleries, private clients to museums to corporate collections. With offices in London, Paris and across the USA we hold a royal warrant for fine art services in the name of King Charles III. ganderandwhite.com



About Maison Belmont

Maison Belmont, established by Sarah Mugnier in 2022, is a unique concept that transcends the typical jewellery brand through shared experiences and encounters. From its distinguished showroom in Geneva, Maison Belmont invites clients into a curated environment of inspiration and travel, presenting precious jewellery alongside antique decorative objects, and consistently emphasizing fine craftsmanship, aesthetic excellence and sophistication.

maison-belmont.com



About Obedir

Obedir focuses on making compliance easy for companies and enterprises that need to report CSRD. By connecting the entire value chain, Obedir's automated processes drive the correct information to the reporting company at the right time. Obedir enables CSRD, CSDDD and Digital Product Passport production in a few easy steps.

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About GOWEN

Located in the historic old town of Geneva, GOWEN represents Swiss and international emerging and mid-career artists. The gallery prides itself on its rich exhibition program, including curatorial projects and participation in renowned international art fairs. Founded in 2009 as Faye Fleming & Partner, the gallery became Gowen Contemporary in 2010. In 2021, a new 200 sqm space was opened in Geneva at Grand-Rue 23. GOWEN aims to showcase pioneering and cutting-edge artists engaged in experimental and critical approaches, often alongside significant works by historical and critically acclaimed artists, including loans from private collections. The gallery welcomes all forms of medium and artistic expression.

gowen.art

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Grand Palais

Avenue Winston Churchill

75008 Paris

Preview (invitation only)

Wednesday April 2nd from 11 am to 9 pm

Opening times

Thursday April 3 from 12 to 8 pm

Friday April 4 from 12 to 9 pm

Saturday April 5 from 12 to 8 pm

Sunday April 6 from 12 to 7 pm

Admissions

Thursday & Friday: 30 € / 15 €

for students and groups

Saturday & Sunday: 35 € / 20 €

for students and groups

Children under 10: free

The Art Paris team

CEOs:

Julien & Valentine Lecêtre

Fair Director:

Guillaume Piens

Director of Communication:

Audrey Keita

Development and partnerships director:

Caroline Farin

Selection committee:

• **Marc Donnadieu,**

independent exhibition curator and art critic

• **Diane Lahumière,**

Galerie Lahumière (Paris)

• **Fabienne Levy,**

(Lausanne, Geneva)

• **Olivier Meessen,**

Meessen (Brussels)

• **Marie-Ange Moulouquet,**

collector and consultant

• **Pauline Pavec,**

Galerie Pauline Pavec (Paris)

• **Michel Rein,**

Galerie Michel Rein (Paris, Brussels)

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