Petit Palais
Musée des Beaux-Arts
de la Ville de Paris

VISIONARIES
Carte blanche to Prune Nourry

20 October 2026 - 24 January 2027

PRESS RELEASE
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Prune Nourry, *Jane Poupelet* (bronze) - (detail), 2025, bronze (white patina) and marble eyes, 71.1 × 66.7 × 40.3cm. Photo © Laurent Edeline. Courtesy of the artist and Templon, Paris - Brussels - New York. © Adagp, Paris 2026

As part of her exhibition entitled *Visionaries*, the Petit Palais has invited Prune Nourry to invest the spaces of the museum to highlight a selection of little-known female sculptors, as well as those overlooked by art history.

At the artist's request, three art historians carried out research over the course of a year with the aim of collecting the writings and photographic portraits of eighteen female sculptors from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Amongst them are Käthe Kollwitz, Nancy Elizabeth Prophet, Hélène Bertaux, Jane Poupelet, Consuelo de Saint-Exupéry, Selma Hortense Burke, Daria Gamsaragan, and Sarah Bernhardt. Inspired by the artistic quality of their work and the strength of their commitment, Prune Nourry sculpted portraits of these eighteen "visionary" women and in so doing, shines a light on the role of women as creators.

CURATOR:
Sixtine de Saint-Léger, Head of the pre-1800 Decorative Arts and Contemporary Art at the Petit Palais

PRESS CONTACT:
Jules Calmets
jules.calmets@paris.fr
+33 (0)1 53 43 40 23
+33 (0)6 26 91 11 84

Agence Dezarts
Inès Masset
ines.masset@dezarts.fr
+33 (0)6 46 45 63 45
+33 (0)1 44 61 10 53

Céleste Dorbes
celeste.dorbes@dezarts.fr
+33 7 78 24 35 48
+33 1 44 61 10 53

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The resulting works can be seen amongst the collections of the Petit Palais, on the outer esplanade of the museum, and in the gardens.

On the forecourt, the exhibition begins with *Mothership*, where visitors are confronted with a hybrid figure vacillating between a pregnant woman and the rusty metal hull of a ship. In the sculpture gallery of the North Pavilion, the eighteen new portraits created for the Petit Palais bring to life the memory of past sculptors. Prune Nourry prolongs the exhibition by cultivating a dialogue between the museum's permanent collections and some twenty of her previous artworks, taken from her *Holy Daughters* and Venus series.

Like a scavenger hunt, visitors set out to discover the white marble eyes with black pupils, embedded in Prune Nourry's plaster busts and the pedestals of works in the Petit Palais alike. This fosters a visual dialogue between the two. Inspired by the polychrome statuary of the Petit Palais, these stone eyes invite the public to cast a comparative gaze at the various eras represented in the museum, from antiquity to the present day. The artist has chosen plaster as her primary material, in resonance with the museum's collection, where almost 70% of the sculptures are "studio plasters". In other words, these casts were not originally intended for museums, yet they have endured over time, whereas the bronze versions have been destroyed. Prune Nourry also plays with scale: her new busts range from 70cm to 3.5m in height, while her earlier works go from 20cm up to 27m in length, making the exhibition a space where the female body can be said to unfold in all its dimensions.

In the art world, women have long been restricted to roles as models or muses, reduced to bodies scrutinized by the male gaze. Their omission from institutional narratives and from sculpture, stems not from a lack of work, but from a structural erasure. Hampered by social norms and a limited access to training, women needed to assert themselves in a male-dominated sphere. The Petit Palais collection bears witness to this: while women are omnipresent as subjects—idealized or allegorized bodies and models—they are largely absent as creators. Of all the works in the collection, barely 4% were created by female artists, with only four female sculptors represented. This exhibition therefore, offers an opportunity to showcase their work alongside their portraits.

The female sculptors of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may be seen as pioneers. Visionaries, they paved the way for the female artists that followed. Yet, despite the rising use of photography around that time, their faces remain unknown. Prune Nourry is part of this living lineage. She seeks to prolong the legacy of these sculptors by restoring their visibility and affirms, through both her practice and her commitment to sharing their story, her devotion to the recognition of women in sculpture history.

This exhibition has been organized with the support of the Galerie Templon.

TEMPLON

PRACTICAL INFORMATION
PETIT PALAIS - MUSÉE DES
BEAUX-ARTS DE LA VILLE DE PARIS
Avenue Winston-Churchill,
75008 Paris
Tel: +33 (0)1 53 43 40 00
petitpalais.paris.fr

Tuesday to Sunday from 10am-6pm.
Free admission.

Accessible to visitors with disabilities.

Prune Nourry sculpting the monumental works for the 'Visionnaires' exhibition in the studio at Saint-Denis Pleyel station – Grand Paris Express. Photo credit: Elea Jeanne Schmitter © Adagp, Paris 2026

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