

Daphne's transformation into a new existence

Anna Rüegg



Daphne 25
Yew, 118 x 30 x 25 cm

There are different versions of the story of Daphne. The fundamental essence of the story, Daphne's metamorphosis, is always the same, but the story changes depending on where it is told.

Ovid describes the myth of Daphne in his "Metamorphoses". Daphne (which means laurel) is a priestess in the laurel grove of Mother Gaia (Earth goddess). She is wild, young and beautiful. Apollo, who has been hit by Eros' arrow, incessantly harasses Daphne, until she flees and asks Gaia to save her. Gaia turns her into a laurel tree. Apollo embraces Daphne's body and feels bark instead of skin. In this monstrous metamorphosis, Daphne turns back to an evolutionary primitive state. In doing so she loses her ability to talk, her rituals as a priestess, in fact, her entire culture.

In the sculptural representations of the story from the 1st Century onwards, we mostly see Daphne as she wrests from Apollo's embrace. The main elements to Daphne are her feet, arms and head that show signs of metamorphosis. Germann's version of the myth is a very personal story in which Gaia is not Daphne's saviour, but instead represents her hindrance. By transforming Daphne, she takes her away from Apollo. Daphne resists Gaia's spell out of her love for Apollo and wants to retain her feminine form.

The wooden sculptures of the artist embody all that is alluring and seductive. The sensuous, graceful forms are swallowed up in the tree trunk. Smooth amplexity resists archaic fragility. In this we recognise the representation of a struggle. Daphne's sense of self-confidence is juxtaposed with her self-emptying and lignification. The artist brings her figures into the dynamics of identity and the primitive state.

In Germann's work, it is the find itself that determines the processing and the nature of each sculpture. In a symbiotic oneness with the organic material, her artistic aspirations, her imagination and empathy, the artist embarks on a search for the unity of man and nature, thereby creating her own personal Daphne myth. This work alone is symbolic of a metamorphosis.

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