



THE BOOK

Jephan de Villiers' book is an invitation to break away from the alienating burdens of everyday life and immerse ourselves in an imaginary civilisation. Here, we set out with the artist on a journey to encounter a lost world, where nature and culture were once closely entwined, where humanity lived in harmony with the elements.

Trees and water are of central importance throughout the artist's work. Whether as a reminder of the origins of life or as testimonies of ancestral beliefs and practices, nothing has been invented in this singular world of sculptures. Everything in his work has been composed and transferred from a forgotten world. His creations are made from materials derived from natural objects that have fallen to the ground: splinters of wood, bark, water chestnuts, rays' eggs, mysterious sea balls washed up by the ocean and fragments of horseshoe crab shells.

For the artist, the Time he devotes to his work means being alone, in the strictest sense of the word. It is Time spent scouring the ground, in search of materials gathered "on the edge of the world". His work is one of memory, a tribute to all those on the look-out, watching over our forgotten world.

JEPHAN DE VILLIERS

It was around the age of fourteen that Jephan de Villiers began to make his huge earth villages from the soil, leaves

and pieces of bark that he collected in his grandmother's garden in Chesnay, near Versailles. The circus, theatre and mime were also among his passions. His work as a sculptor and poet has continued ever since. In the 1960s, he encountered Constantin Brancusi's reconstituted studio. In 1966, his *Structures Aquaticales* went on show in Paris. A year later, he settled in London where his work was shown regularly. In 1976, he discovered the Forêt de Soignes, the Sonian Forest near Brussels, where his *Voyage en Arbonie (Journey into Arbonia)* began. Since 2000, he has lived and worked in Charente-Maritime, not far from the River Gironde. His work invites us to set aside our daily lives and discover an imaginary civilisation that seems to have emerged from a past where humans and nature lived as one. A number of exhibitions have been devoted to his work. His sculptures can be seen in the open air in parks and public spaces, as well as in museums and private collections. "*Des Fragments de mémoires (Fragments of Memory)*" have been shown in exhibitions across the world.

EXHIBITIONS

- Group exhibition *J'aime les Arbres (I Love Trees)*, at the Retour de Voyage Gallery, l'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue (France) - April to June 2021.
- Exhibition at the Artset Gallery, Limoges (France)
- Permanent exhibition of *Fragment de mémoire (Fragment of Memory)*, as part of the renovated Albert Metro Station (Brussels)

THE AUTHORS

Roger Pierre Turine

Born in 1942, Roger Pierre Turine obtained a doctorate in law from UCLouvain University before joining Belgian Television (RTBF) as an arts critic, at the beginning of the 1980s. He has written introductions to exhibitions and books on artists, among them *Conversation avec Pierre Soulages* (2014), *Conversation with Jed Novatt* (2017) and *Conversation avec Ernest Pignon-Ernest* (2018), published by Tandem.

Caroline Lamarche

Novelist, short story writer, author of radio and stage plays, and for other media, Caroline Lamarche also works closely with designers, painters, artists as well as photographers. She has recently been awarded the five-year Prize for Literary Achievement from the Wallonia-Brussels Federation for 2020-2025.

Laurent Danchin

Laurent Danchin graduated in 1965 from the prestigious École Normale Supérieure (Letters) and taught modern French literature. He was the curator for exhibitions at the Musée de la Halle Saint-Pierre in Paris and at the Abbaye d'Auberive and was a prolific writer, with several books, articles and exposition catalogues to his name.

Bernard Noël

Born on 19 November 1930 in Sainte-Geneviève-sur-Argence in the Aveyron, Bernard Noël is a poet, essayist, novelist and art critic. His close friendship with several painters and sculptors has led him to work on several artists' books and, more recently, with his own illustrations.

Joël Bastard

Born in Versailles in 1955, Joël Bastard is a poet, novelist and playwright and has also produced a large number of artists' books. He gives regular public readings (either solo or accompanied by musicians) both in France and abroad.

Marc Petit

Marc Petit is a poet, fiction writer, painter, essayist and collector, whose many books include *Ouroboros* (*Ouroboros*), *Architecte des glaces* (*The Ice Architect*), *Le Nain Géant* (*The Giant Dwarf*), *La Compagnie des Indes* (*The East India Company*), *Éloge de la fiction* (*In Praise of Fiction*). His book on *Himalayan masks in primitive art*, *À Masque découvert, regards sur l'art primitif de l'Himalaya*, was awarded the Best Artbook prize by the Société des Gens de Lettres in 1996.

***“Figures of silence, watching over our world in crisis”, Caroline Lamarche**

“I have invented nothing, I have simply remembered...” , Jephhan de Villiers

Chantal Detcherry

Poet, novelist and travel writer, Chantal Detcherry was born on the banks of the River Gironde which inspired her book, *Le Sentiment de l'estuaire*, (*Thoughts on an Estuary*), in which she devoted a chapter to Jephhan de Villiers. Her interest in art includes singular, raw, naïve and folk art as well as primitive arts.

Emmanuel Driant

Emmanuel Driant was Executive Producer for France Culture between 1976 and 1996, before becoming a trainer and consultant in communication and head of commercial press. He met Jephhan de Villiers in the 1960s with whom he became great friends, maintaining a keen interest in the development of de Villiers' work, particularly during his London period until he settled in Brussels.

Michel Butor

Poet, novelist and essayist, Michel Butor published over two hundred works in his lifetime. In 1957, he was awarded the Prix Théophraste Renaudot for his novel *La Modification*. As a keen participant in art workshops and the conversations they produce, he worked closely with several artists.

Arnaud Matagne

Born in Brussels in 1973, Arnaud Matagne is an art historian, whose interests are focused primarily on the connection between the various artistic disciplines. His special interests span symbolism, contemporary art, the art of the novel and literature, silent and spoken film, and photography. He met Jephhan de Villiers when he was working for the Royal Museums of Fine Art of Belgium.

Jean-Dominique Burton (auteur et photographe)

Jean-Dominique Burton, born in Huy (Belgium), is a photographer and film director. A tireless traveller, enquiring humanist with a keen, observant eye, Jean-Dominique Burton has turned his attention in recent years to the hidden secrets of Africa, after years travelling in Asia. His approach embraces a sensitive, poetic form of anthropology that unveils beliefs and practices with restraint, respect and a responsible sense of fascination. His photography conveys the pleasure of discovery, a meditation on the origins of artistic creation, with a play on form and theme that steers away from any sterile exoticism. Jean-Dominique Burton met Jephhan de Villiers in 1986.





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