

## **NADA New York | Véronique Wirbel (1950-1990) at Nagas**

Véronique Wirbel was born in 1950 in France. Her father served in the colonial infantry, and her early years were spent moving between West Africa, Central Africa, and later Latin America. What she encountered there stayed with her in a very direct way: animals, rituals, forms, ornaments, and ways of structuring space and meaning that would later reappear in her work.

She settled in Paris in the early 1970s and trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Jacques Yankel's studio. At that time, she was finding her influences. Surrealism and Art Brut were her major sources of inspiration, as were African ritual objects and pre-Columbian imagery. She began a relationship with Corneille, the co-founder of the European avant-garde group CoBrA, which influenced her early practice. In her work, color is often frontal, sometimes almost raw, and the forms are reduced to what is necessary for them to remain legible within the saturation.

By the 1980s, Wirbel was fully integrated into the Parisian art scene and became part of the surrealist group Magie-Image, created by Roberto Matta. The group was made up of Latin American artists influenced by Surrealism and living in Paris. As the art critic Christine Frérot later wrote, Wirbel was close to the artists of Oaxaca, Rufino Tamayo and Francisco Toledo, and also drew inspiration from Wifredo Lam.

From the mid-1980s, her compositions became more compact, structured around hybrid figures, animals, and totemic presences. This is where her vocabulary stabilizes. It draws at once on personal memory and on elements from mythologies, rituals, and legends. Writing becomes integral to the surface. She would sometimes note down words or sentences heard on the radio while working, allowing them to enter the painting as fragments, not as commentary but as part of its internal rhythm.

In September 1990, Véronique Wirbel died at the age of thirty-nine in Étretat, during a period of personal difficulty.