

Ingrid Donat

Ingrid Donat is one of the most influential living artists working in decorative arts. As a contemporary designer and sculptor whose artistic identity has been shaped by her rich cultural heritage, Donat channels an inner creative force that allows her to reinvent the timeless elegance of French decorative arts traditions. Known for imbuing bronze with warmth and vitality, the artist integrates sculptural practices into the production of functional pieces.

Donat was born in France to a Swedish mother and a Réunionese father. Raised in Sweden, she returned to Paris aged 19, where she was taught sculpture techniques by artist Silva Bernt, the partner of André Arbus. Her friendship with Diego Giacometti was a turning point in her practice, as he encouraged Donat to develop her own furniture, which she began doing in the 1980s, forging her artistic language.

Living on the outskirts of Paris through the '80s and '90s, Donat was surrounded by the great collection of paintings, sculptures and decorative artworks belonging to her husband, Francis Lombraïl, an important auctioneer of the time. For these 20 years, Ingrid created designs for her own family house, only starting her professional career at age 40. In 1998, she transformed her home into an atelier and began exhibiting publicly, marking the beginning of her rise in the world of collectible design. By 2003, Donat's collaboration with the art dealer Barry Friedman propelled her onto the international stage, cementing her status as a major figure in contemporary design. Her professional trajectory has been further nurtured by her son, Julien Lombraïl, who co-founded Carpenters Workshop Gallery with Loïc Le Gaillard in 2006 to represent artists like Donat who redefine the boundaries of art, design and craftsmanship.

Donat's upbringing in Sweden instilled in her a deep appreciation for precision and craftsmanship, yet she is also drawn to a fluid, expressive aesthetic of repetitive pattern-making. She takes inspiration from movements like Art Nouveau and Art Deco but also infuses her pieces with influences from Africa, Oceania, South Asia and other world cultures that she encounters and studies. The artist is similarly inspired by the organic sensuality of Egon Schiele's lines, the golden opulence of Gustav Klimt, and the sculptural mastery of Armand-Albert Rateau.

Donat works primarily with noble materials, including bronze, parchment and wood, transforming them through processes that blend precision with intuition. Scarification motifs have become a signature element in her designs, adding texture, history and intricacy to the weighty mediums she works in – as seen most clearly in the Commode pieces that extend throughout her practice. The harmonious integration of traditional techniques with contemporary sensibilities highlights the artist's mastery of the soldering and engraving that adorn her pieces, all of which embody a carefully crafted balance between strength and subtlety, tradition and modernity, function and art.

Donat's work has been showcased by institutions such as Galleria Giorgio Franchetti Alla Ca' D'Oro, UTA Artist Space and Sotheby's, as well as at prestigious art fairs including Art021,

TEFAF, Design Miami and PAD. Complete with nearly 200 illustrations, the monograph Ingrid Donat by Anne Bony (2016, Norma Editions) celebrates the artist's career and journey, from early sculptures to recent series, allowing the reader to delve into her extraordinary artistic universe. Donat also features in the book Star Pieces: The Enduring Beauty of Spectacular Furniture (2009, Thames Hudson).