



Les demoiselles d'Armissan - Hommage to a Forest

It was a beautiful day during August. I went for a walk in the hills near Narbonne, a magnificent area. I hesitated.....poised on a threshold between two worlds, the one beautiful, joyful and colourful. Birds singing and flitting from tree to tree, the rustle of leaves, aromas of the garrigue, thyme and rosemary. A countryside bursting with life, I filled my lungs with the goodness around me.

In front of me... darkness.

I closed the door behind me and walked through the trees. My progress was slow, my tread heavy. I moved slowly forward, what I saw through moist eyes saddened me. All around me were naked, carbonised trunks. I breathed in the desolation. A monochrome landscape, black and grey. On the ground lay a thick carpet of ash, all vegetation erased. There was complete silence. No leaves rustling, no birds singing, no animals scurrying off through the bushes.

Then, I noticed through the blackened columns, a splash of colour, it was the vineyards of Armissan. They had survived, no, more than that they had stopped the fire.

A few weeks later, near dawn, I was there again to soak up the atmosphere of this forest. The opaque light of a full moon guiding me through the trees. I walked slowly, I was afraid of disturbing nature in its grief, my footsteps cushioned by the grey carpet. In amongst the skeletal trees ghostly shadows followed me. There in front of

me a patch of vines, as though surrounded by carbonised sentries, appeared in the milky as an island of life, bursting with autumnal colours. A breathtaking contrast. I was dumbfounded, I couldn't move or breathe, wonderstruck.

As I looked on, the vines slowly, slowly began to move. Maybe it was an optical illusion, a trick of light, but no. These ancient plants, with twisted shapes almost human looking, dressed in rugged bark, started to remove their coarse covering, revealing naked bodies as white as alabaster and smooth as marble. Then began a dance, a strangely beautiful sight, a wonderful joyful spectacle.... And yet all around was desolation.

Little by little dawn broke, the cry of a bird broke the silence, I blinked, and there in front of me appeared a patch of vines. An island of life in a dead sea.

Shortly afterwards I saved a number of vines from a patch that had been ripped up. With trembling hands I removed their coarse covering. Here they are, Les demoiselles d'Armissan, naked, their bodies of alabaster as smooth as marble... It wasn't a dream.

Antony Duff – February 2011





Island of hope

A castaway, adrift on a sea of darkness

In a world stripped of sensations, I wander aimlessly.

A grey world, a black world

There is no life, I see only despair

Then, in the distance, a splash of colour appears, between the carbonised trunks

Leaving the darkness behind I am drawn into an island of life, of movements,
sounds, of hope

Where there is life there is hope

Where there is hope there is life

Antony Duff - October 2012



Tears

You enter my heart

Disturbed by your presence, I hold my breath and await your passing

Tension fills the air

You sometimes bring infernal machines that rip and roar, slash and tear

I drink and breath your poisons

You carry sticks that spit fire and death

You scare us

You depart, leaving behind plastic reminders

Now our world has been extinguished

My heart is broken

Your fire has torn us apart, reduced us to ash

These tears are not for me

They are for you

And your future