

## Minotaur and Hare

Sophie Ryder (Cotswolds, United Kingdom)

**WHO MADE THIS SCULPTURE?** Sophie Ryder was born in London in 1963. She studied at Kingston Polytechnic (1980-81) and the Royal Academy Schools, London (1981-84). Her larger than life sculptural works are reminiscent of Picasso, Goya and Henry Moore. Her animal forms explore the thin boundary between the human, animal and mythological realms.



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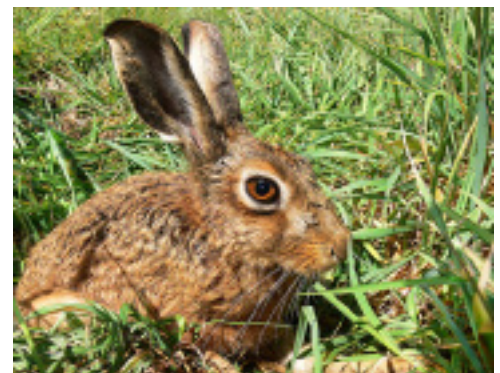


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Since 2000 Sophie Ryder has exhibited widely in public exhibitions in the UK, Canada, the United States, Eire, Belgium and the Netherlands. In Europe the spectacular 10 foot wire Torsos was exhibited at The Hague in Holland, sited in an underground chamber. A major show of indoor and outdoor work went to the Veranneman Foundation in Belgium. Shows in North America included substantial exhibitions in Montreal and Vancouver and recently Sophie participated at the Arts Festival in Carlow, Ireland.

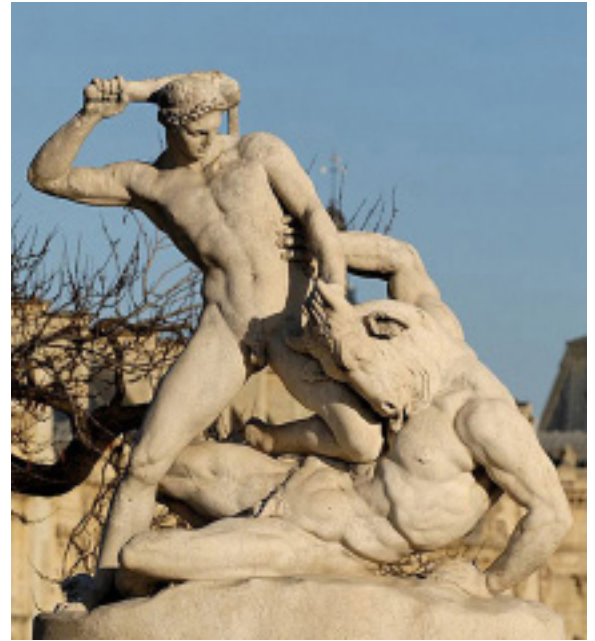
## WHAT IDEAS ARE BEING EXPLORED IN THIS SCULPTURE?

Sophie Ryder's *Minotaur and Hare*, a twisted and wrapped anthropomorphic sculpture made of galvanized wire standing on a ceramic base might at first seem whimsical or maybe that the two are telling a story of love. However, according to ancient folklore, the two are incompatible opposites. In Greek mythology the Minotaur, often portrayed as part man and part bull, is a figure of courage and terror, while the Hare symbolizes fertility, agility, and bravery.



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The story of the ferocious Minotaur is that he dwelt in the centre of a Labyrinth, an elaborate maze, built for King Minos of Crete. When Theseus, King and founder of Athens, learned of the Minotaur living in the maze he volunteered to slay the monster. When he arrived, Theseus met and fell in love with Minos' daughter, Ariadne, who promised to provide him with means of escape from the maze. This was a simple ball of thread, which he fastened to the entrance. As he made his way through the Labyrinth, the thread unwound until he found the sleeping monster. After killing the Minotaur, Theseus found his way out of the maze by retracing the path of the thread.



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**SOPHIE RYDER'S APPROACH IN ART MAKING.** For Sophie Ryder, making art is much more than a profession, it is a compulsion. Sophie starts making a new piece by developing ideas in different media. She might, for instance, make a large sculpture before making a smaller piece of the same idea. Then perhaps a drawing or collage may follow on from that. There is no logical order in the way she works. Her world is one of sawdust, wet plaster, old machine parts and toys, weld joins and angle grinders, wire 'pancakes', torn scraps of paper, charcoal sticks and acid baths. These objects are direct products of her working methods, an unusual process. The idea of making three-dimensional sculptures entirely from wire was pioneered by Sophie Ryder. She begins with a metal armature which is then covered with wire of different thickness and sources. These might include bed springs and other pieces salvaged from skips. She uses her bare hands and pliers, sometimes aided by a hammer to shape the wire.

Although best known for using wire as a sculptural medium, she doesn't restrict herself to the use of one particular material for its own sake. Whatever material she uses, Sophie has always responded by looking closely at traditional work-



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ing methods and then asking how else it could be used. What are its limitations, is it suitable to express her thoughts? It is not enough to say her idea can fit the material, rather the material must bend to her will. She compulsively exploits it, forcing a way through until it forms a unique structure that could only be hers. Whether working in wire, bronze, clay, plaster or translating her ideas two dimensionally, Sophie's strong imagery is instantly recognizable. She works through her ideas in a relentless pursuit of perfection. Sophie Ryder and her husband have started their own foundry next to her studio. This enables her to monitor the proceedings of her work at every stage, as she demands perfection in all aspects of her work. She is also a marvellous drafts-woman, equally at ease in two dimensions. Her charcoals and pastels complement her sculpture admirably.



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**MINOTAUR AND HARE WEIGHS 454 KG (1,000 LB)  
WITH A DIMENSION OF 330 CM X 229 CM X 109 CM  
(10.8 FT X 7.5 FT X 3.6 FT)**

**THIS ARTIST'S OTHER WORKS.** Ryder creates large scale art works that demand a strong emotive response. She finds most fulfillment immersing both her body and soul in the making process. Working on a large scale allows her to move around and interact with the piece from every conceivable angle. The majority of her works are designed for urban public spaces or natural landscape settings.

Individual animals and groups of them, fashioned in wire and in bronze, some realistic and some fantastical, have featured in Sophie Ryder's sculpture and colorful collages since her student days. Her technique of manipulating and winding metal wire to shape her creatures endows her beasts with great dynamism. Human attributes may be found in some of her creatures, but in others innate animal qualities are underlined, particularly in some of the group and pair compositions.



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**TO LEARN MORE:**  
[www.sophieryder.org](http://www.sophieryder.org)

**WHO PUT THIS SCULPTURE ON DISPLAY IN VANCOUVER?** This sculpture is part of Vancouver Biennale 2009-2011 Exhibition. The Vancouver Biennale is a non-profit charitable organization that celebrates art in public space. Each exhibition transforms the urban landscape into an Open Air Museum, creating globally inspired cultural experiences where people live, work, play and transit. The Biennale features internationally renowned and emerging Contemporary artists that represent a diversity of cultural perspectives and artistic disciplines including sculpture, new media, performance works and film. The objective is to use great art as a catalyst to transformative learning and social action.

The Vancouver Biennale also creates supporting public programs, events and publications including the award-winning BIG IDEAS Education program, the International Artist Residency Program inspired by Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream", the CineFest LIVE documentary film festival and the Tour de Biennale and BIKennale arts & culture cycling events.

**TO LEARN MORE** you can search the terms **BIENNALE**, **PUBLIC ART** or **OUTDOOR SCULPTURE PARKS** on-line. Also Visit the Vancouver Biennale website at [www.vancouverbiennale.com](http://www.vancouverbiennale.com)

#### IMAGE CREDITS:

- 1 Sculptor with *Minoaur and Hare*; Dan Fairchild
- 2 The Minotaur in the Labyrinth, engraving of a 16th century gem in the Medici Collection in Palazzo Strozzi
- 3 Sculptor at work; Harry Scott
- 4 Benjamint
- 5 Theseus fighting the Minotaur by Jean-Eyienne Ramey, marble, 1826, Tuileries Gardens, Paris
- 6 Sculptor at work; Harry Scott
- 7 Sculptor at work; Harry Scott
- 8 *Paint Pots*, (Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 2008); Harry Scott

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