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AT THE TUILERIES, DIALOGUE RELIES ON FORM TO MAKE A CONNECTION

BY RICHARD LEYDIER

— For eight years now, the FIAC and the Domaine National du Louvre et des Tuileries allows a few galleries participating in the international art fair to show monumental sculptures in the Tuileries Gardens in Paris.

This year, seventeen projects have been selected and the resulting works can be seen all along the central alley. Some of the sculptures have decided to be discrete, even to try their hand at camouflage, despite a modern workmanship that should logically have made them stand out against the historical and natural surroundings. Take Francisco Sobrino's large op art structure (*Untitled*, 1963-1971, installed by Jousse Entreprise, Paris) that reaches a height of 7.5 metres and whose plates of polished steel, by reflecting the grass, the sky and the foliage of the surrounding trees, make it surprisingly furtive. Depending on the angle of one's point of view, it can even disappear completely. The misshapen and stylised concrete cross (*Scruff Mechanics*, *Gray Cross*, 2013, Eva Presenhuber, Zürich) by Valentin Carron also blends in relatively well with the ancient marble statues that are dotted around the Tuileries. After a similar fashion, you could almost take Berger&Berger's structurally 'weakened' version of the geodesic dome (*Planetarium Sorrow*, 2013, Torri, Paris) for an arbour, a dome-shaped support for climbing plants.

Conversely the more 'visible' pieces are those whose, when all's said and done, baroque or classical trappings lend themselves to a dialogue with the rich history of their location. Take for example James Lee Byars' large golden sphere (*Untitled*, 1992-2010, Michael Werner, New York-London) that was initially conceived for the palace of Charles V at the Alhambra in Granada. From this piece emanates an impression of purity reminiscent of the pure spheres to be found in certain paintings by Nicolas Poussin (who actually lived in the Tuileries during the time he spent in Paris). As for Didier Faustino's large sculpture,



Didier Faustino, *Memories of Tomorrow*, steel barriers.
Photo: Marc Domage presented by Michel Rein, Paris-Brussels.

it is entirely composed of crowd control barriers, the same that are used on a regular basis by the police to channel and restrict both the flow and anger of crowds. Called 'Vauban' barriers in French, here they perfectly describe the curves of a formal garden (such as those designed by Le Nôtre in the 17th century). *Memories of Tomorrow* (2012, Michel Rein, Paris-Brussels) thus evokes a sort of duel between Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban and André le Nôtre, in which the rigour of military architecture meets the sensuality of the garden's arabesques. In short, it is like an iron hand in a velvet glove.

Finally, Shen Yuan's large ceramic *Pont* (2013, Kamel Mennour, Paris) takes the first tentative steps to establishing a dialogue between cultures, an exchange that remains fragile and perilous as is mirrored by the narrowness of this fragile work of art. Through its evocation of a constant throughout history, a blue and white ceramic tradition, the work takes us on a journey through the Arabic, Chinese, Portuguese and Dutch cultures (the famous Delft pottery). Dialogue often relies on form to make a connection. ■