

VEILHAN VERSAILLES

XAVIER VEILHAN
AT THE CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES

PRESS PRE-OPENING: WEDNESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2009
EXHIBITION: 13 SEPTEMBER – 13 DECEMBER 2009



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VEILHAN VERSAILLES

INTRODUCTORY TEXTS

JEAN-JACQUES AILLAGON

Throughout its existence, Versailles has encapsulated the creativity of artists from France and other nations. No sooner had building work begun on the Château than Louis XIV called on the services of Hardouin Mansart, Le Brun, Le Nôtre, Lully, Molière, Vigarini, Francini, Bernini, all of whom left their mark on the site with masterpieces of their period. In later years, the Château and estate were enhanced by such as Lalande, Lemoine, Nattier, Riesener, Mique, Gabriel and Hubert Robert. When Louis Philippe set up the Museum of the History of France at Versailles, he in turn commissioned work from the leading artists of the century: it is to him that we owe the masterly decorative schemes produced by Delacroix, Horace Vernet and Meissonnier for the Hall of Battles or the Hall of the Crusades.

It is in the same spirit that the State authority now entrusted with the running of the Château and Park, the Etablissement Public du Musée et du Domaine National de Versailles, wishes to ensure that outstanding artists of our time should be present at Versailles. Following the worldwide acclaim for the exhibition *Jeff Koons Versailles* in 2008, this year it is the turn of Xavier Veilhan to present his works inside the setting of the Château and its estate and to take on the task of working specifically for the site. He will be the latest in a centuries-old line of artists and designers: producing work for the Gardens, the Royal Court, the apartments of the Château, always in reaction and relation to the stunning heritage left by those who went before. His exceptional talent for capturing the spirit of the place will certainly intrigue and challenge the perceptions of the visitors from all over the world for whom Versailles is one of the chief jewels of France.

Jean-Jacques Aillagon,

Chairman of Château de Versailles Spectacles,
President of the Etablissement public du musée et du domaine national de Versailles, May 2009

XAVIER VEILHAN

A year ago, when Laurent Le Bon and Jean-Jacques Aillagon invited me to follow in Jeff Koons' footsteps, I had no idea just how much space in my life Versailles was going to take up: the exhibition is a wonderful opportunity to present my work on a big scale, both in terms of size and the public involved.

There's a need here to measure up with the desires that were given shape by our ancestors, to show how our own desires can both protract and complement them, not innocently, but with the freshness of ambition. Mainly running along an east-west axis outside the Château itself, my proposal features a series of works specially produced for this occasion that create a contemporary dotted line which splits in two the masterly garden lay-out of Le Nôtre.

Art is a visual device which we have to look through in order to understand our past, our present and our future.

Xavier Veilhan, May 2009

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

Furtivo, Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris
Furtivo, Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Torino
Metric, Gering&Lopez Gallery, New York
Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm
Aérolite, music show with Air Centre Pompidou, Paris
Les Habitants, Palais des Congrès de la Communauté Urbaine de Lyon, Lyon (public commission)
Miami Snowflakes, Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Miami
Sculptures automatiques, Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris
Le Plein emploi, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Strasbourg
Le Projet Hyperréaliste, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, & the National Academy Museum, New York
People as Volume, Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm
Éléments célestes, artistic conceptions, Chanel Joaillerie, Taiwan, Paris, New York, Hong Kong, Tokyo
Le Lion, Place Stalingrad, Bordeaux (commande publique)
Vanishing Point, Espace 315, Centre Pompidou, Paris
Big Mobile, Forum, Centre Pompidou, Paris
Le Monstre, Place du Grand Marché, Tours (public commission)
Barbican Center, London
CCA Kitakyushu, Japan
Göteborgs Konsthall, Göteborg
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona
Le Consortium, Dijon
MAMCO, Geneva
ARC, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris
Keep the Brown, Galeria Javier Lopez, Madrid

COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS:

Airs de Paris, Centre Pompidou, Paris
Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, München
La Force de l'Art / Grand Palais 2006, Paris
Supernova : Expérience Pommery # 3, Domaine Pommery, Reims
Thank you for the music, Simon Lee Gallery, London
Collection and new acquisitions, Viktor Pinchuk Foundation, Kiev
Boucle, Carrousel du Louvre ; *Ville Nouvelle*, Cour de l'Hôtel de Ville, Nuit Blanche 2006, Paris
Fundacion La Caixa, Barcelona
None of the Above, Swiss Institute Contemporary Art, New York
Genesis Sculpture : Expérience Pommery #2, Domaine Pommery, Reims
Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris
Musée du Louvre, Paris
7e Biennale d'art contemporain de Lyon
Collection Lambert, Avignon
Centre Pompidou, Paris
Tate Gallery, London
Guggenheim Museum Soho, New York
Fondation Cartier, Paris
Kwangju Biennale, Korea

XAVIER VEILHAN

IS REPRESENTED BY THESE GALLERIES:

Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm
Galeria Javier Lopez, Madrid
Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris/Miami
Gering&Lopez Gallery, New York

VEILHAN VERSAILLES

PRESENTATION OF THE WORKS
BY BÉNÉDICTE RAMADE

INTRODUCTION

How might one comprehend an ensemble of architecture and landscape as symbolic as Versailles? Xavier Veilhan has done just that with an exhibition-piece open to all and situated principally within the ambulatory spaces of the palace and its gardens. Because, as any good artist attached to systems of representations' concepts and processes, Veilhan has taken this opportunity to showcase a new piece placed within the perfect setting that is Louis XIV's, a fluid and dynamic trajectory focused on the relationships between scale, equilibrium and observation points. These chapters, telling the story of a single solitary work, follow each other in the course of a scripted walkthrough, nourished by the genius of the surrounding environment and the great geniuses that inhabit the artist's memory.

THE MAP

A full-fledged work of art, Veilhan's design synthesizes all of the propositions into one exhibition, breaking new ground. Stylized, the sculptures' and statues' silhouettes occupy positions within this new spatial (hi)story, a journey acting like an unrestricted open-air museum. In his time, Louis XIV described his own conception of Versailles in a short text. Here, Xavier Veilhan describes a global vision of his own representation «à la Versailles».

THE LARGE CARRIAGE

Insolently violet, *The Large Carriage* is displayed in the court of honor. Here, its familiar form is deformed by a shock wave, a genuine, dazzling trajectory placed on those very cobblestones. In an acceleration, this strange horse-drawn carriage plays on references to photographic analyses of movement done at the end of the 19th century by Marey and Muybridge. As the grand siècle (17th century) rubs shoulders with modernity, the gallop metamorphosizes into a colored and optical force.

Commissioned work by the Centre National des Arts Plastiques (Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication)

THE NAKED WOMAN

Borrowing this great classic from Art History, here Xavier Veilhan gives us a version of the feminine nude with sparkling metal curves. By playing with rupture of scales – that of the servant within the court's superhuman framework, of the statue's oversized pedestal – the artist explores his hobby horses. Does a monument necessarily need to be monumental? Here, like a new standard-meter, the female figure regulates the court's balance. Its pathetic size in comparison to the architectural ensemble's affirmation of power acts to normalize; the woman, in her ingenious nudity, regulates the universe of Versailles. While remaining immutable and commanding, she also becomes modern, contemporary and delicate.

LE GISANT, YOURI GAGARINE

Every great conquest has its hero. Within this popular pantheon, Youri Gagarine is in the right place, fulfilling the modernist fantasy to be the first man in space and the first man to have seen the earth as an object. However, he fell back to Earth, into a space between the recumbent statue and fallen man, a derisory figure constructed by technology and fantasies. He lays on the bare ground without any pedestal.

Appropriating the "recumbent statue" motif as "statuary's ultimate state", Xavier Veilhan once again plays on the relationships of scale with a more than 4-meter-long Gagarine-colossus. The celebration of progress' universal symbol, - the conquest of the universe and of knowledge - has left a few elementary of its elementary particles behind. Astrophysics and relic devotion thus compose the astronaut's newest tangible incarnation, this new modern man who still symbolizes hope and progress. An echo of Louis XIV's conquest.

VEILHAN VERSAILLES

PRESENTATION OF THE WORKS (FOLLOW-UP)

THE MOBILE

Like an overflow of thoughts and inspiration, a delicate effervescence occupies this transitory space - the grand staircase - a terrain of clashing images of a visit to the palace, where the graceful and colossal monochromatic mobile acts like a planetary hourglass. Mixing together skeins from the past, present and future, it could be a modern representation of the Fates, those mythological goddesses of destiny. But its perpetual movement sends us even closer to the conditions of modernism and science.

THE LIGHT MACHINE

A light bulb as a pixel: the equation that this great luminous piece proposes, takes the digital image back to its primitive or amplified form, converting the digital into low definition. 1000 ampoules for 1000 pixels per image. The flickering short film (in black and white) offers a ghostly bird's-eye view of the Versailles gardens. As in a memory, the images are smoothed over: from object to sign, "the narration is as much more rich as it is open and incomplete".

THE ARCHITECTS

Claude Parent
Richard Rogers
Sir Norman Foster
Renzo Piano
Tadao Ando
Jean Nouvel
Anne Lacaton & Jean-Philippe Vassal
Kazuyo Sejima
Philippe Bona & Elisabeth Lemerrier

Because the famous personalities that have traversed these venerable alleys and perspectives, Xavier Veilhan wanted to add his own personal touch, his pantheon of great architects, of whom Claude Parent would be the patriarch. This list of names mixes with that of great universal references, weaving the relationship between the subjective and the generic that the artist loves so much. A full-length, classical-style portrait is thus made of each great architect, using an extremely sophisticated digital scanning technique. But the monochromatic treatment gives this open-air portrait gallery a ghostly and enigmatic allure. Perched very high on barely outlined pedestals that function like frames in the landscape, this community of master-builders offers a new dynamic axiality to the gardens' main artery, naturally leading to the king's perspective.

THE FOUNTAIN

Xavier Veilhan has also added his own touch by designing something entirely new, a technical feat that will be located in the middle of the Grand Canal, the king's pride. A 100-meter-high fountain, a dynamic homage to Brancusi's *Endless Column* and to progressive optimism. The height determined by the kinetics energy could be thought of as entirely fortuitous. But it has been calculated using the gardens' global scale. "Brought up to size", in a way.

Translation by **Christine Beunaiche**

VEILHAN VERSAILLES

PRACTICAL INFORMATION & CONTACT

PRACTICAL INFORMATION VEILHAN VERSAILLES

Press Pre-Opening

Wednesday 9 September 2009

Exhibition

From 13 September to 13 December 2009

In the Court of Honour, Royal Court, Gabriel and Queen's Staircases and gardens of the Château of Versailles

Normal conditions of visit

Exhibition included in the tour King's State Apartments and Queen's State Apartments

Entrance to the exhibition

From the Court of Honour of the Château of Versailles

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THE VEILHAN VERSAILLES EXHIBITION

is organised by **Château de Versailles Spectacles**

Chairman **Jean-Jacques Aillagon**

Manager **Laurent Brunner**

Coordination **Elodie Berthelot**

Exhibition management **Laurent Lebon**

Scenography and artistic collaboration **Alexis Bertrand**

Production **Château de Versailles Spectacles, AIA PRODUCTIONS**

VISUAL MATERIAL

High resolution photographs can be downloaded from the 'corporate sector' on www.chateauversailles-spectacles.fr

User name: **versailles**

Password: **spectacles**

Xavier Veilhan website: www.veilhan.net

Cover image: © **Vincent Germond**

