

EUROPEAN GARDEN AWARD 2019 – 2020

Laudation for: Jardins d'Étretat (1st Prize, Historic Gardens)

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Versailles, Villandry, numerous palace parks and gardens, gardens inland and at the coast – they represent an exceptional garden culture in France.

And who can forget Monet's garden, which enchants us in Giverny with a wonderful reflection of garden art and impressionism.

In the Étretat gardens, we encounter him again: up here on the steep cliffs is a magical place with a magnificent view that inspired Monet in his famous painting "The Cliff of Aval, Étretat".

One of his best friends, Madame Thébault, laid the foundations for the garden that we are honouring today with the European Garden Award, when she bought a Belle Epoque villa and planted one of the first trees on untouched land.

More than 100 years later, a young man from Russia visited this same place – and fell in love instantly. He bought the abandoned property and acquired another in the neighbourhood.

His name is Alexandre Grivko and he is a graduate horticultural designer and florist.

About another 100 years (?) later, the transport and processing of 1000 tonnes of earth, the construction of 2 km of gravel paths and last but not least the purchase and planting of more than 100,000 evergreen plants from Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands – his own personal vision of a garden in Étretat was realised.

The 7,000 m² garden incorporates quite exceptionally the geological and atmospheric density of this stretch of land between the sky and the sea and is a pure passion:

Green spaces and round forms proceed in waves up to the sea, a forest of clipped yews, whose tops stick out into the sky, regarding the conifers on the French coast, while arcs and gaps symbolise the ebb and flow, box tree crowns are reminiscent of mussels washed up on the beach, narrow-leaf phillyrea (*Phillyrea angustifolia*) look like chalk cliffs.

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ome of the commonly occurring species in Normandy are planted, such as the silverberry (*Elaeagnus*), but also species imported from Japan, like the redvein enkianthus (*Enkianthus campanulatus*).

Alexandre Grivko has designed a sensory and very imaginative type of garden space at Étretat, which immerses us into different worlds – with a change of perspective in every respect, with a great feel for the historical origins but also cautiously leading to the future:

A space with precise topiaries which captures the visitors with the topiary art of Baroque and Renaissance gardens and is equally associated with the modern gardens of Jacques Wirtz. Walls made of azaleas, rhododendrons and camellias form the background for a romantic garden. At the end of an alleyway, a secret garden enclosed hermetically by a bamboo hedge summons up contemplative peace, whilst a virtual place arises in the "Avatar Garden" with holly mingled with roots.

All of this takes place in front of homogenous greenery with shades of blue agapanthus, white camellias or even orchids, designed so that their blossom complies with the season.

Right at the end of the garden, high above the sea, a wooden terrace offers a breathtaking view of the chalk cliffs which once fascinated Monet so much...

And Alexandre Grivko interweaves the work of humans and nature in his garden with the genre of contemporary art. He has invited renowned artists whose work temporarily or even permanently adds to the language and symbolism of this magical site.

This is how the sculpture of the Polish artist Wiktor Szostalo, who portrays a huge Claude Monet, creates surprise.

The most highly impressive works are the enormous round heads made of elastomer resin by Samuel Salcedo, which seem to be laid in green ellipses and whose grimaces, sometimes sad, sometimes joyful, complete the mysterious allure of this wonderful garden.

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azz concerts, theatre and other events round off the whole ensemble in Étretat, and since last year a festival has made the encounter between art and the garden a regular fixture.

The whole place reflects its surroundings: it is a treasure chest full of horticultural, scenic and artistic works with a poetic dimension and each of the individual spaces has its own charm –

All of this is united with a single inspiration into one pattern that is simply gorgeous.

The jury was very impressed by the idea and the design of a garden that captures and uses its historical roots, in particular the surroundings and its atmosphere do not only incorporate but also identify with it and this is also avantgarde in the best horticultural traditions.

I am very pleased to be able to personally greet Alexandre Grivko and his team of IL NATURE – Alexandre is one of the most important horticulturalists who is referred to as "an ordinary gardener".

Your wonderful location, Alexandre, is receiving the EGHN Garden Prize in the category of "Best development of a historic garden or park" and I am very pleased to present you and your team with the prize. Please come and join me up on stage.