

EUROPEAN GARDEN AWARD 2021

Laudation for The Third Train

1st Prize "Design or concept of a contemporary park or garden"

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Heavily impacted by 20th century wars, the region Hauts de France chose to celebrate its heritage and resilience in the gardens of peace. The gardens of peace - a idea that will eventually include thirty sites - creates places to think, rest and self-reflect on the concept of peace. It's an unique landscape project that creates a brand new typology of remembrance. The gardens are an initiative by Arts & Jardins | Hauts-de-France, honouring the hundred years since the end of the First World War. The initiative pays tribute to the nations who chose to embrace the pacification of the modern world.

The first satellite of the gardens of peace, The Third Train, is located on the Armistice glade, in the Forest of Compiègne. The armistice that ended World War One was signed there on November 11th 1918, in a rail coach. The more painful it was that in the second World War, the same spot was chosen to sign the ceasefire of 1940 after Germany won the Battle of France. Making this landscape the backdrop of a complex history of war and peace.

Now, The Third Train is designed by a French-German collaboration: the landscape architect Marc Blume, the artist Gilles Brusset and the architect Francesca Liggieri.

From the entry to the glades, visitors are able to make a memorable walk before discovering the location of the Armistice. The paths crossing the undergrowth are a poetic version of the trenches of the First World War.

The Third Train is a garden that embraces the qualities of soil and undergrowth. The planting plays with the light making the walk an enriched spatial experience. The spaces encourage the discovery of a peaceful place along the winding paths. It suggests the idea of an unlimited garden, always expanding as one walks through it.

The paths of the garden make their way through the foliage, creating rounded planted areas where different essences of the forest can be seen.

The main axis of the garden design centres The Third Train, a wooden sculpture of 70m long. It echoes the two trains in which the Armistice of 1918 and the one of 1940 were signed.

The sculpture floats above the ground, points towards the middle of the glade and horizontally crosses the undergrowth. It is decorated with tens of mirrors oriented towards the sky making the sculpture shimmer like a jewel in the woods. One can sit or lay down on it on a summer evening contemplating the sky of peace filtered by the foliage.

The jury is very enthusiastic about this project. The Third Train is a small garden, but with a huge impact. It's an unique landscaping project and a very special place of remembrance of the Great War. In a very subtle and poetic way, visitors are pointed to the absence of brutality of the conflicts of the 20th century. That needs to be kept alive.

The designers created a coherent design, that looks 'simple' but is very strong. The layered narrative of this landscape and of the design strengthens the experience. Coming from the darkness of the forest, you are invited to immerse yourself in this place of peace. The play of dark and light, open and closed, makes a visit to this place (almost) a spiritual experience. The garden encourages the freedom to wander, which contributes to contemplation. In this space, you are one with your thoughts.

It is precisely the simplicity of the chosen form language, the limited choice of materials and the subtle planting that reinforces the highlight of the site: the wooden sculpture that stretches 70 metres across the garden, the symbol of the two trains where a historic moment took place.

With much love and care, this project was created and with a lot of attention the project is maintained, as I saw for myself during my visit.

We would like to give the designers our compliments for this wonderful project. This also counts for Arts & Jardins | Hauts-de-France who took the initiative for the whole series of gardens of peace.

The Third Train deserves to be in the spotlight.

On behalf of EGHN I would like to congratulate all the designers and builders that are behind the making of The Third Train. We would like to ask Marc Blume, Gilles Brusset and Francesca Liggieri on the stage to receive the award in the category 'Design or concept of a contemporary park or garden'.

Thank you.