



V E N E T

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Bernar Venet is the Palace of Versailles's guest in 2011.

He is taking over from Takashi Murakami who, as we know, attracted considerable interest and sizeable crowds in 2010.

The Palace of Versailles chose Bernar Venet to showcase a French artist's meticulous, intense efforts to probe the question about the relationships between art, landscapes and architecture, and therefore between art, time and history. It is also the first time that this institution has decided to display an annual contemporary art exhibition work of art in the Marly Estate, which it is now responsible for.

I am all the more delighted as my friendly respect for Bernar Venet goes back a very long way. He is relentlessly tearing down his own work and starting again. And – something I find absolutely remarkable – can look at other artists' works with caring, insightful eyes.

Jean-Jacques Aillagon

Former Minister

Etablissement Public du Musée et du Domaine National de Versailles President

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I was excited when Jean-Jacques Aillagon asked me to take over the Palace of Versailles for two reasons: because it was an amazing backdrop for my sculptures, and because it was an amazing opportunity to capture my conception of space. I found Versailles fascinating even before they started organising contemporary art exhibitions. I made my own photomontages, overlaying my sculptures and the Chateau de Versailles backdrops, long before the Jeff Koons exhibition. I kept that project secret, along with several other “perfect views” for my work. During the Versailles heyday, those projects would have been called “caprices”. The only difference is that, in my case, they were sculptural rather than architectural “caprices”.

Versailles, as I see it, is all about wide open spaces and perspectives that stretch as far as the eye can see. It is the perfect venue for my sculptures – and a real challenge to take on such a sublime, grandiose milieu. My Arcs have to blend in without fading away in the backdrop. So I have to accommodate several variables. That was why I decided to tailor new sculptures to the area’s topology and scale. It was clear at the start that my sculptures would not be on show inside the Château, as they would unleash their full potential in the paths across Le Notre’s gardens. I am thinking about the sunrises and sunsets, and the golden light that steeps the Corten steel in red and brown hints.

The curves on my sculptures will contrast with the angular geometry in the gardens, and espouse the circular edges around the Basin d’Apollon and Grand Canal.

Bernar Venet

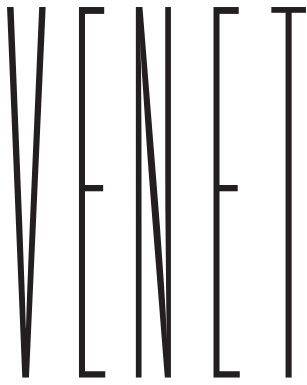
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When he was doing his military service in Tarascon (in Southern France), in 1961, Bernar Venet delivered a performance lying nestled in refuse. That was the first work he laid claim to. More than 50 years down the road, this artist is taking over the Palace of Versailles court of honour and gardens with his Corten steel Arcs, Lignes Indéterminées and Effondrements (“collapses”). The book published for this exhibition tells this protean artist’s visual story, the story about his path from conceptual art to public art, and the story about how his paintings, installations, performance, monumental sculptures and even writing have made a lasting mark on the contemporary aesthetic landscape.

The essay by artist and art critic Brian O’Doherty in the catalogue published for this exhibition focuses on Bernar Venet’s contribution to the big issues that art and sculpture are grappling with today. Bernard Marcadé’s starlit, polyphonic article provides perspective on a singular artist who is exacting and rigorous, and yet wholeheartedly embraces formal freedom.

Bernard Marcadé
Exhibition curator



À VERSAILLES

THE WORKS

This exhibition organised by curator Bernard Marcadé, features works in the Palace of Versailles gardens and the Marly Estate.

86.5° Arc x 16 – Place d'Armes

This first sculpture is not confined to the Château: it is also a gift for the town, as it enhances the perspective from Avenue de Paris. It was created specifically for this spot, and provides two angles. First, it encircles Louis XIV's equestrian statue – and overhangs it. Then it opens up a new perspective: it frames the chateau it towers over. It is something of an interlude, a decompression chamber. And it intertwines two scales: an amplified human scale (the Louis XIV statue) and a monumental scale (Mansart's architecture). The arcs stand 22 high between them.

5 Groupes d'Arcs, 214.5°, 215.5°, 216.5°, 217.5°, 218.5° – Parterre of the South

This is the most literal expression of Bernar Venet's Arcs. They almost interlock into a circle. The full shape is a prism that underlines the perspective and shifts the view, stretching towards the four cardinal points.

Trois Lignes Indéterminées – Parterre of the South

This sculpture points towards the Château, underscoring the North-South axis, and unfurling across the Parterre du Midi over the Orangerie, capturing the perspective to the Pièce d'Eau des Suisses.

219.5° Arc x 28 – Water Garden

These arcs facing the Château lean over the Parterre d'Eau, and face viewers with an eminently material feel. They seem to bend over them – and their undiluted dimensions also overhangs visitors.

Effondrement: 225.5° Arc x 16 – Apollo Bassin

These slim arcs between the Bassin d'Apollon and Grand Canal bow and collapse following no particular rules besides haphazard balance and gravity.

219.5° Arcs x 13 – Bassin du Fer du Cheval

These two clusters of arcs mirror the Parterre d'Eau and underscore the end of the secondary arm of the Grand Canal, in front of the Bassin du Fer à Cheval at the foot of the Trianon.

Lignes Verticales – Marly Estate

Bernar Venet's lignes verticales spring from the gardens that once nestled the château that Jules-Hardouin Mansart build for Louis XIV's leisure, replacing a building that is no longer there.

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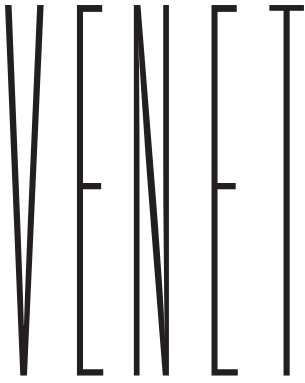


86.5° Arc x 16 – Place d'Armes

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BIO

Bernar Venet's career began in 1961 when he coated canvas with tar and exhibited mere mounds of coal as sculptures. The French artistic scene's lading lights – Arman, César, Jacques Villeglé, etc. – promptly encouraged this avant-garde artist to take it further.

He moved to New York in 1966, discovered minimal art there, and continued experimenting with tubing blueprints, reproducing scientific drawings solely to distil the evocative, meaningful views. The neutral images were stripped from any artistic addition and devoid of the artist's subjective eyes. He exhibited alongside the day's minimal and conceptual art top names – Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd, Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, etc. – in Dwan, Paula Cooper and other galleries. He hones a 4-year programme to delve in the various branches of science, and decided to end his artistic career at the end of that period. That period ended in 1971 and Bernar Venet started working on retrospectives on his work and speaking around the world (including a lecture cycle at the Sorbonne). When he resumed his artistic career again in 1976, he picked up the mathematical formulae again, and his paintings and sculptures took a formalist turn. He distilled the notion that randomness is mathematical into a series of lignes indéterminées sculptures, “doodling” them to no particular aesthetic agenda or predefined pattern. Then he moved on to sculptures comprising arcs providing depths to the various angles, which define and compose them. There is something strikingly material about Bernar Venet's Corten steel arcs, and they provide meaning for their surroundings. The line variants – arcs, tilting arcs, vertical arcs, collapses, etc. – add up to Venet's vocabulary to broach the issues that sculpture has to deal with, i.e. the relationship with the body, balance, setting and so on.

He made the mainstream with exhibitions featuring his sculptures around the world (inter alia in Paris). In Versailles, he will be baking over the eminently classical and distinctly geometrical Palace gardens, which radiate the rules of perspective. He is fully aware of this symbolic aura enveloping this place, and set out to underscore the lines, capture the coherence, and cast a new light on it – on occasion using contrast, i.e. a overlapping a collapsing view and the exactly drawn lines (for example, something that looks like a wreck, not lacking in form yet deliberately anti-formal, between the Bassin d'Apollon and the Grand Canal, enthroned in the par-excellence architectural gem that is Versailles).

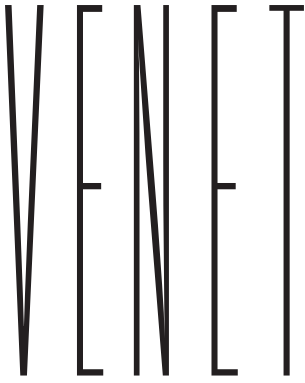
Bernar Venet was born in 1941 in Château-Arnoux Saint-Auban, in the Alpes de Haute Provence (France). He lives and works in New York and Hungary.

VENET

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Bernar Venet



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PRINCIPAL SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1968 Judson Church Theater, *Relativity's Track* (Performance), New York
1970 Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany
Kunsthhaus, Hamburg, Germany
1971 New York Cultural Center (Retrospective), New York
1975 *XIII Biennial*, São Paulo, Brazil
Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK
1976 La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, California
1977 Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, Saint-Étienne, France
1988 *Graduation* (contemporary ballet), Opéra de Paris, Salle Favart, Paris
1986 Castelli Uptown, New York
1993 Musée d'Art, Nice, France
Wilhelm Hack Museum, Ludwigshafen, Germany
1994 Museo de Arte Moderno, Bogota, Colombia
Venet au Champ de Mars, Paris
1995 Hong Kong Museum of Art, Kowloon, Hong Kong
Shanghai Museum of Art, Shanghai, China
1997 Musée de Grenoble, France
Institut d'Art Contemporain, Villeurbanne, France
Musée du Québec, Canada
1998 Musée d'Art Moderne de Saint Étienne, Saint Étienne, France
1999 *Improvisé - Inachevé - Non-Formulé*, Mücsarnok, Budapest, Hungary
Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (MAMCO), Geneva, Switzerland
2000 Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Museu Brasileiro da Escultura, São Paulo, Brazil
Centre d'Art Contemporain Georges Pompidou, Carjac, France
2002 Ludwig Museum, Koblenz, Germany
Performance-Poésie, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
2003 Musée d'Art moderne et d'Art contemporain (MAMAC), Nice, France
1961-1963, Hôtel des Arts, Toulon, France
Bernar Venet aux Tuileries, Paris, France
2004 *Sculptures on Park Avenue*, New York
2007 National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea
Bernar Venet à Bordeaux, France
Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst, Duisburg, Germany
Busan Museum of Art, Busan, Korea
2008 Kunsthalle Darmstadt, Darmstadt, Germany
2009 Arsenale Novissimo, 53rd Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy
2010 Bernar Venet in Hermann Park, Houston, Texas
Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM), Valence, Spain
Bernar Venet in Salzburg, Salzburg, Austria
2011 Le monde de Bernar Venet, Venet in Context, Musée des Abattoirs,
Toulouse, France
Seoul Museum of Art (painting retrospective), Seoul, Korea

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The Catalogue

The exhibition catalogue is published by Editions du Regard and covers Bernar Venet's entire career.

The essay by artist and art critic Brian O'Doherty focuses on Bernar Venet's contribution to the big issues that art and sculpture are grappling with today. Bernard Marcadé's starlit, polyphonic article provides perspective on a singular artist who is exacting and rigorous, and yet wholeheartedly embraces formal freedom.

Bernar Venet exhibitions, Summer 2011

Museum Ludwig, Koblenz, Germany, 6 April to 6 June 2011

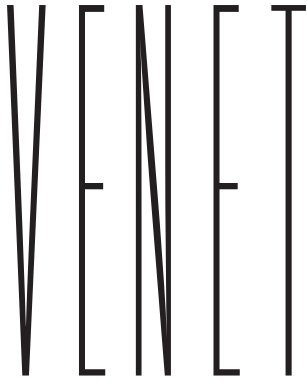
Blickachsen 8 Rhein Main, Frankfurt, Germany; preview: 20 May 2011

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes, France; preview: 20 May 2011

Rives, Dérives, Biennale de Sculpture, Valenciennes, France; preview: 20 May 2011

Bernar Venet, L'oeuvre peinte, Hôtel des Arts, Toulon, France, 11 June to 18 September 2011

Bernar Venet Sculptures, Poppy et Pierre Salinger Foundation, Le Thor, France, 20 June to 6 November 2011



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THE EXHIBITION

The Venet Versailles exhibition is organised by the Établissement Public du Musée et du Domaine National de Versailles and by Palace of Versailles Spectacles (executive production).

Jean-Jacques Aillagon

President, Établissement Public du Musée et du Domaine National de Versailles and Palace of Versailles Spectacles

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Chief Heritage Curator, Managing Director

Denis Berthomier

Executive Director

Bernard Marcadé

Exhibition Curator

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PRACTICAL

The Exhibition

1 June to 1 November 2011

7 new monumental works on show in the Versailles and Marly Estate gardens

Versailles: free admission (Cour d'Honneur entrance) any day except Grandes Eaux Musicales days (Saturdays and Sundays from 2/4 to 30/10, and 2/6 and 14/7, except 1/5; Tuesdays from 24/5 to 28/6 and Friday 22/4).

Marly: free admission (park main entrance)

Internet

www.chateauversailles.fr

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