

TRAIT POUR TRAIT 1993

Stainless steel

H500/L1150/P1150cm

National Funds for Contemporary Art

Installation :

Contemporary Arts Center of Kerguéhennec in Bignan, Locminé (FR).

TEXT BY ELISABETH BALLET

The sculpture « Trait pour Trait » stands in the Domaine de Kerguéhennec forest away from the footpaths in a long, wide clearing that leads to a pond. The dimensions of the sculpture are imposing.

One can see something from a distance without realizing what it could be. A dull veil clouds the view of the landscape that appears to have a gray grid on it. When one approaches the sculpture, it is seen to be round, taking up nearly the whole width of the clearing. One has to walk some distance before finally being able to recognize the sculpture.

A group of five meters high rods is placed vertically in a circle eleven-fifty meters across. The rods are welded together with four flat-sided iron rings, which are attached horizontally at four different levels. The sculpture immediately suggests a cage. A door that is cut into the rods closes very quietly by itself as soon as one has gone through it. The grass in the clearing grows both inside and outside the circle. The first time I saw this place, there were beautiful cobwebs covering this clearing that no one ever walked through.

I decided to make my sculpture out of unpolished stainless steel to avoid a glare in the sunlight. The gray metal rods create a pattern against the landscape, which can also be seen from the inside through the rods. The rods are arched slightly inward at the top to arrest their flight into the sky. They are arranged in such a way that the sculpture is closed off at top and bottom, and the trees form a kind of wall on the sides.

I chose this site in the park without knowing beforehand what I would do there. Most of all, it was the place I liked, its solitude, the surprise of discovering it, its peacefulness at the turn of a dark, hidden forest path. This clearing really is unexpected when one comes across it. I sat down there. I wondered how the concepts for my work, which I was developing at the same time in my atelier, could be linked to a work outside. I imagined this site as an ordinary exhibition space. For this reason, I asked a surveyor to draw an exact plan of the clearing for me indicating the trees and the unevenness of the ground. I always work with a plan representing the borders, within which I find my rules. Then I reconstructed the space using a model. In this way, I was able to create a sculpture for an external space, but from a distance, in peace and quiet in my atelier.

My work is based on a principle of displacement – from words to things, from the drawing to the sculpture, from plan to volume, from perimeter to the centre, and – more generally speaking – from one work to the next. I created “trait pour Trait” according to the pattern of a sculpture I made in 1990, which was called “Face-à-Main”. I developed an idea at a 360° angle: what I see, what may be seen around me, enters into the construction, serves as a model – a sculpture, a sentence, a thought. In Kerguéhennec, the trees that completely encircle the clearing became my model – their long vertical trunks were transformed into steel rods placed in the centre of the clearing forming a circle – a very picture of the face of the landscape (“trait pour trait avec le paysage”).