

## **André Du Bois**

### **Attracteurs - An homage to the difference ; an interactive path**

André Du Bois' *Attracteurs* involves a radical realignment of what public art is or can be. The actual forms are enigmatic, prescient and have the insignia of an artist whose engagement with nature is the point of departure for a dialogue on culture. The interactive nature culture flow inherent to André Du Bois' *Attracteurs* is something new in the public art discourse, an emerging connective aesthetic that is increasingly perceived as essential in the urban context, for humans are so often estranged from nature. As public art, Du Bois' *Attracteurs* are not those object-based Plop art works that occupy most public art sites as visual markers. Instead, Du Bois' public art displays that same inherent sense of the fragility of life as his wood assemblage sculptures. There is a sublime collaging of symbols, of nature, of sound, and of space in these works.

While most public art emphasizes distraction, or object dominance of the artwork, André Du Bois' is truly futurist for its sense of art's capacity to integrate a dialogue with an environment that is as much about sound and light interaction as the specifics of the site, and its effects are as much invisible as visible. With great artistic freedom and audacity, Du Bois invents new ways of perceiving space, light, and form in public art. The bridge is always to nature's own fragility, the fragility of life and procreative design. The craft element also emerges in the variability of each of *Attracteurs*' thirty six sculptural components.

Located in the Quartier Saint-Roch of Quebec City's Lower Town, André Du Bois' *Attracteurs -interactive path* brings public art into a radical intersection, for here is an artist has engaged in a dialogue with ecology while adding a few traces of his classic sense of humour to the art. These sculptures are like space invaders, or a strange cluster of hybrid gigantesque insects (originally referred to as *les Capteurs*, as if these sculptures an alien life form!) assembled from cedar wood gathered in the forests of the Bas-Saint-Laurent region. Cast in bronze, a material associated with classic modernist sculpture, these sculptures have all the variability of nature, the lines, branches, all a suggestion of the impossibility of capturing nature's infinite variation.

As sculptures they are quietly sited, seemingly at random, in front of the Saint-Roch Church, in the place de l'Université du Québec, and in the beautiful public garden named in honour of Jean-Paul-L'Allier (1938-2016) former Mayor of Quebec City from 1989 to 2005. The UNESCO Heritage prize is given worldwide in Jean-Paul L'Allier's name. The park itself is a place enjoyed by the citizens of, and visitors to, Quebec City. As public sculpture, the *Attracteurs* invokes a reintegration of a human presence within the orchestrated nature design within the quartier Saint Roch and Jean-Paul-L'Allier park. The L'Allier Park is a beautiful regenerative sanctuary in the urban context, a place for people to relax and engage with the

variability of nature's own designs in the urban context. The symmetry of the garden design is contrasted by the chance placement of these sculpture elements.

With their original sound assemblage-component designed by René Lussier, seventeen of *Du Bois' thirty six Attracteurs* are interactive and reference this site in the quartier of Quebec designated for new technologies. Unlike Plop art, Du Bois sculptures are efforts at creating an art that focuses on permacultural reintegration into the ecosystem and is likewise unobtrusive, user friendly, and interactive. Despite the restricted space of park, Du Bois works, his exchange with light and sound elements that ultimately encourage an environmental awareness for visitors. The way Du Bois transforms these urban/natural spaces verges on public performance art... Amid the flora, plants, flowers and trees, these *Attracteurs* likewise generates an acoustic environment using a connective aesthetics and that is truly state of the art.

As a cultural component in an urban area these sculpture adopt a kind of camouflage character, a near invisibility, but they likewise add a cultural aspect to what these bronze sculptures cast at the Atelier de du bronze d'Inverness. Arriving in the Saint-Roch district, these three dimensional assemblage cast sculptures exist as forms that reaffirm nature as source, and provider. Each sculpture has unique variables, due to the nature of the lost wax casting process. The variability of each form bring with it a craft aspect that personalizes the look of each element of the *Attracteurs*, a far-sighted project that is quite unique in urban projects in North America. Made from found cedar selected in and around the Bas-Saint-Laurent region, part of Du Bois' process, the *Attracteurs* memorialize the fragility of life, embroidering this urban context and the Jean-Paul-L'Allier park.

Du Bois' public art is one of the most successful integrations of an artists' vision in a public space, for in an age of coastal flooding, global warming, they are conceived less as objects than as procreative and interactive elements that enhance our awareness of space, of place and of the immutability and physics of place, all this in an age of new media, screen bred imagery, and disconnected sensibilities.

The original sound compositions are engaging and are activated when you get near to a sculpture. As sounds we the public then hear are surprising, involve chance and conjure a sense of the mystery of nature culture interchange. We feel that nature itself is a product of human perception in the way Du Bois' thirty six sculptures integrate as an ensemble in a response to the Quebec and Bas-Saint-Laurent bio-region. This is an eco-artists response to global realities, achieved with aesthetic resolve.

As a project the *Attracteurs* began in 2010, a response to the Ministry of Clulture of Quebec and Quebec City's "Art et design urbain – Saint-Roch technoculture" competition. Over the

next five years of realization, the *Attracteurs* project had considerable input from the architects Madame Diana Cardas and Pascal Gobeil . Their expertise enabled the eventual and effective realization of this four season permanent public art project. Meriol Lehmann and Tobie Horswill likewise helped in realizing the sound interactive aspect of the project. The sound aspect is remarkably effective in its near invisibility, and included unique compositions enacted via motion sensor sound emissions. Andre Du Bois' dialogue is intimate, and without that dominant sense so many land artists have of taking over a place. His sensitivity to site and place is remarkably visionary.

- The *Attracteurs* team were shortlisted for the Prix des mérites d'architecture de la ville de Québec in 2016
- John K. Grande, summer 2018
- Artist's site : [www.andredubois.com](http://www.andredubois.com)
- John K. Grande
- A leading figure in the field of art and ecology, John K. Grande has curated five editions of Earth Art for the Royal Botanical Gardens in Canada, Eco-Art for the Pori Art Museum, Finland (2011) Art Nature Spring in Merano, Italy (2014) and Small Gestures at the Kunsthalle/ Mucsarnok in Budapest, Hungary (2016). Specializing in art and ecology, John K. Grande's books and catalogues include *Artr & Environment* (Friendly Chameleon, 1992), *Balance: Art and Nature* (Black Rose, 1995), *Art Nature Dialogues: Interviews with Environmental Artists* (State University of New York Press, 2004), *Dialogues in Diversity* (Pari Publishing, Italy, 2008) and *Art Space Ecology – Two Views Twenty Interviews* (Black Rose / University of Chicago, 2018). [www.johnkgrande.com](http://www.johnkgrande.com)