

MARTINE FEIPEL & JEAN BECHAMEIL
SELECTED WORKS



Sculpture Crash Park, 2011

Nuit blanche Metz (F)

Plaster objects, remote-controlled items, arena

Sculpture Crash Park was presented in the main hall at Metz City Hall as part of the 2011 Nuit Blanche event. The installation was designed as an interactive game to be played in successive rounds. Six players engaged in a battle of plaster sculptures mounted on caterpillar-track platforms using remote controls to move them around in a ring. With even the least impact altering the fragile objects, the players gradually led them to destruction.

Staging a playful iconoclasm using everyday objects (garbage can, vacuum cleaner, garden gnome, etc.) in the context of City Hall was a kind of diversion of purpose. The institutional space became playground provided the setting for the desacralization of art objects by the act of destruction.



Le cercle fermé, 2011

54th International exhibition - Venice Biennale, Luxembourg Pavillon (I)

Mixed materials and techniques

Le Cercle fermé (The Closed Circle) was Martine Feipel and Jean Bechameil's contribution to the 54th Venice Biennale, in 2011. Created expressly for the uncompleted 15th-century Ca' del Duca palazzo, the work alluded to the Venetian context, to the unreal and timeless city. The artists' staging aimed to go beyond the limits of a place to find a new one, prompting reflection on the meaning of limit and space. Subjected to forms of deconstruction and opening, the Ca' del Duca space became multifarious and fragmented, a maze of disconcerting, destabilizing portions of space.

Le Cercle fermé symbolizes space in disorientation and crisis, reflecting a rapidly changing society in which past models of orientation and action are radically called into question.



Le cercle fermé, 2011

54th International exhibition - Venice Biennale, Luxembourg Pavillon (I)

Mixed materials and techniques



Many Dreams, 2012

Beaufort 04, Triennale of contemporary art by the sea, Blankenberge (B)

Polyester resin

Many Dreams was produced for Beaufort 04 – The Triennial of Contemporary Art by the Sea, in Belgium. A 1950s tourist bus, cast full-size in stonelike synthetic material, stands immobile on the beach at Blankenberge, its roof rack still full of passenger luggage. The bus was clearly headed out to sea before stopping short at the water's edge, as if stranded there and frozen in time.

This work symbolizes the wait for a hypothetical departure on journeys that will never happen, a metaphor for unfulfilled wishes and unquenched aspirations.



Un monde parfait, 2013

Galerie Gourvennec Ogor, Marseille (F)

Jesmonite

The installation *Un monde parfait* (A Perfect World) is a reflection on the modernist utopian architecture of the 1950s through the 1970s, specifically on the social housing projects of that period. Programmed and designed to solve the housing crisis and the needs of large communities, these projects have become symbolic monuments of a generation and an era. Their demolition or renovation is a frequent subject of debate and controversy. While residents have developed a sort of family-heritage connection to their apartments, some municipalities seem to be in a rush to eradicate what they consider “trouble spots.”

At the time, the architects and urban planners promised a perfect, modern, beautiful and functional world. Today, the huge urban projects belie those promises, with many in deplorable condition. *Un monde parfait* revisits the issues and metaphorically shows the state of an ideological world in turmoil.



***La nuit sans lune*, 2013**

Creux de l'enfer center of contemporary art, Thiers (F)

Mixed materials and techniques

The installation *La nuit sans lune* (The Moonless Night) was created for an exhibition at Creux de l'enfer – Centre d'art contemporain, in Thiers, France. The place is marked by the violence of the surrounding nature and by the harshness of the living and working conditions that prevailed on the former factory site. The building stands on a cliff alongside a torrential river punctuated by blocks of rock. The valley's factories have been shuttered but still carry the memory of precarious lives.

The abandoned factory site and a certain feeling of solitude that goes with it inspire *La nuit sans lune* through a history tinged with melancholy. The bell that sways above dark pools of water lends final movement to the remaining factory machinery. It peals in muted silence. The rocks reclaim their right to prominence on the upper floor. The work confronts a disappearing world and a story of destinies in an experience of relocated reality.



La nuit sans lune, 2013

Creux de l'enfer center of contemporary art, Thiers (F)

Mixed materials and techniques



At dawn, 2015

In rapture and pain, Lustwarande, Tilburg (NL)

Polyester resin

At Dawn was created for the exhibition *Lustwarande '15 – Rapture and Pain*, held at the Oude Warande Park in Tilburg, Netherlands. Set in the midst of the woodland, emblems of modernity such as a car, a television set and ghetto blasters allude to the incalculable waste generated by our society. Damaged, broken and ravaged by time, they resemble historical vestiges of a modern age and contrast sharply with the natural environment of the Baroque park.

The staging evokes the remnants of a party and uses icons of a recent past to sublimate them with dark optimism.



Ballet of Destruction, 2016

Public art experience, Belval (L)

Synthetic gypsum, robotic engines, sound

Ballet of Destruction was created during the artists' Public Art Experience residency at Esch-Belval, in Luxembourg. Three sculptures cast from remains recovered at the former steel plant are animated by programmable robotic motors. Like a mechanical ballet, the movements give new life to the industrial fragments in a dematerialized choreography orchestrated by sounds specific to each motor.

The installation calls into question the consequences of evolving production technologies. Conceived as a reference to the growing hegemonic presence of robotics in modern industry, this dance of objects also revives the poetic quality of old mechanical forms and pays homage to their mysterious geometry.



Ballet of Destruction, 2016

Public art experience, Belval (L)

Synthetic gypsum, robotic engines, sound



Ni robot, Ni esclave, 2019

HAB gallery, Nantes (F)

9 Fabric banners, tools

Stretched out across pitchforks, brooms and rakes, these banners bring to mind popular revolts. The geometrical shapes on coloured are a symbol of renewal and echo early 20th century art, while the words embroidered on them refer to an artisanal handicraft of yore with a revisited from a contemporary perspective.

The slogans *Enragez-vous* ("Get Angry"), *Le futur est notre seul objectif* ("The future is our only goal"), *Explorons le hasard* ("Let's explore randomness"), *La folie est à l'ordre du jour* ("Madness is the order of the day"), *Ni robot, ni esclave* ("Neither robot nor slave") all confirm the political dimension, which echoes the Beat Generation, The Situationist International, and the slogans of striking workers in May 1968.



Mechanics of the absent revolution, 2017

Casino Luxembourg – Forum of contemporary art (L)

Resin acrylic, robotic engine, sound

Mechanics of the Absent Revolution is a headless sculpture with legs that appear to be stepping forward, leading to doubt as to the identity of the man enthroned on his pedestal. The only coloured element – the pale pink heart – is replaced by a motorized object that spins and seems to be looking for its initial position, hesitant in its comings and goings.

Here, the artists have turned to a news story for inspiration. In 2013, in Kotovsk, a tiny Russian-speaking town in the Ukraine, locals discovered a statue of Lenin had been beheaded. The formal and nostalgic symbolism of this unresolved affair, where the statue was “unbolted” – a man embodying the now faceless revolution – in the heat of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, was of interest to the artists as well as its potential political message.



Contra Construction Unit, 2017

HAB gallery, Nantes (F)

Resin polyester, 3 robotic engines, 3 sounds

Contra Construction Unit is an abstract architectural object that constructs and deconstructs itself all to perfectly timed choreography, performing a ballet of shapes and colours that seek to find the ideal architectural and pictorial composition. The work is directly in line with modernism and particularly the *Contra-Construction Project* by Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg whose utopian housing project designed minimalist living spaces resulting in a balance that would allow modern man to live in harmony with his environment. The work also evokes Le Corbusier's famous "Unité d'habitation".



Contra Construction Unit, 2017

HAB gallery, Nantes (F)

Resin polyester, 3 robotic engines, 3 sounds



Hotel Utopia, 2018

Ses Dotze Naus, Ibiza (E)

Video still, Collective action.

In 2018, during the residency “Ses dotze naus” in Ibiza, Feipel & Bechameil worked on an unfinished project by Catalan architect Josep Lluís Sert. The building was initially intended to become a hotel and remains a manifesto of modern architecture and an utopian project for the architect. It is composed of simple volumes where every unit has a window overlooking the bay.

The artists wished to appropriate and inhabit the place through a collective action. With the help of local islanders, they repainted the building in a way that was both symbolic and reversible. With their uniquely gentle and generous palette – sea-green, pale pink, bright orange, coral red, midnight blue, azure, pale yellow - the artists underline the architecture of the building, revealing its beauty and fragility as a contemporary ruin.



Hotel Utopia, 2018
Ses Dotze Naus, Ibiza (E)
Video still, Collective action.



Electric Eclipse, 2017

HAB gallery, Nantes (F)

Resin acrylic, Epoxy, 2 robotic engines, 2 sounds

Steeped in the heritage of pre-WWII modernist painters and architects, Feipel & Bechameil create bas-reliefs that take their inspiration from the repertoire of that period's shapes and colors. *Electric Eclipse* and *Untitled* are sculptural and pictorial compositions made of acrylic resin – a material frequently employed by the artists resulting in works that are both artisanal and spotless. The choice of a soft and bright color palette also a direct reference to the 20th century avant-garde. The introduction of an ultramodern element, a robotic motorization allows the artwork to come alive and to executes a choreography that deconstructs and reconstructs the composition of the artwork through movement and sound.



Les Brutalistes, 2020

Permanent artwork, Nantes (F)

Concret, glazed lava stone, lamp, wood oven

In their artistic approach Feipel& Bechameil are bent on proposing new ways of sharing and inclusion. Devised like a staging theatre, the sculptural ensemble permits a new representation of local neighborhood life. *Les Brutalistes* is, through its utilization, a conveyor of links. Fitted with ovens, the sculptures bring the inhabitants together around a custom of cooking with firewood.

The work is an attempt to re-invent man's place in the contemporary space and enable him to appropriate the public place.



Les Brutalistes, 2020

Permanent artwork, Nantes (F)

Concret, glazed lava stone, lamp, wood oven



Les Brutalistes, 2020

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Firing and celebration with the neighborhood



The Gonner House, 2022

Permanent artwork, Rumelange (L)

'Shelters', Birdhouses in glazed ceramics

Permanent indoor and outdoor installation conceived for the House *Gonner*. An industrial site transformed into a guesthouse by *Heisbourg & Strotz* architects in collaboration with the artists Martine Feipel & Jean Bechameil *The House Gonner* is part of the Minetttrail.

In their work the artists wished to revalue the industrial patrimony and to imagine the Gonner house like a place of cohabitation between the past and the present, between mankind and nature. The artist meant to pay a tribute to the nature by giving the place partly back to it. In this way the main facade has been provided with glazed ceramic birdhouses that are implemented inside the façade, they will allow birds in housing difficulties to find shelter and nest.



The Gonner House, 2022

Permanent artwork, Rumelange (L)

Indoor wall in acrylic resin

Inside the building the artistes conceived a bas-relief that stretches over the walls of the two floors and includes the doors leading to the rooms. The artwork represents a tree from the roots to the treetop, it stands as the central pillar keeping the house upright. And becomes a way of glorifying nature and the living through nature and the living in all its various forms.



L'immortelle, 2021

La littorale, Biennale of contemporary art, Anglet (F)

Aluminium cast

On the beach of Anglet, we are confronted with a life cycle constantly evolving and challenged by man; between the things that we produce and reject, what vanish into the sea and comes back, expelled by the waves. The cliffs have been carved by those waves over the years and mark with a timescale. Man occupied those same cliffs and incise it with stories buried in the past.

L'immortelle represents an imaginary tree and gourd characterized by ultra-organic features, that presumes a tropical plant. They appear as fascinating then terrifying, overflowed by life, but immaculate by the silver reflection of the bright and shiny aspect of the raw aluminum from whom it is shaped. They appear as an immortal figure. This alienating vegetal regains the landscape and questions the relation between the natural and artificial, nature and culture.



L'immortelle, 2021

La littorale, Biennale of contemporary art, Anglet (F)

Aluminium cast



Garden of resistance, 2022

MUDAM, Museum of modern art, Luxembourg (L)

Aluminium cast, robotic engines and sound installation

At Mudam, the artists address this question of allegiance to technology in a new light. The exhibition, entitled Garden of Resistance, consists of three sculptures, including a new work. Together they create an artificial, automatized landscape intended to 'unite the inert and the animate'. The work questions the capacity of our natural environment to develop strategies of resistance to the pressures brought to bear on it by industry. At the same time, the exhibition proposes a fantastical scenario; a hybridization between nature and technology as opposed to the familiar nature/culture binary. Conceived as a garden of a different nature, its components are not plant-based but metallic and electronic. Nature is denatured and becomes almost monstrous.

