

OPENING DISCOURSE OF THE '1% ARTISTIQUE' OF THE ASSEDIC DU XX^e DISTRICT OF PARIS

Refined over the centuries, the city of Paris reveals to the discriminating eyes of a wanderer an exquisite harmony. The different architectural styles weave a tapestry of masterpieces envied throughout the entire world. Adding a relevant work of art to such an heritage requires not only



Photographie : Lorentino

a profound understanding of the historical context but also an absence of aesthetic cowardice. Nevertheless, this is the noble goal of the Assedic (the French Welfare Agency) of the 20th Administrative District of Paris.

The Survival Goup is honored by this important responsibility which, while difficult, will stretch the talents of its members. This piece commissioned by the French Welfare Agency fulfills its legal obligation to devote 1% of its construction budget towards works of artistic value. This original sculpture will serve as a metaphor for Hope and Inspiration and will be titled : TheAssedic Aesthetic.

A long Stendahl Avenue, classic building materials such as stone are amalgamated with the most advanced alloys and concrete in a delicately coherent fashion (an aesthetic already foretold by the eponymously-named roadway).

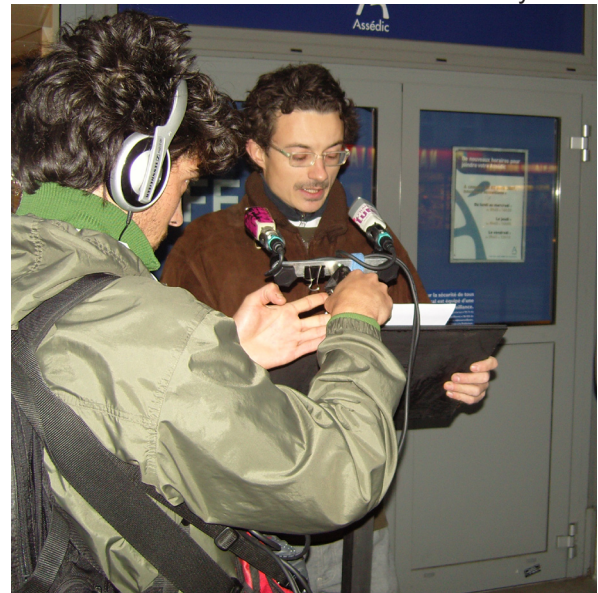
It is therefore necessary, even critical, to respect this architectural harmony while, at the same time, introducing a touch of whimsy and fantasy.

This fanciful moment will be delivered to all but primarily to those who visit the offices of the welfare agency, the intended recipients of our message of Hope and Inspiration.

However, we must be careful because this touch of whimsy and fantasy must respect the essence of the space with which it converses ; too violent

of a contrast, too many foreign elements will rupture the delicate architectural harmony of Stendhal Avenue, like a traitor among friends.

Concrete, from which the offices of the welfare agency are moulded, is one of the archetypal materials of the modern era. It is a commonly used



building material due to its rare and sought-after qualities : extraordinary impact resistance, a low wear coefficient, and non-trivial insulating characteristics.

Certain architects, including the most well known, have elevated its status by utilizing it to create veritable masterpieces of industrial housing .

In addition, its unmatched natural hue, an elegant pale grey that allows all other colors to shine in its presence, has captured the imagination of some.

Among its acolytes, we count Anne Lacaton and Jean Phillippe Vassal.

Ideally suited for living spaces, due to its warmth and the feelings of wellbeing that emanate from its walls, concrete was often used in the creation of the comfortable housing complexes built to solve the housing crisis of the 1960s.

Reinforced, concrete was previously used in the construction of World War II bunkers to protect soldiers, important people, and ammunition. During these times of skepticism and anxiety, we wish to invoke its virtues of comfort and safety to highlight the philanthropic and universal mission of the French Welfare Agency, the protector of civil society.

Our reinforced concrete will be moulded in the

shape of a flower container to symbolize the fruit of our labors.

Our work celebrates, therefore, the enthusiasm and the dynamism necessary to find gainful employment while also recognizing the patience needed by the courageous welfare recipient to collect



his benefits.

And the promise of greenery that it suggests allows us to avoid clashing with the architectural context because the reinforced concrete of the flower container will blend with the four large columns at the entrance while nevertheless evoking nature's fecundity.

However, we do not wish to strip the mineral element of all its aesthetic dimensions.

Indeed, it is self-evident that, like the sun setting on the horizon, a beautiful stone deserves our fullest attention.

As a result, we have chosen to erect in each flower container reddish rocks selected by our best artisan stone-cutters. From their fiery volcanic birth at the Earth's core, following the long torturous path up through her crust to finally form majestic snowy peaks, these rocks are an allegory of the three phases envisioned by the French Welfare Agency :

- 1) A personal accounting of one's strengths and weaknesses
- 2) Re-training and re-education
- 3) A triumphant return to the workforce

With the stark nature of these two mineral elements, the natural rocks and the reinforced concrete, our different visions are fused together in an aesthetic of aridity.

With an aesthetic of aridity, or a realistic alternative in an environment that does not cry for vain demonstrations of grandiloquence but rather pleads for reserve and humility, our ultimate goal is pe-

haps fulfilled.

Born of awareness and activism, fully committed and singular in purpose, this work, nevertheless, gently pries open the doors of perception in a social context disturbed by a vision of instability and feelings of being overwhelmed.

Indeed, these robust volcanic rocks represent the strong partnership between the French Welfare Agency and its visitors. Their multiple facets recall the expansive field of possibilities offered to us, a field fertile and full of promise available to each and every one of us such that, combined with our natural instinct for survival, allows a visitor to the agency to find within himself the necessary resources to transcend his unemployed status as well as the care and support that he needs and is sure to find at the French Welfare Agency of the 20th Administrative District of Paris.

Survival Group 2007.

