

Rythmes d'Automne in Paris

Commandment

Rythmes d'Automne (*Autumn Rhythms*) is the latest work in the *Commandements* series that Alain Kirili began in 1979-80. *Commandement I* is currently in the collection of the Ludwig Museum in Germany. The series is based on an *open form* that, over the course of time, has become one of the most fruitful in Kirili's oeuvre. It is part of an aesthetics of the "open work" (*opera aperta*), to the use the expression coined by Umberto Eco (1962). *Rythmes d'Automne* comprises 90 elements in black cement, each of which weighs 100 kilos and stands 90 centimeters tall. These elements are arranged by the artist on a surface of 600 square metres in front of the Hôtel de Ville of Paris. The bases of the elements are covered in black gravel.¹

The *Commandements* series functions as a crucible containing the essential aspects of the artist's temperament and unique aesthetic. It is not the privilege of friendship that leads me to this assertion, but rather a powerfully imposed observation: one can speak of *the commandements of Kirili* in the same sense that one speaks of *the preludes of Debussy*, or *the sonatas of Chopin*. Kirili reminds us that his first *Commandement* corresponded to his arrival in New York in 1979, when he dreamed of inscribing himself in the family of great abstract artists such as Jackson Pollock—to whom he renders homage with this new piece in front of the Hôtel de Ville of Paris—or Barnett Newman. In the 1950s Newman had also produced sculptures in series such as *Here* or *Zim Zum*, sculptures that at the same time were "places" [*lieux*] in the same manner as Alberto Giacometti's aptly-titled "Places" [Places].

The first *Commandement* was forged by hand. For, while the artist had become interested in the liveliness brought to sculpture by David Smith's openness to industrial

¹ The artist worked with the Société Naullet and the Société GSM. The gravel was selected from a quarry in Belgium. Julien Grissonnange of the Société GSM brought this gravel to the artist's attention in the company's storage yard at Gennevilliers. This text was commissioned by the Akira Ikeda Gallery, to which the author expresses his thanks, as well as his gratitude for the use of photographs by Laurent Lecat.

production, Kirili was nevertheless reluctant to systematically resort to industrialized processes in making his own pieces, and in this respect intentionally took his distance from minimalist art:

“My first *Commandements* presented the traces of their forging, cuts made with a blowtorch in iron that had been treated to resist rust and thus remain black.”²

The first *Commandements* were installed inside museums on platforms painted in colors in halftones. According to the artist,

“A platform that is colored transforms its function as a base into a chromatic space from which the sculptural signs seem to emerge.”³

The black gravel covering the bases of *Rythmes d'Automne* is an outdoor, exterior alternative to the chromatic ground of the first *Commandements*, which were presented indoors, in interiors. With its textured surface it mirrors and reflects the changing Parisian sky. The sculpture's grey elements emerge from it, as if suspended.

One of the concrete elements of the *Rythmes d'automne* sculpture, installed in the Ikeda Gallery in Berlin, reveals the square base that accentuates the sculpture's abstraction as it stabilizes it on the ground. In the ensemble installed on the parvis in front of the Hôtel de Ville of Paris, on the other hand, the gravel hides the bases and suggests elevation and lightness. Alain Kirili is fond of recalling that André Malraux, in *The Voices of Silence*, admired the way that signs in modern art possess autonomy without being compromised by figuration

In 1985-86, the sculptor painted the elements of his *Grand Commandement blanc* in white, for their arrangement on the lawn of the Tuileries garden in Paris:

“*Grand Commandement blanc*, installed in the Tuileries in 1986, was painted in white in homage to and out of respect for the white historical sculptures of that setting.”⁴

² Exhibition catalogue, *Kirili et les Nymphéas* (Paris: Musée de l'Orangerie, 16 mai-17 septembre, 2007), RMN, Entretien Pierre Georget/Alain Kirili, p. 6. See also, in this same catalogue, my text entitled “Kirili aux Nymphéas,” pp. 13-17.

³ Alain Kirili, “Commandement, 1980-1990” (December 1990), in exhibition catalogue, *Commandement XI* (Paris: Galerie Templon, 9 février-9 mars, 1991). Reprinted in Kirili, *Mémoires de sculpteur* (Paris: Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, 2007), Preface by Thierry Dufrene, p. 28.

⁴ Alain Kirili, “Commandement, à Claude Monet,” in Alain Kirili, *Mémoires de sculpteur*, *op. cit.*, pp. 322-32, p. 326.

Grand Commandement blanc stands out effectively from its surrounding natural context, in the manner of classical sculpture in marble arranged in formal gardens, to which the artist alludes in this piece. For the installation of this sculpture, Alain Kirili selected the lawn next to the Orangerie, thus relating this piece to Monet's *Les Nymphéas* (*Water Lilies*). The same year, for a retrospective of his work at the Musée de Grenoble, he created a new *Commandement* titled *Water Letters*, which he describes as "a surface of floating signs that shift on the water with the wind, a sort of abstract *nymphéas*."⁵

The next stage took shape in the exhibition *Kirili et les Nymphéas* (*Kirili and the Water Lilies*) at the Musée de l'Orangerie, 15 May—17 September, 2007, commissioned by Christian Briend.

This was the first time Alain Kirili used cement. He made the decision to paint certain of the molded elements, in order to inscribe color at the heart of this sculptural writing. The vertical cylinder was left in white, but the rectangular plates and round forms that they supported were colored in the concrete. The colored vibrations on the molded surface echoed the atmosphere of Giverny as painted by Monet. Kirili explained his choice in this manner:

"The idea of a *Commandement* in cement came to me in thinking over the Musée de l'Orangerie's invitation to create a dialogue between my works and *Les Nymphéas*. My friend Jocelyne Feliot had put me in touch with important cement manufacturers such as Calcia or the Société Naullet, who are great specialists in research on concrete. In visiting their worksite recently, I discovered the minerality of this material, produced by the grain of the cement, which is comparable to that of stone. I also appreciated the chromatic qualities of cement that has been colored in its mass, in which the porous texture of the concrete maintains its integrity. With this discovery, I immediately began imagining the creation of a new monumental group whose nuances and materials would subtly echo the *Décorations* of Claude Monet. Thanks to the enthusiasm of Didier Gazacau, of the Naullet firm, who helped me utilize the full spectrum of possibilities, we embarked together on a feverish period of research, over several months, and undertook

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 324. See also my own text in the catalogue of this exhibition in Grenoble, which was my first text on this artist whose works and writings on art had long interested me, and whom I was only then meeting for the first time in New York.

numerous experiments with coloration and forms. I tried out different chromatic approaches to the molding of concrete into cylinders and plates. I developed both monochrome and polychrome surfaces. Eventually I settled on a play of two or three irregular colors that created the effects of clouds or aquatic reflections. The ensemble creates a chromatic alphabet that rhythms space in an unpredictable and decentered way. This is a poly-rhythmic universe that extends, in three dimensions and into the 21st century, the syncopations [*pulsations*] that Claude Monet inaugurated with *Les Nymphéas*.⁶

Moving forward with the adventure of the *Commandements, Rythmes d'Automne* (2012) is situated in an entirely different context than *Commandement, à Claude Monet* (2007), whose use of cement as a material it adopts. In this case, the context is that of the hyper-center: a heavily-built space,⁷ far from any gardens, and a public parvis or enclosed pavement that is frequently crowded and directly in front of the Hôtel de Ville, a monumental edifice whose impact on its surroundings is tremendous, whether or not one appreciates its aesthetics. Quite logically, the sculptor opted for grey cement, a grey that is colored in its mass and recalls the general atmosphere of the Parisian urban context. A *city grey*, we might say, that has some of the energy of its space and of urban perspectives. That grey which Giacometti, speaking of the rue de Ménilmontant, described as going so well with certain Parisian streets and spaces. I like to think that this grey is at least partly Alain Kirili's homage to this truly Parisian sculptor, Giacometti—his homage to this sculptor he admires greatly, notably for his manner of renewing the question of sculptural groups during the 1950s, and a sculptor we have often discussed together. Here in *Rythmes d'Automne* it is a matter of both holding the figures together as an ensemble, and giving each one a freedom and a “wandering line” [*ligne d'erre*] (Fernand Deligny) that individualizes them. I think, for example, of the 1950 sculptures *Clairière (Clearing)* or *Forêt (Forest)*, which are both human figures and trees in a landscape. *Rythmes d'Automne*, much like the sculptures of Alberto Giacometti, brings together an ensemble of passing figures, a collection of urban signs, and a landscape

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

⁷ Even if the installation's placement benefits from view towards the Seine and the cathedral of Notre-Dame.

nestled in the heart of the city, while the whole appears like a lightning-flash of thought and emotion beneath the immense sky of the Ile-de-France.

History and Space

Alain Kirili goes to great lengths to take full account of the places in which his sculptures are situated, often deciding to pursue a very thorough process of research and documentation concerning his sites. He undertakes this process in order to make the sculptures live in and inhabit their emplacements, and thus they should be thought of as less *in situ* than *pro situ* (not made “in” but rather “for” a place). In the case of the *Grand Commandement blanc*, he remarks:

“I wanted to be near Monet, in the garden designed by Le Nôtre, whose tradition of white sculpture I wanted to recall; as well as near the Eiffel Tower, which marked the arrival of iron in such a noble manner in both architecture and sculpture; and the obelisk of the Place de la Concorde, which is a scriptural sculpture. Scripturality in sculpture has grand antecedents: in Egypt, which is magnificently present in the center of Paris thanks to the obelisk, and in the scholar stones of Chinese gardens, which are abstract monoliths pierced with openings, sometimes two or three meters in height.”⁸

Similarly, in the case of *Ascension* (2002), the Abbaye de Montmajour was not a site chosen by chance, nor was the artistic response to it without persuasive force. This Cistercian abbey and its sublime architecture called for verticals. At Caen, within the walls of the castle, and near the Musée des Beaux Arts located inside it, *Geste de résistance* renews the artist’s ties with this elevation. For *Résistance* (2012), a monumental work installed in Grenoble, fourteen blocks of *Pierre de Bourgogne* [Burgundy stone], grouped in seven ensembles, each containing a stone serving as a base and another which is raised (or supported), recall the locales used by the Maquis (resistance fighters) of the Vercors and Chartreuse mountain areas.

I know that Alain Kirili was very moved by the prospect of displaying a *Commandement* on the “village square,” as Bertrand Delanoë, Mayor of Paris, joked on the day of the sculpture’s opening. He was also proud to be the first to exhibit a sculpture

⁸ P. 8.

Commented [phb1]: Il s’agit des “Gongshi”? Je crois que le terme en anglais, c’est “scholar stones”: voir le Wiki, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scholar_stone

Commented [phb2]: pour ce note 8, il n’y a pas de titre. Faut-il l’ajouter?

in that space for any time longer than a “white night”: the Mayor was quite right to want the sculpture to be displayed by itself, for a period of six weeks, without any visual interference, extraneous distractions, or goings-on. In a place where a very particular type of “commandment” is felt and fulfilled: a commandment of transparency and equity. The parvis laid out in front of the “commons house” is a place for meeting, a place to talk, a place for the exercise of collective, direct, or representative powers that may sometimes have been confiscated for the profit of the few, but that have always, eventually, returned to the “villagers” following “outbursts” and popular insurrections.

In order to properly understand Kirili’s work *on* and *in* this parvis, this particular place, it is necessary to recall the history of the parvis and Hôtel de Ville of Paris.

In his Preface to the catalogue of the exhibition entitled “The old Hôtel de Ville of Paris and the Place de Grève” at the Carnavalet Museum (July-August 1975), Michel Gallet, the Conservator of the Carnavalet Museum, recalls that it was in 1357 that Etienne Marcel, the Marshall of the City Merchants, established a “Commons House,” also called the “Marshall’s House” located in the “House of Pillars” on the Place de Grève. The “House of Pillars” was so-called on account of its arcade of pillars in a façade whose appearance is echoed in *Rythmes d’Automne*. This *place* or parvis owed its name to the nearby banks of the Seine. The site had previously been occupied by a *grève*, a sort of beach composed of sand and gravel, where merchandise could be conveniently offloaded from boats. Thus for Kirili, making the elements of *Rythmes d’Automne* rise out of a bed of gravel recalls the earliest use of this ground, the historical stratum of what later, until 1830, was called the parvis or Place de Grève, after which it was given its current name, the Place of the Hôtel de Ville. The Place de Grève has always been linked to History in this grand sense. The Hôtel de Ville was the theatre of momentous events during the 1789 Revolution. On the three revolutionary days of July 1830, which put an end to the Restoration, fighting over the Hôtel de Ville that took place on the Place de Grève transformed this parvis into a memorial [*lieu de mémoire*] for fallen martyrs of democracy and was subsequently renamed the Place de l’Hôtel de Ville. To this day it is understood as a space for demonstrations; people congregate here in order to demonstrate. Indeed, the French word “*grève*” [strike], meaning a cessation of work for the purpose of pursuing political struggle or making political statements, is

etymologically drawn from the name of the former *Place de Grève*. In effect, unemployed laborers once gathered here each morning in order to offer their services to employers; the *place* was located near the docks and markets, and one could hope to gain a day's work as a porter or stevedore. An underqualified and unstable labor force gathered here. Thus to strike, or in French *se mettre en Grève*, meant to go out looking for work. "To strike" or "*faire grève*" later became synonymous with "stopping work" in order to obtain better conditions in which to carry it out. Grouped in this manner in front of the City Hall of Paris, Alain Kirili's sculpted elements may well evoke and bring to our mind's eye these laborers, emerging from the depths of history, who fully intend to be heard by all in the "village square."

In 1848, it was here that Lamartine delivered his victorious speech in favor of the tricolor flag, rejecting the red flag of the ephemeral Second Republic. And in 1871, at the time of the Paris Commune, the Hôtel de Ville was burned down. The current building was opened in 1882, with its statue of Etienne Marcel. In 1944, the tanks of the Leclerc Division that liberated Paris were quartered here. Alain Kirili notes that one of the essential moments recalled by *Rythmes d'Automne* is De Gaulle's speech declaring the liberation of Paris, delivered in this same location on August 25, 1944.

As the first artwork installed for an extended period on the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, *Rythmes d'Automne* bears within it the breath of History: it embraces the present moment the better to underline the energy of popular movements which, like Nature in its four seasons, are an immense cycle full of new beginnings. Autumn bears its fruits.

Calligraphic Sculpture and Musical Labyrinth

Rythmes d'Automne provides pleasure and changing emotions for those that pass by it. When the sculpture is viewed from afar, it almost seems as if birds have landed on the parvis, a group of pleasure-seekers meeting without any sense of over-regimentation, yet in an organized manner that allows one to glimpse, as one does when reading a musical score, the visual accents of a music that is free-wheeling and un-monotonous. When I draw closer, I recall how Kirili said, of the earliest *Commandement*, "I forged this sculpture like a written page of my existence," and how he recalled having "encountered

the religious sense of writing” on Essex Street on New York’s Lower East Side. There, the calligraphies used for Torah “trace out letters in the tradition of stone-carvers.”

“I was struck by the cut-out shapes of the letters, by their extreme angularity which is practically sculptural. When I questioned them, they taught me that Hebrew calligraphy indeed concerns the sculpted letter, and that Hebrew writing is thus indeed a sculptural writing. I was moved and quite surprised, stunned, by the conjunction that I became aware of in this manner, after the fact, between the sculptural writing that I had done and this very ancient, millenary, yet still living tradition. Subsequently, at the Jewish Museum of New York, I discovered that the objects in silver that fit over the *Torah* when closed are called ‘rimonim,’ a term that evokes the pomegranate fruit. These objects have a shape similar to that of elements of the *Commandement*. Their name, ‘pomegranate,’ comes from the saying that there are as many seeds in the pomegranate as commandments in the *Torah*. And there are more than 600 commandments in the *Torah*. I like this idea of a multiplying force, which corresponds to the effects of multiplication that I have been developing in my work for 30 years. These discoveries helped me to recognize and identify the path I was taking. And I do love the beauty of the word ‘Commandment,’ its biblical force in the sense of an unlimited affirmation, toward and against all things.”

Likewise, the artist often alludes to the way that David Smith, author for example of *The Letter* (1950), imprints the text of sculpture literally on the void, which thereby becomes the page of the sculpted text. Kirili also recalls that in Paris he took courses in calligraphy from Korean painter Ung-No Lee (1904-1989), who arrived in Paris in 1958 and was linked to the Informal Art movement along with Hans Hartung, Pierre Soulages, and Zao Wou-Ki. Alain Kirili must have seen the collages made from Korean paper on canvas that Ung-No Lee exhibited at the Galerie Paul Facchetti in the 1960s-70s, which were scriptural works basically comparable to those of Henri Michaux. His manner of approaching the plurality of figures, of silhouetting groups, was significant for the sculpture of disparate yet linked elements, and shares a common impetus and gestural quality with that of Kirili, as do his charcoal drawings.

For his *Grand commandement blanc* (1986), the artist spoke of a “springtime of verticality”: “The expansion of *Commandement*,” he wrote, “proceeds laterally, along the

surface of the ground, but also vertically, as if pushed upward by the earth, towards the sky.” Today, in 2012, what is that *Rythmes d’Automne* proposes? Should we speak of an “autumn of dissemination”? Over its gravel, the sculpture seems to levitate and then extend or pour itself out laterally, and to move toward the space around it with a generous swerve (*clinamen*). Toward an encounter with the diffuse. Or even losing itself in a labyrinth. A dancer might take her risky steps through its mazy openings, and it brings to mind a kinetic calligraphy like the eccentric Chinese 18th-century calligraphies of which Kirili is so fond, which race in brush-strokes the entire length of nine-meter long banners.

It could be thought of as an “art of dispersing” or “scattering” after the manner of the “scatter pieces” of the *Process artist* Barry Le Va (1941-present), much appreciated by Kirili. The deployment of the *Commandements* involves improvisation. The artist speaks of “a certain effect brought about by casting the elements on the ground.” Yet this is not simply an aleatory process and Kirili speaks of “assisted chance.” Much like Le Va.

But, by a dialectical effect—and Kirili’s reading of Gilles Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* is relevant here—what is scattered is simultaneously grasped again by a formative will. The motion let loose is held and tightened, like a taut cord that vibrates in space in accordance with a dominant tonality. *Rythmes d’Automne* alternates between notes played at pitch and in *glissando*; musical phrasing is thereby given an equivalent in plastic form.

Finally, if the work is also a landscape, it acts as one in the manner described by Jackson Pollock when he wrote, “I *am* nature.” Kirili’s work does not evoke [*évoque*] nature so much as it summons [*convoque*] it.

First of all in the chosen material. Is cement not the very moment when the molding, the swirling, the subtle equilibrium of sculpture achieved in a state hovering between solid and liquid, is made fixed and motionless?

The artist wrote:

“In my new *Commandement (à Claude Monet)*...I imagined a light, aerial color whose nuances contribute to the general effect of fluidity.

The piece’s transparency is clearly a consequence of the equal importance given to its volumes, signs in iron or cement, and to the empty space that surrounds and

separates them; and its fluidity is a consequence of their irregular distribution, of their decentering and dynamic disequilibrium, which we discover in Monet's compositions: two or three groups of water lilies, in the lower right or upper left, in an otherwise empty space. This is what gives this work its tremendous quality of breathing, what infuses the breath of life into it, and what Debussy so perfectly mastered in music."

And secondly, because, like his *Commandement (à Claude Monet)*, *Rythmes d'Automne* invites a descending and oblique gaze, as if one were entering the depths of the earth, and not the sort of gaze with which one looks out at a panorama.

Kirili has written: "A descending gaze brings out a general peacefulness, a calming of bodily expression, a meditative mood [*recueillement* or gathering], in the proper sense of the word."

And in addition, we find an immersive and even interactive system of oblique openings, something that, above and beyond the millennial experience of circumvolution—which always remains possible and even desirable—allows one to experience the interiority of the sculpture's glancing movement, in the same way the German philosopher George Simmel said that one might experience the expressivity of one of Rodin's sculptures, that is, with one's entire body. Through empathy.

Monumentality

The struggle between the sculpture and the viewer who enters and visits the sculpture, which takes place on a human scale, is doubled by another, no less important challenge, which is the sculpture's relation to architecture and the urban environment itself. In dealing with an urban space as multi-dimensional and symbolic as the parvis of the Hôtel de Ville, Kirili had to rise to a challenge that he describes thus: "How is it possible to respond to this situation without the risk of creating a bombastic, pompous work? Simply making-larger often results in failed sculptures, in an impoverishment. And *Rythmes d'Automne* is the most monumental sculpture in my *Commandements* series."

His response is a horizontal monumentality in which an extended occupation of ground is preferred to massive frontality. Or better yet, in his own terms: "a 'lateral' monumentality that extends beyond the field of vision, that creates a dynamic and

peaceful effect outside the expected frame of reference. Additionally, the sculpture's elements have two different heights: 90 and 85 centimeters, which produces an undulating rhythm: rhythm and more rhythm! Thus we have a 600-meter square field of signs that corresponds to about one-third the surface of the parvis and is quite successful at manifesting its presence without being too emphatic." The work's effect does not consist in intimidating the public or demanding admiration; rather, it succeeds in "inviting the public into the space of its signs in order to play, converse, dance, or meditate." Interaction between the sculpture and the public has always been one of the essential aspirations of Kirili's works; in this case, it also brings with it the pleasure of tactility.

In terms of horizontal monumentality, Kirili has returned to the source. As he put it during his presentation of the work at the Hôtel de Ville:

"Before my installation on the Parvis, I had an urge to go back and re-examine the megalithic alignments at Carnac,⁹ which have given me all the energy and power of their repetitive and differential monumentalities. The act of raising stones weighing tens of tons is a foundational gesture for sculpture that is vertical and repetitive without any systematic aspect. Carnac is to sculpture what Lascaux is to painting. Morbihan is the realm of the vertical erection of stone. It constitutes a founding statuary gesture for this art that celebrates the event of upright humanity. This event, this infinite gesture without beginning or end, is developed at the same time on all the continents. Walking at Carnac and in Morbihan, I thought of the great privilege I had in soon seeing three installations of my repetitive signs in Paris: *Grand Commandement blanc* in the Tuileries, *Hommage à Charlie Parker* on the Avenue de France, and *Rythmes d'Automne*. At the same time, *Commandement XV* was installed in the Akira Ikeda Gallery in Berlin. The ensembles *Résistance* in Grenoble and *Tellem* in Dijon are extensions of this scattered writing. Like the dispersion of these megaliths, these sculptures express an open, infinite, and planetary continuum. At Carnac I felt the birth of abstract statuary, of an erection that the etymology of the word *statuary*, from Latin *stare* or to stand, makes clear, as the word bears the sense of that which stands erect, that which stands upright. It was contemporary

⁹ *Rythmes d'Automne* may also remind us of the megaliths of Stonehenge. As if Kirili had extracted and condensed the desire for monumentality into its most intense form.

art that allowed us to understand this primordial sense and leave behind esoteric visions. I think that it was only toward the 17th century, in the scholar stones of Chinese gardens, that one begins to find stones raised so powerfully. I therefore thought of Carnac, of China, and of course of my visit to Kyoto. I meditated on the difference between Chinese and Japanese conceptions of the garden. Carnac can provide an answer. Carnac is the founding alphabet of the modernity of my work.

A question occurred for Jackson Pollock when he made his *drippings* shortly after the Second World War: how does one reconcile work on the ground, the horizontal, with the standing-up on the wall of the canvas-become-painting? On the one hand there is a total implication, an infinity of gestures: the painter inhabits the canvas with his gestures and with his body. On the other hand there is the intimidation of the vertical, a facing-off against the work, the monumentality of the format on the wall. Taking on this contradiction between the almost complete animality of the *dripping* and the quasi-sublimation of the elevation, Pollock created a colorful vibration that opens the wall through an overwhelming activation of forms, traces, and smudges.

The same question confronts the sculptor. Throwing elements, like a Mallarméan “throw of the dice,” resembles a giant *dripping*. The artist confided to me that he had wanted to make a dripping that was “three-dimensional, free from any pre-established composition, any grid, any scheme at all. The gesture is monumental, spontaneous, free, and rapid.” But sculpture also stands up. It must affirm vertical force, without which sculpture would not be what it is. How, then, can these two simultaneous postulates be reconciled? They make sculpture dynamic, but at the same time remain in tension. And it is this tension that the artist utilizes and pushes to the limit, so that the ensemble functions as a field of forces, or, better yet, as a magnetic field. The geometrical elements, whole or truncated cylinders, squares, and rectangles, enter into a complex configuration, a bit like a constellation in the heavens. But they are also buffeted as if by powerful breaking waves. This is what was perfectly well perceived by the dancer Sandra Abouav and the flutist Jérôme Bourdellon, who accompanied the sculpture’s installation. Bodily movement and the vibrato of the instrument oscillated continually between achieved form and Dionysian abandon. This is precisely what Kirili describes as his goal, wanting on the one hand for “the gaze to remain descending and peaceful: in a sculptural

meditation,” and on the other hand ensuring that “the differences in height create an undulation that repeats that of the gravel and gives the work a lively tone.”

The space thus created, especially when I pass by it at night, brings to mind a chapel without walls, and reminds me that Kirili is very fond of the Chapel of the Rosary at Vence, designed and built by Matisse between 1948 and 1951, as well as the Rothko Chapel, both places of meditation. By day it has the appearance of an enclosed garden, much like Monet’s garden at Giverny, but at the same time its boundaries are not closures in any way.

This is what one seeks in a public sculpture in an urban space: that it deliver the message of its own form and dynamics, and that it manifest, in the density of the urban fabric, a contemplative pause, an unspoiled space—just as we cherish recollections that construct us in our memory—while nevertheless participating fully in the city’s embrace of human activity.

Rhythmes d’automne is not closed off from, but *opens onto* the city. It beats with its pulse. It describes its utopia.

Thierry Dufrière

Translated by Philip Barnard