



An ephemeral work of art for the parterres of the gardens of Vaux-le-Vicomte



In 2019, a new artistic creation will replace the boxwood parterres of the boulingrins of the Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte

The gardens of Vaux-le-Vicomte, founding piece of the French formal gardens, will soon be living an unprecedented change. The boxwood parterres of the boulingrins (derived from the English "bowling green"), aging and diseased, were uprooted in March 2019 to make way for an ephemeral work of art, created especially for the estate, and chosen from candidate proposals in 2018.

After the deliberations of the jury, the project chosen was that of Patrick Hourcade. The project, titled "*Ephemeral Ribbons*" was inspired by Achille Duchêne's designs for his boxwood arabesques, themselves inspired by Le Nôtre's embroidery patterns, but in modern materials.

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Engraving by Israël Silvestre, representing the gardens Vaux-le-Vicomte during their creation (1641-1661)



Refurbishment needed for the gardens: appeal for proposals

The first signs of a decline in our boxwood were noted in 2010-2011: these were due to their age (100 years), the mediocre quality of the soil and illness caused by two fungi, *Volutella buxi* and *Cylindrocladium buxicola*. After a serious attack by box tree moths (lepidopterous insects who, in their caterpillar stage, feed on boxwood leaves), **by the spring and summer of 2017, 70% of our boxwood were dead.**

The de Vogüé family, owners of the estate, aided by the scientific community, formally noted the death of the embroidery-patterned boxwood planted by Achille Duchêne in 1923 and decided to replace them.

Called together for an emergency meeting in 2017 after the box tree moth attack, the committee confirmed the fact that it was no longer reasonable to envisage saving the boxwood of the boulingrin parterres.

Before a new, final plan for their replacement (using artistic, historic, scientific, and economic criteria) could be elaborated, the owners decided to:

- organize in the summer of 2018 an **appeal for candidatures** from artists, landscape architects, designers, etc. for the creation of an ephemeral work of art for the two parterres.
- **uproot the boxwood of the two parterres to the south of the château** in February 2019. From that date, the parterres would be covered with soil and delimited by the existing strips of grass.

The boxwood parterres - January 2019



The *Ephemeral Ribbons*

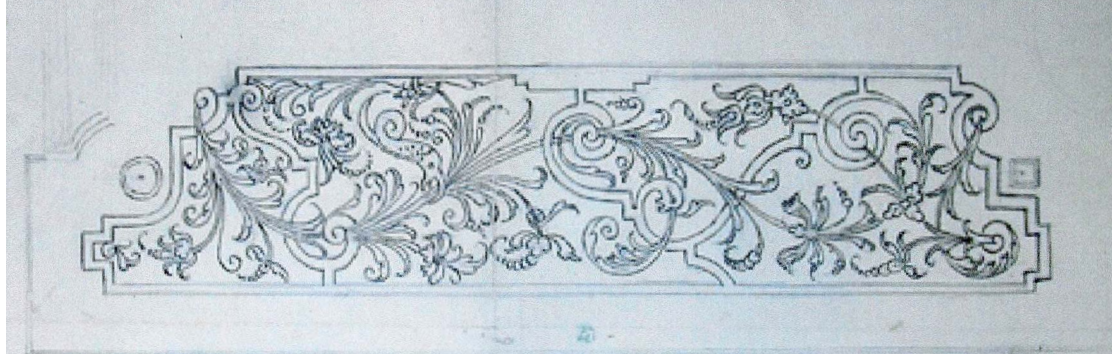
After deliberation by a jury of specialists, the project submitted by Patrick Hourcade was chosen to replace the embroidery-patterned boxwood parterres of the boulingrins. The work, entitled "*Ephemeral Ribbons*" was inspired by drawings of arabesques by Achille Duchêne (early 20th century), themselves inspired by the embroidery patterns designed by Le Nôtre in the 17th century. The work is to be created and put in place by the Décoral Agency.

A work respecting the tradition of André Le Nôtre

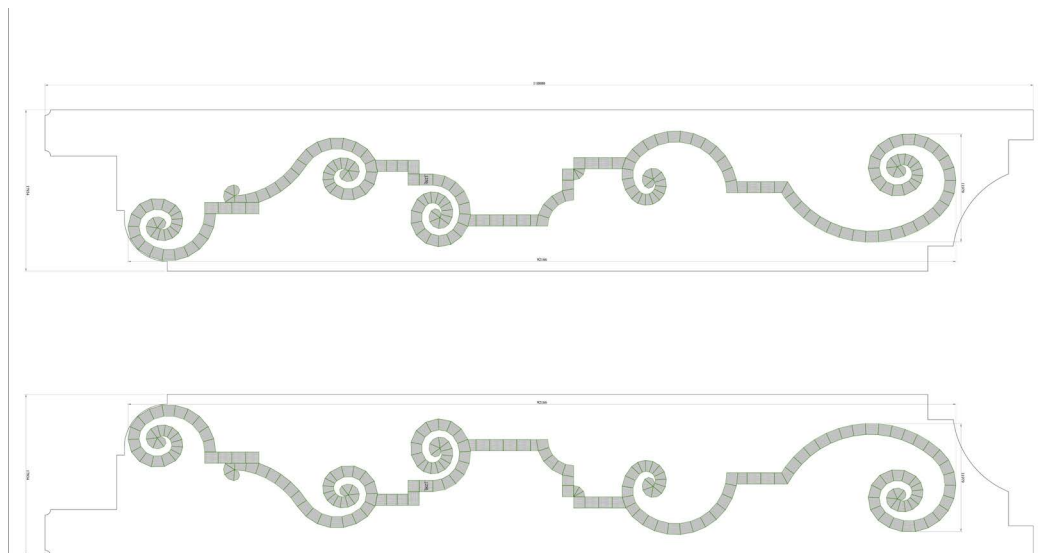
In his proposal, Patrick Hourcade made it his mission to respect the rules of the *jardin à la française*. It is for this reason that his design honors André Le Nôtre's view of the garden as well as the very structured language of landscaping and nature subdued by Man. A perfectly manicured lawn is thus an essential aspect of *Ephemeral Ribbons*: it must be cut short and its aspect not change over the seasons.

As far as the arabesque is concerned, this is the key concept of *Ephemeral Ribbons*. Its whorls represent "**a satin ribbon with very subdued highlights**," explains Patrick Hourcade.

"The idea of a reworking of the arabesque seemed obvious. The arabesque is both the origin—the DNA of the garden—and the cause of the problem, since the decline of the boxwood is the cause behind a contemporary work of art."



Above: the boxwood embroideries by André Le Nôtre, drawn by Tessin le Jeune (XVIIth century)
Below: the *Ephemeral Ribbons* by Patrick Hourcade



Innovative materials lending boldness and modernity

The choice of materials for *Ephemeral Ribbons* was guided by the presence in Le Nôtre's gardens of water features, where the reflections of the sky change according to the hour of the day and the season of the year. Patrick Hourcade was specifically inspired by the aluminum walls at the Louvre Lens.

Ephemeral Ribbons will consist of 390 angled aluminum plaques. "We will play with the tilting of the plaques in a very subliminal fashion, to within the millimeter, very subtly, at the whim of the curves of the arabesque, very close to the ground."

Aluminum will lend strength and dynamism to the arabesques, even while echoing the interplay of reflections and mirror-images of the water-features.

The work is intended to be evolutive and lively: as a kind of natural video, it will never be the identical two days in a row. The sky will be reflected in the plaques, causing differences in the effects of light and resulting in constant modification of the *Ephemeral Ribbons*.

The aluminum plaques used in the creation of *Ephemeral Ribbons* will be unique: each one will be of a different size, shape and angle. They will be created in a factory in the Marne in April, before being installed in the gardens of Vaux-le-Vicomte in the month of May.

Simulation of the sun's reflection in the *Ephemeral Ribbons*



Visitors will be able to enjoy discovering this original ephemeral work as of the month of June. The work will be on exhibition for 2 to 5 years, while possibilities for a permanent solution for the replacement of the embroidery-patterned boxwoods in the *jardins à la française*.

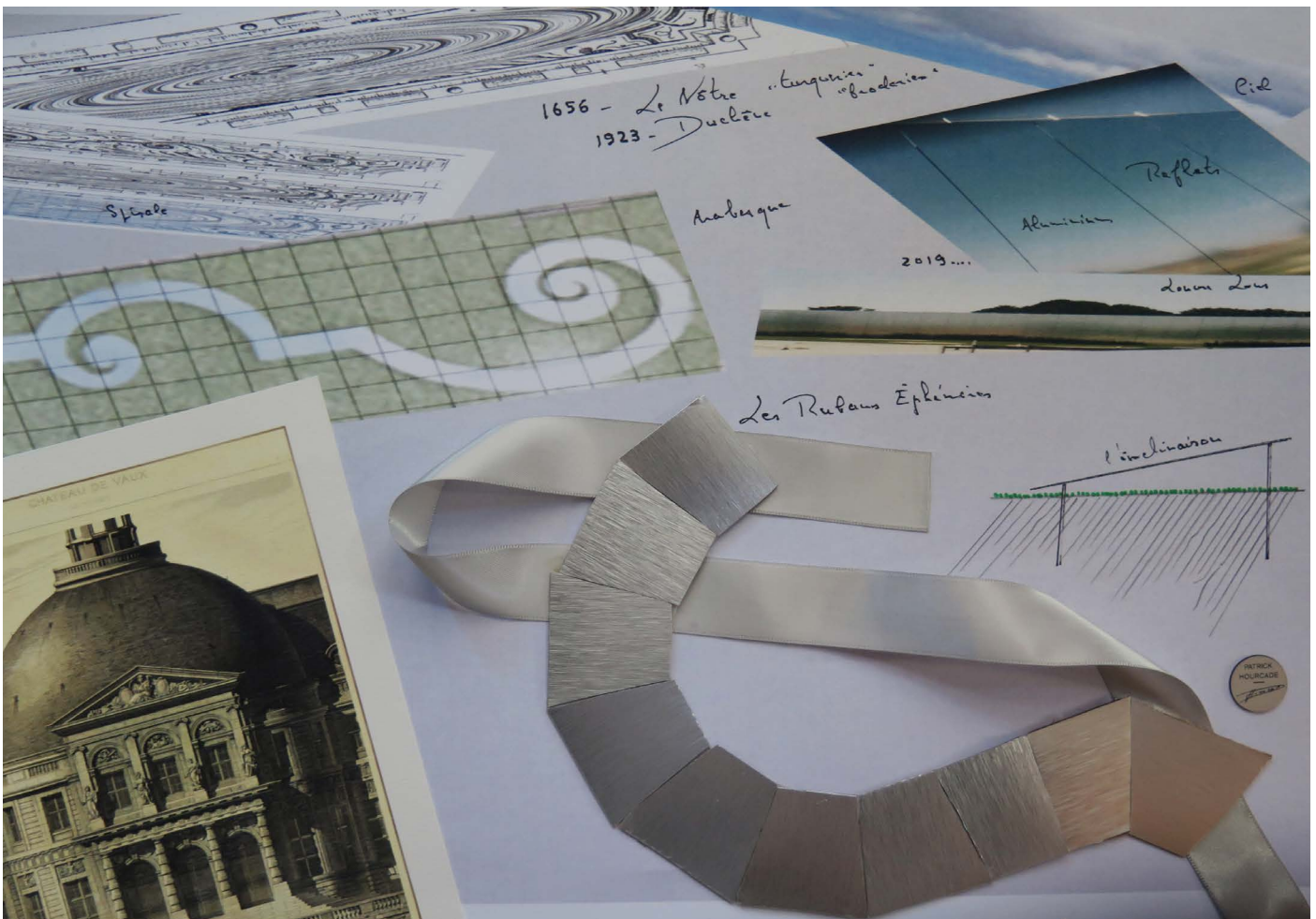
The boxwood parterres of Vaux-le-Vicomte in a few dates

- **1656-1661**: creation of the first boxwood embroideries of Vaux-le-Vicomte by André Le Nôtre.
- **1923**: the landscaper Achille Duchêne recreates the boxwood embroideries (previously replaced by lawn), inspiring himself by the works of Le Nôtre.
 - **2018**: appeal for candidatures to replace the boulingrins parterres.
 - **February 2019** archeological digs.
 - **February- March 2019**: uprooting of the boulingrins parterres boxwoods.
- **April- May 2019**: creation and installation of the *Ephemeral Ribbons*, work of art by Patrick Hourcade.
 - **June 6, 2019**: press inauguration.

Ephemeral Ribbons key figures

- **22 m large X 110 m long**: dimensions of each of the two parterres. The total project will thus spread over almost one half-hectare.
- **180 000 boxwoods** are divided between the two parterres.
- **395 000 €**: total cost of creation for the *Ephemeral Ribbons*.
 - **2 to 5 years**: duration of the ephemeral work of art.
- **390 plaques** constitute the *Ephemeral Ribbons* - they are all signed by the artist Patrick Hourcade.

Preparatory work by Patrick Hourcade



Patrick Hourcade - Biography

After an initial course of study in Art History, Patrick Hourcade was **Artistic Director of Vogue** from 1982 to 1998.

Between 1982 and 2001, he became curator of the collections of art works and houses belonging to Karl Lagerfeld; in particular, he was the scenographer for the exhibition "Un Percorso di Creazione" at the Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna e contemporanea in Rome in 1992 and of "Histoire des Bijoux" at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, in 1996.

In 2010, Patrick Hourcade turned toward the design of objects, photography and video. In 2014 and 2017, he was successively Organizer and Artistic Director of Exhibitions at the **Château de Versailles**.

Patrick Hourcade has known the Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte from childhood, and has been there many times: for him it was obvious that he would aid the château by creating *Ephemeral Ribbons*.

Ephemeral Ribbons will be his second professional landscape project: the first was for **Karl Lagerfeld** at his Château de Grandchamp, where he designed embroidery-patterned boxwoods.

Ephemeral Ribbons will be his first monumental work.

Patrick Hourcade holding a sample of aluminum plaque for the *Ephemeral Ribbons* in the gardens of Vaux-le-Vicomte ©DANIEL CASTETS





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Press Contact

Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte

Hortense LAMARCHE ALLAND - 06 75 34 53 87 / h.alland@vaux-le-vicomte.com