



25 May 2009: "Dang'cing Solar Forget-Me-Not"

At the Galeries Royales Saint-Hubert, Brussels, Belgium

Alexandre Dang

Lives and works in Basel, Switzerland

An artist's statement

Alexandre Dang comes originally from a scientific background. Convinced of the need to raise awareness of the potential of environmental friendly technologies (eco-technologies) and sustainable development, he developed his artistic creation often incorporating solar energy as source into his kinetic art works. Through his work, he contributes educating the general public on contemporary themes which represent a major challenge for the future.

Though the sun provides 10,000 times more energy to the earth than humans need, more than 1.3 billion people still do not have access to electricity. The pressing need to address this issue is the driving force of Alexandre Dang's artistic commitment, where he combines scientific approach, environmental concern and humanism.

He designs in particular: "Dancing Solar Flowers" and "Wind Flowers". The flowers are set horizontally to form a "field" or vertically to form a "vertical garden". Flowers embody by essence the beauty of nature. In his works, Alexandre Dang tries to give them a dimension which is poetic by breathing life into them using renewable sources of energy.

These flowers often trigger surprise, wonder, questioning... and thus bring the viewers to think about the underlying subjects which are addressed.

Apart from the esthetical aspect of his work, his creations also invite the spectator to question our

current use of energy, and to think about the possibilities that renewable energy can offer. Indeed, his works reflect the instability of a world in constant turmoil, questioning, transformation... especially concerning sustainable energy, as energy is a major issue for the future of humanity. Alexandre Dang has also developed a pedagogic aspect to his sustainable art, using it to educate young people about the potential of eco-friendly technologies with a focus on renewable energy. He has founded Solar Solidarity International (a non-profit international association) to raise awareness on the potential of renewable sources of energy and to support solar electrification of schools in developing countries.

The "Dancing Solar Flowers" have become an iconic work of the commitment of the artist. They have toured around the world and have been featured in sites including the Belgian and European Pavilion of World Expo Shanghai 2010, the Palais des Beaux Arts (Bozar - Center for fine Arts) in Brussels, the Singapore Art Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Taipei, the Central House of Artists ("The State Tretyakov Gallery at Krymsky Val"), the Musée de Plein Air du Sart-Tilman (Liège), the International Exhibitions of the United Nations on Climate Change (2008 Poznań, Copenhagen 2009, Cancún, 2010), the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken (Brussels), the Royal Palace of Brussels, the European Commission (Brussels), the European Parliament (Brussels, Luxembourg, Strasbourg), the Council of the European Union (Brussels) etc...

Alexandre Dang

An interview by Dario Rutigliano, curator
landescape@europe.com
 with the collaboration of Theresa S. Sutton

Establishing an effective synergy between Art and Technology, Alexandre Dang's works stress the way in which perception depends on cultural perspectives, accomplishing the difficult task of educating the general public and especially young generations on contemporary environmental and energetic issues. His Dancing Solar Flowers that we'll be discussing in the following pages invite us to rethink about way we perceive not only the environment we inhabit in, but also and especially our role and our relationship with Nature. The power of Dang's approach lies in his incessant research of a point of concurrency of various meanings of beauty to create a coherent and multi-layered narrative: so it's with a real pleasure that I would like to introduce our readers to his stimulating works.

Hello Alexandre, and welcome to LandEscape: to start this interview, would you like to tell us something about your background? You have a solid scientific training and you degreed at the prestigious École Polytechnique in Paris. How has these experiences influence your evolution as an artists and how do they impact on the way you currently conceive and produce your works?

Hello, Many thanks for your interest in my

work and for asking me questions. To answer this first question, I would say that having a scientific and technological background enables me to conceive and realise some works integrating technological means notably electronics, mechanics, physics etc.. The scientific background gives me also a sort of reading grid on things that surround us, hence perceiving them from a scientific and technological point of view.

Before starting to elaborate about your production, would you like to tell to our readers something about your process and set up for making your artworks? In particular, what technical aspects do you mainly focus on your work? And how much preparation and time do you put in before and during the process of creating a piece?

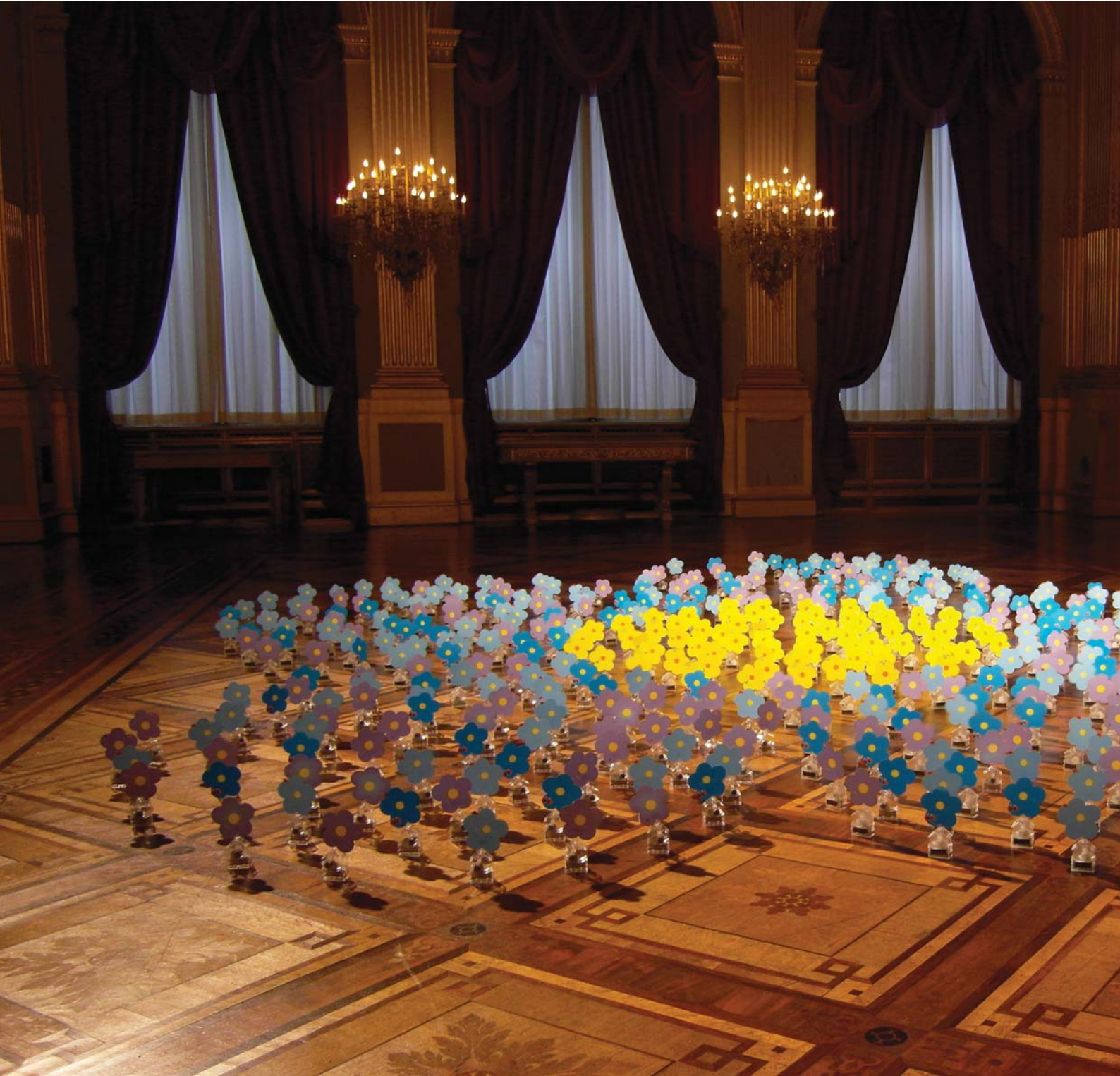
When viewing my artworks notably the "Dancing Solar Flowers", public often have a smile: I appreciate this very much, because one aspect of my works is to bring poetry, emotion and in particular smile to people. Everyday's life is difficult enough when viewing all catastrophes and problems that occur just around us and worldwide.

Although the works bring smile and seem easy, realising them is not just a children's game, it is really a lot of work! I have to conceive a first draft, do some pre-testing, address the issues (notably technical!), find solutions, do some further tests, find again solutions, finetune etc... Realising a new work takes some months or sometimes some years. It's important to



14/ 4 June - 24 July 2011: **"Field of Dancing Sunflowers"**

At the Cultural Centre "Hospice d'Havré - Maison Folie", Tourcoing, France





highlight it, as when it is realised, everything seems so easy...

Now let's focus on your artistic production: I would start from "Field of Dancing Solar Flowers" that our readers have already started to get to know in the introductory pages of this article: and I would suggest to our readers to visit your website directly at <http://www.alexandredang.com/> in order to get a wider idea of your artistic production... In the meanwhile, would you like to tell us something about the genesis of this interesting project? What was your initial inspiration?

I just saw the *Field of Dancing Solar Flowers* my mind! I told some friends about it and they could not understand what I was speaking about. So I realised it!

I remember the first *Field of Dancing Solar Flowers* exhibited in February 2006. It was in Brussels in an international surrounding, with people from all over Europe. I could understand only very few comments as they were speaking lots of different languages like Hungarian, Polish, Czech and Romanian... but I saw their expression in their faces and also all the body language... Apparently they seemed to appreciate and this was my best reward.

A relevant feature of "Dancing Solar Flowers" that has particularly impacted on me is the way you highlight the inner bond between Man and Nature: you invite the viewer to appreciate the intrinsic but sometimes disregarded beauty of geometrical patterns, bringing a new level of significance to the idea of landscape itself. In particular, the evolving nature of the installation at Queen Fabiola Children Hospital offers a multilayered experience and can be read at two levels: first, it give the intuitive idea of beauty conveyed by flowers, on the second hand the interaction with external light reveals the geometric substratum on which



13 October 2014 - 18 March 2015: *"Dancing Solar Flowers"*

At John Jay College, City University of New York, USA



such beauty is grounded... Like Jean Tinguely's generative works, this installation raises a question on the role of the viewers' perception, forcing us to going beyond the common way we perceive not only the outside world, but our inner dimension... I'm personally convinced that some information are hidden, or even "encrypted" in the environment we live in, so we need to decipher them. Maybe that one of the roles of an artist could be to reveal unexpected sides of Nature, especially of our inner Nature... what's your point about this?

Yes, I fully agree. When I see the public looking at my works, I always wonder on which side is the work. Is it the work displayed or is it the expression in the face of the viewer hence revealing her/his inner Nature and Beauty!

Marked with careful pedagogic aspect, your works accomplishes the recurrent but difficult task of instilling a consciousness about the potential of eco-friendly technologies and renewable energy, especially in young generations. In this direction, the chance of taking a participatory line with the viewer both on an emotional aspect as well as on an intellectual one is a crucial point of your Art: while referring to an easily "fruitful" set of symbols as starting points, you seem to remove the historic gaze from the reality you refer to, offering to the viewers the chance to perceive in a more absolute form, in order to address us not only on a mere contingent view but especially to invites us to rethink about our future. So I would take this occasion to ask you if in your opinion personal experience is an absolutely indispensable part of a creative process... Do you think that a creative process could be disconnected from direct experience?

Direct experience is not only important but even key for me and in particular for my creation.







14 March - 13 June 2015: **"Dancing Solar Flowers"**

At Oldham Gallery, Oldham, Manchester, United Kingdom

I think it's important to mention that besides conveying environmental messages through your artistic production, you have founded Solar Solidarity International, a non-profit international association whose website can be visited at <http://solarsolidarite.org> to raise awareness on the potential of renewable sources of energy and to support solar electrification of schools in developing countries. Although

I'm aware that this might sound even a bit naïf, I have to admit that I'm sort of convinced that Art could play an effective role in sociopolitical questions: not only just by offering to people a generic platform for expression... In particular, I would go as far as to state that Art could even steer people's behaviour... what's your point about this? Does it sound a bit exaggerated?

I'm convinced that art can significantly



18 - 28 June 2012: **"Field of Turning Solar Sunflowers"**

At the European Commission (Berlaymont), Brussels, Belgium

influence the world. In very concrete terms, I organise workshops where participants are first sensitized as regards the potential of renewable sources of energy and issues linked with sustainable development, and then they realise their own *"Dancing Solar Flowers"* from the edition *"Fill in your own pattern!"*.

These workshops were originally devoted to young public: children, teenagers... but we

discovered that adults were also very fond of these workshops! These workshops as a prolongation of the works reinforce the impact of the works. I'm also glad, through Solar Solidarity International, to be able for some years now to support with my copyrights some solar electrification projects like solar electrification of schools, hospitals, orphanages... in the developing world for instance in India, Togo, Tanzania, Mali,





Morocco, Kenya, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Nepal, Haiti, Ecuador...

Maybe because I have a scientific background myself, I strongly believe of convinced that the boundary between Art and Technology will come more and more blurry, with a mutual convergence between such apparently different disciplines.

Multidisciplinarity is a crucial aspect of your art practice and you seem to be in an incessant search of an organic, almost intimate symbiosis between Visual Arts and Technology, taking advantage of the creative and expressive potential of Sculpture as well as of the interactive nature offered by Technology: while crossing the borders of these fields have you ever happened to realize that a symbiosis between different disciplines is the only way to achieve some results, to express some concepts?

I'm often asked about the difference between art and science. For me, there is more a complementarity. In fact, art and sciences are like a pair of eyes that enable to see in 3D!

During these years "Dancing Solar Flowers" have been internationally exhibited in several occasions: from Europe to China, from Korea to the United States: what experiences have you received in these occasions?

In particular I would like you to tell me if you have noticed particular differences in the way your audience reacts to a combination between artistic aesthetics and scientific ideas.

Moreover, since your Dancing Solar Flowers are feedback systems themselves I would ask you the importance of the feedback of your audience: does a positive response to a particular idea push you into

pursuing it or do you prefer to maintain a more neutral viewpoint?

All over the exhibitions in the world, I can see a very universal response from the audience: people mainly smile and start asking "How is this moving? What does it mean?" And this is for me the most important: bringing people to smile and to think about important contemporary issues.

Thanks a lot for this interesting conversation, Alexandre. Finally, I would you like to tell us readers something about your future projects. Anything coming up for you professionally that you would like readers to be aware of?

There are plenty of upcoming exhibitions in the coming weeks for instance in Paris, in Boston, at NordArt in the north of Hamburg, in Venice, in Japan, in Singapore... so I would love that the readers have a look at a real installation. In the meantime, it is possible to have a look at some videos in the video section on my website www.alexandredang.com: this can already give some flavour.

Many thanks again for your interest in my work and for taking the time to ask these very interesting questions.

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