

LandEspace meets

Alexandre Dang

Lives and works in Brussels, Belgium

Alexandre Dang comes originally from a scientific background (Engineer of the École Polytechnique (Paris) and of the École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées (Paris)). 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.

Alexandre Dang has 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 co-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: USA, China, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Russia, Mexico, Brazil, Lebanon, Morocco, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Denmark, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia, and Romania...

His works have been featured in sites including the Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá (MAMBO) (Colombia), the Shifang Cultural Center in Chongqing (China), the Cultural Center Correios in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), the Heritage Space Cultural Center in Hanoi (Vietnam), the Chengdu A4 Art Museum in Chengdu (China), the Elektrownia Cultural Center in Radom (Poland), the Villa Méditerranée in Marseille (France), the Museum of Natural History in Geneva (Switzerland), the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Xi'an (China), the Nian Dai Mei Shu Guan (Epoch Art Museum) in Wenzhou (China), the Art Tower Mito Cultural Center in Mito (Japan), the National Museum of Singapore (Singapore), the Ca' Foscari Università in Venice (Italy), the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Taipei (Taiwan), the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tournai (Belgium), 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 (SAM), the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken (Brussels), the Royal Palace of Brussels, the European Commission (Brussels), the European Parliament (Brussels, Luxembourg, Strasbourg), etc.

An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator
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Hello Alexandre, and welcome back to LandEspace. We already got the chance to introduce our readers to your artworks in a previous edition and we are now particularly

pleased to discover the development of your artistic production. The new body of works that we have selected for this special edition of LandEspace and that our reader can view at <http://alexandredang.com> has captured our attention for the way you are developing a more and more distinct visual identity. How does your





practice has evolved over these two years and in what direction are you currently addressing your artistic research?

Alexandre Dang: Hello and thank you for your

interest in my recent works. Over the past two years, I have been developing new types of works hence also expanding my ways of expression. For instance, through “Graphic

Dances”, I explore solar energy through various angles, in particular how the human body receives its energy to live and move. Indeed, when we think about it, the energy of

the body comes exclusively from solar energy. More precisely, the plants grow thanks to photosynthesis which is a conversion of solar energy. Hence, all vegetables and the fruits





grow thanks to the energy coming from the sun. Then some animals eat the vegetables and the fruits... like the cows which eat grass and produce milk. The human, at the end of the food chain, eat vegetables, fruits, animal products (like milk, eggs...) and meat. Hence we can see, that originally, all the food is

produced exclusively by the conversion of solar energy thanks to the photosynthesis and the food chain. So "Graphic Dances" involving the movement of the body of the Dancers is an expression of solar energy. I have developed other types of artworks where the solar energy is a key

element like the "Sun's Path" and the "Solar Paintings and Drawings". Each time, I try and explore the potential of solar energy and sun in a poetic way.

Your art practice is marked out with such unconventional and multidisciplinary approach,

that provides your artworks with such unique tactile feature. New York City based artist Lydia Dona once stated that in order to make art today one has to reevaluate the conceptual language behind the mechanism of art making itself: do you create your works gesturally, instinctively? Or do you methodically transpose



geometric schemes? In particular, how important was for the creation of your recent Graphic Dance series the physical aspect of your creative process?

Alexandre Dang: Relating to the “Dancing Solar Flowers”, it is obvious that there is a whole phase where I draw sketches and blueprints and work on the technology aspects like electronics and mechanics. There is an enormous preparatory workload on these works notably also on the calculation of the movement. With the Graphic Dances, two aspects are essential: on the one hand, the definition of a clear composition and a working framework and, on the other hand, spontaneity in the realization. During the creation process, both aspects are very most important: enabling spontaneity of the choreography to evolve in a well-defined and set space, context and structure. The physical aspect of the Graphic Dances results from the different movements performed by the dancers who become in a certain way “animated paint brushes”.

The body of works that we have selected for this special edition of LandEscape and that our readers have already started to get to know in the introductory pages of this article has at once captured our attention of your works is the way they challenge the spectators' perceptual parameters, inviting them to look inside of what appear them to be seen, rather than its surface, providing them with freedom to realize their own, personal perception. Austrian Art historian Ernst Gombrich once remarked the importance of providing a particular space for the viewers to project onto, so that they can actively participate





in the creation of the illusion: how important is for you to trigger the viewers' imagination in order to address them to elaborate personal interpretations? In particular, how open would you like your works to be understood?

Alexandre Dang: In my opinion, it is crucial to enable a viewer finding himself in front of a work to have full freedom for his imagination to be strongly triggered. One mission of an artist, in my opinion, it is to invite people to dream and potentially to be amazed by an art work. In addition, it is also important to be able to develop a reflection of what we perceive in order to try and understand it. I would like my works to be understood for their commitments, in particular to raise awareness on the various issues related to our contemporary world, the environment and also on the link that mankind maintains with its surrounding and in particular with the potential of solar energy.

With such unique combination between sense of freedom and balance of composition, your Graphic Dance series feature bold colors and suggest sense of dynamics: how did you come about settling on your color palette? And how does your own psychological make-up determine the nuances of tones that you decide to include in your works in order to achieve such brilliant results?

Alexandre Dang: I leave my imagination free to imagine color combinations. I give some tries to combinations. Generally, these are more empirical and experienced choices, to try them out in order to have a certain harmony of colors.

For your current body of works you used large canvass, that provide the viewers with such an





immersive visual experience: how did the dimensions of your canvass affect your workflow and how important is for you to provide the viewers with such immersive visual experience?

Alexandre Dang: I use small and very large canvas for this project. This is an element of my freedom of creation.

Whatever the size of the work, the public can immerse in the dance. With that, the viewers become actors and no longer spectators. Above all, the choice of the size of the canvas refers directly to the freedom of creation. This freedom makes also the dance more fluid and more important.

A crucial aspect of your artistic practice is the



need to raise awareness of the potential of environmental friendly technologies (eco-technologies) and sustainable development. Mexican artist Gabriel Orozco once stated, "the artist's role differs depending on which part of the world you're in. It depends on the political system you're living under". Not to mention that almost everything, could be considered political, do you think that your work could be

considered political in a certain sense? Moreover, what could be in your opinion the role of artists in our contemporary age?

Alexandre Dang: My work highlights the potential of renewable energy and solar energy. Indeed, the Earth is facing a major contemporary environmental challenge and I want to raise awareness about it. It is also



Two small, white informational cards are mounted on the wall to the right of the painting. The text on the cards is illegible due to the image resolution.





crucial for me to make things happen through my works: in this context, all copyrights of my works are fully devoted to the nonprofit international organization Solar Solidarity International. The aim of Solar Solidarity International is to raise awareness on the potential of renewable sources of energy and to support solar electrification projects in the developing world. Thanks to the activity of the association, projects could be supported in countries like Togo, Tanzania, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Ecuador, Nepal, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea Bissau, Zimbabwe, Morocco, Mali, Ecuador and Haïti where some beautiful realisations were carried out such as the solar electrification of schools, equipments, infirmaries, medical centers, orphanages and hospitals in developing countries. More information is available on the website of Solar Solidarity International: www.solarsolidarity.org in particular in the section "projects supported".

We like the way your practice combines scientific method with such unique artistic sensitiveness: how does your scientific background fuel your artistic reasearch?

Alexandre Dang: My background in science makes my works integrate another sensitivity that further enhances the technique used. Indeed, Art and Science have a lot in common. They are interdependent. They are both based on empirical research, drawing, sketching... The approach is similar; we find the same concepts in both areas such as the circle, perspective and the theory of colors. Art and Science are two different points that I combine to enable me to enrich my thoughts by means of two different approaches.

You are an established artist and over the years your artworks have been exhibited in several locations. Direct relationship with the audience in a physical is definitely the most important one, in order to snatch the spirit of a work of Art. However, as the move of Art from traditional gallery spaces, to street and especially to the online realm increases, how would in your opinion change the relationship with a globalised audience? In particular, how do you consider the role of emerging online technosphere — and platforms as Instagram — in creating new links between artists and worldwide audience?

Alexandre Dang: Now more than ever, the online platforms and social networks have a major and international role in the artistic field. These spaces give unlimited access to culture. In addition, on these different social networks such as Instagram, it is possible for people to exchange and share. I continue to discover these new forms of media and I am convinced that this helps to strengthen links with the public.

Thanks a lot for your time and for sharing your thoughts again, Alexandre. How do you see your evolution as an artist over time? Are there any things that you do fundamentally different from when you started years ago?

Alexandre Dang: I strive to develop new works in relation to what I see, hear, feel and think. New projects are also to come as well as a search for beauty aiming to convey messages through aesthetics and poetry. I still have the same way of working and have this desire to get messages across for humanity. Thank you for these very interesting questions.

