

Laudation by: Roswitha Arnold
(Vice-Chairman EGHN, Member of the EGA Jury)

EUROPEAN GARDEN AWARD 2022

1st Prize: Special Award of the International Jury
Project: Gardens of Peace (France)

On an initiative by the Hauts-de-France region and the Art & Jardins Hauts-de-France association entitled "Gardens of Peace", special gardens have been created by artists and landscapers from countries that fought in the First World War near the main remembrance sites.

Last year, we distinguished an impressive example of this; "The Third Train". In the park, restrained design elements symbolise the trenches of war, with rail-like benches inviting contemplation and reflection.

"The Third Train" is a part of several Peace Gardens located in France.

For this year eight other ones were nominated in the "Contemporary Gardens" category:

Thiepval – the English and Welsh gardens, created by Scape Design

Péronne – the Irish garden, created by Peter Donegan

Craonne – the German, Italian and Moroccan gardens, created by Lorenza Bartolazzi, Luca Catalano and Claudia Clementini, and by Atelier KEL (Karim El Achak) and Bernhard Depoorter

Neuville-Sain-Vaast – the Czech and Slovak garden, created by Zuzana Nemecková

They all symbolise the confrontation with war and the consequences of war, arouse emotions, remember the victims with great sensitivity and empathy, and stage the incomprehensible.

But the message of "Gardens of Peace" is also: Nature in particular has an incredible ability to beautify what man destroys, and it stands the test of time; nowhere is this more evident than in battlefields.

Four weeks after receiving the compilations, the world was no longer the same.

With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we are looking at a war in the middle of Europe, and my generation, our children, are stunned by the violence, ruthlessness and destructiveness to which the people of Ukraine are exposed.

This shows us how fragile democracy, international law and peace are, shows us that we must do everything in our power to preserve the values of social coexistence and what great importance we must attach to the memory of past wars.

For this reason, the international jury of the EGHN Garden Award has decided to award a special "Gardens of Peace" prize to the "Gardens of Peace for tomorrow's world" initiative.

Also as a symbol for the gardens and parks in Ukraine, I quote the Director d'Art & Jardins Hauts-de-France, Gilbert Fillinger:

"A Garden of Peace is a place that brings calm to counterbalance the violence of combat. Situated near some of the major Great War remembrance locations, the gardens were designed by landscapers, artists and architects from the 35 warring nations.

This illustrates not only the international dimension of the conflict but also the potential force of fraternity. They are an invitation to sit down, to question yourself about the meaning of peace, and to develop an inner strength equipping you to better face the future.

The Gardens of Peace have a positive, constructive approach to the duty of remembrance, where Canadian serviceberries, dogwood, steplebush – all white flowers and never the same ones – are prevalent, always giving the same feeling of peace and calm, as if echoing the white flag", says Gilbert Fillinger, finishing with: "A universal message"

I now invite Gilbert to join me on stage so that I can present him with the award on behalf of the jury of the EGHN International Garden Award.