



# The art of the garden

The interplay between art and nature is at the heart of an impressive sculpture exhibition this summer at the experimental, avant-garde Les Jardins d'Étretat in northern France

OPPOSITE: *Summer* by Gevorg Tadevosyan. THIS PAGE FROM TOP One of the garden's protective spirits in a costume designed in collaboration by artist and choreographer Venera Kazarova and Mark Dumas. The bronze sculpture *Looking Ahead* by Paola Grizi. *Meditation* by Dashi Namdakov in the Jardin Zen

From its elevated site, overlooking the chalk cliffs of Normandy's alabaster coast, Les Jardins d'Étretat offers spectacular sweeping views of The Channel, which for centuries have inspired great artists, including Claude Monet.

Today, art still has a special association with this beautiful place. The view of the cliffs immortalised in so many paintings remains unchanged but now, superimposed in the foreground, is a sculpture of a bronze hoop with the figures of a woman and a man walking round it. This mesmerising work, entitled *Summer* by Armenian sculptor Gevorg Tadevosyan, is currently displayed on the terrace as part of the garden's inaugural summer season group exhibition and competition *Man and Nature: Double Game*, launched in May.

Founded by *fin de siècle* French actress Madame Thébault in 1905, Les Jardins d'Étretat have been brilliantly revived over the past few years by the Paris-based landscape architect Alexandre Grivko, of the international garden design company Il Nature, together with his partner Mark Dumas.

Alexandre's experimental style of garden architecture is influenced by neo-futuristic principles: he has reimagined much of the planting, adding an array of striking, sculptural topiary to the 3.7-acre space, with these neatly clipped plants acting as living, constantly evolving artworks. The textures and vivid hues of the evergreens provide a dramatic backdrop for the contemporary sculpture that is an integral part of the garden's design, creating playful juxtapositions and an inventive dialogue between the natural and manmade.

Since opening in 2016, Étretat has promoted a distinctive mix of sculpture, installation and performance art projects. This summer's show explores the interplay and interdependence of man and nature: how the natural environment shaped by man correlates with sculptural forms and artistic ideas.

With its wave-like clipped hedges cascading down the hillside and shell-shaped topiary referencing the coastal location, this avant-garde setting is the perfect showcase for contemporary art. The 24 pieces in this year's annual international exhibition by artists from 12 countries, including Gianna Dispenza and Hywel Pratley, complement works on permanent display by Samuel Salcedo and Sergey Katran among others.

The show is open to international professional sculptors at any stage of their career, emerging or established, who were invited to interpret various cultural concepts of 'nature'. The 24 artworks range in scale from monumental to miniature and have an elemental quality, crafted from a mix of materials including terracotta, willow, wood, bronze, steel and glass. At the end of the season, in October, prizes will be awarded to the three winners of the competition, selected by a jury of professionals from the art world. In the meantime, why not pay a visit to this enchanting garden and judge for yourself?

*Les Jardins d'Étretat: [etretatgarden.fr](http://etretatgarden.fr). The summer exhibition 'Double Game' will continue until October 31, 2019* □

