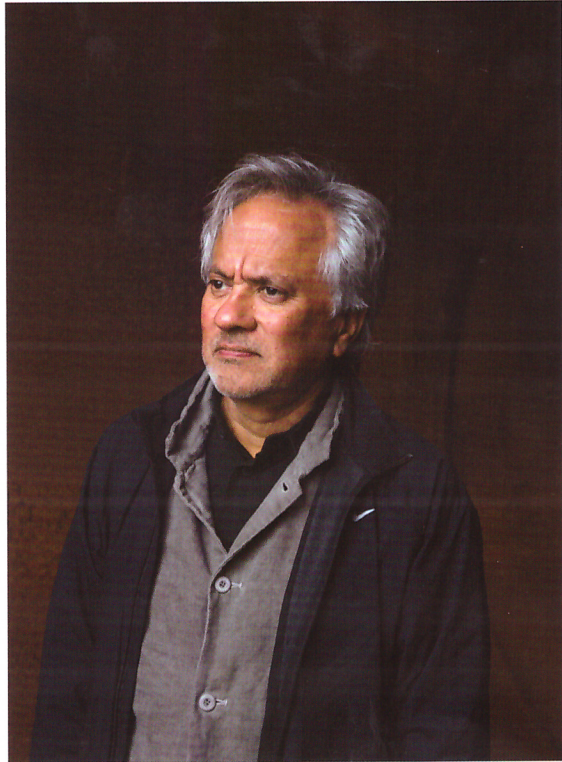


UNDER- WORLD

Anish Kapoor digs up the dirt at the Palace of Versailles



Text: Avis Cardella

Ditches, dirt, disconcerting mirrors, and a bottomless whirlpool are all part of the summer 2015 contemporary art exhibition at the Palace of Versailles. The artist behind this untidy presentation is Anish Kapoor, and the effect is dramatic, disturbing, and, not surprisingly, controversial.

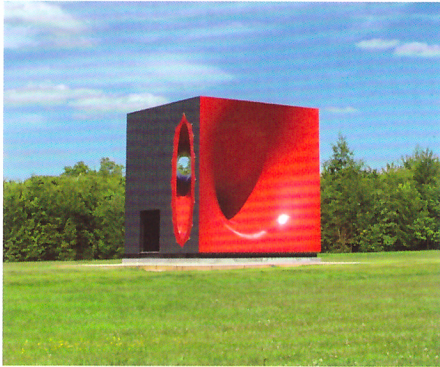
Anish Kapoor Versailles, which consists of five sculptures in 800 hectares of grounds, disrupts the imposed order and symmetry synonymous with the renowned garden's creator, André Le Nôtre, by playing with nature's chaotic curves and distinct dualities: heaven and earth, shadow and light, inside and outside and, of course, visible and invisible. The desired chaos arrives in the form of Kapoor's delightful 'C-Curve' a high-polished reflective steel wall, which circles to form the letter C. Installed beneath the palace's Hall of Mirrors, its convex side distorts the familiar

surroundings, as well as the palace itself, into a bulbous form, while the concave side turns everything upside down, including the visitors standing before it. The destabilization continues with a second reflective sculpture, the spherical 'Sky Mirror' where sun and clouds pass across its surface, sometimes creating such brilliant beams of light that it becomes blinding. A nod, perhaps, to the power of the Sun King himself, Louis XIV, and to the ground's 'Apollo Fountain' depicting the Greek sun god driving a horse-drawn chariot.

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Anish Kapoor Versailles runs through November 1, 2015.



Sectional Body, Seixas

"I do not wish to make sculpture about form – I wish to make sculpture about belief, or about passion & experience."

The power of the sun, reflections in mirrors, and energy of water, were all preoccupations during the time of Louis XIV's reign, when Le Nôtre was commissioned to refine the grounds. Kapoor continues his interpretation of these themes with 'Descension' a whirlpool of dark water that appears to be bottomless. But as mesmerizing and disconcerting this bottomless black vortex of swirling water can be, the show's most controversial and confounding resides in Kapoor's more interior, and psychological challenging sculptures.

Sequestered in a labyrinth of paths is 'Sectional Body Preparing for Monadic Singularity,' a red cube of interlacing tubes that can be entered as if entering a part of the human body itself, or "Shooting Into the Corner," a cannon that has fired a mess of

blood-colored wax, evocative of flesh and entails. Still, the most polemical of the show's sculptures is its largest and most imposing. 'Dirty Corner' is situated on the Tapis Vert, or 'green carpet' of the grounds, where Kapoor has "flayed" the landscape, dug up the earth and uncovered the underbelly of Le Nôtre's geometric perfection. Amidst boulders and mounds of dirt sits a 60-meter long steel structure that resembles a warped gramophone with a wide opening that tapers off into a darkened tunnel. The sculpture, with its sexual allusions, has been called 'the vagina of the queen coming into power' thus setting off a flurry of discussions and rants, and even an act of vandalism: it was splattered with paint but has since been cleaned.

Kapoor has said, "I do not wish to make sculpture about form. I wish to make sculpture about belief, or about passion, about experience." Beliefs and passions are usually accompanied by equally strong emotions. Experiences are to be savored. In Versailles, Kapoor has succeeded in creating an exhibition, an experience, that exists alongside Le Nôtre's genius yet reflects the historical events which have taken place there. He has exposed a rich underworld, a parallel story that sits boldly beside the controlled symmetry on the surface.

Dirty Corner, Seixas

