

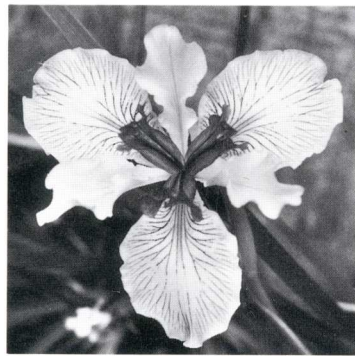
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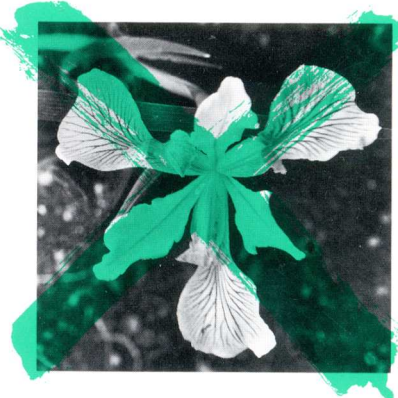
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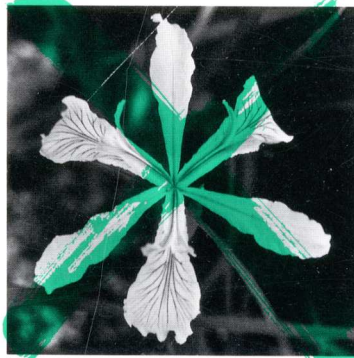
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Gave away



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THE UTILITY OF NOT CHOOSING BETWEEN POETRY AND ART: A SCULPTOR'S USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

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As an adolescent, I was passionate about science, technology, history, arts and poetry at the same time. The combination of these central interests seemed highly improbable to me, given the academic perspective and the normal training in the Western world of today, which seeks to develop the specialist.

While I was studying for a bachelor's degree in mathematics and simultaneously registered for a bachelor's degree in ethnology, I continued my essentially poetic activity, which distanced me altogether from the university. It was then that I was struck by the fact that the act of writing is an act of drawing and at the same time is connected to the geometry of curves in mathematics. I sought to create a visual poetic writing, a "vocabulary of forms," after Kandinsky; I called this kind of writing "Graphenes."

Also, little by little I tried creating graphic illustrations for my poetry, which led to the creation of items of furniture.

I put primary importance on the sense of each of my creations and carefully select the material for its realisation in order to match the goal of the work. If I seek to explore the universe of mathematics—for example, in doing curves and surfaces on the screen of my computer—either by choice or by chance I never use these forms as they first appear. I rework them until they have a meaning in my "mythological" vocabulary.

Although I find it a great pleasure to use a new technology and thus to engage the interest of specialists (industrialists, researchers, engineers) in new applications of their work, I think this adventure of spirit must still start on a poetic step.

After my start in abstract painting and designing, I had the chance to obtain a commission from the French Post Office (1985–1986). I installed two large paintings done on Altuglas in the post office

at Place de la Bourse in Paris. These were painted using stencils that were cut by a computer-controlled cutting machine. This was still an unusual application of the technology in France at that time. The titles of the works were *L'Entropie n'est plus ce qu'elle était* and *De l'Esprit à la lettre*.

I started to write three-dimensional visualisation software for my own use and for presentation of my projects. Because of the specific qualities of the software PMMA, I used it most frequently in my new work. I also experimented with cutting the stencils quickly by using a laser and have since used this method for the realisation of *Planète Bleue, Or Noir* (House of Plastics, Paris, 1987), *Hommage Aux Peuples de la Mer* (Colombes Post Office, near Paris, 1989), and the sculpture *In Illo Tempore, Aqua Nubit Lux* (Fig. 5; Laser Industrie Corp., Metz, 1990). These were all large-scale works intended for public places or industrial sites.

The major interest of Altuglas resides in its transparent effects, its diffusion of fluorescence, and its way of reacting to light—which is always important in my work, whether it be natural or artificial light. During this period I worked in collaboration with Derrick de Kerckhove, Director of the McLuhan Program in Toronto, and I contributed to an interactive art link by videoconference—*The Transinteractive*, between France and Canada—where I presented a system of drawing in real-time via graph plotters and modems. This was a modern version of the surrealist "exquisite corpse," with the authors dispersed throughout the world.

Recently, the appearance of water-jet cutting gave me a new perspective, in particular for the use of glass. My first use of this technology was for the creation of theatre decorations in wood: *Hommage à la Femme Noir* was assembled for the *Festival des Cultures Noires*, which I organized in 1991.

For the past 5 years, I have been searching for a way to cut blocks (wood or Altuglas) by machine, and also to realize what I call the "Robosculpture." France, in particular, is one of the most highly developed cultural places in the world with what may be the lowest eco-

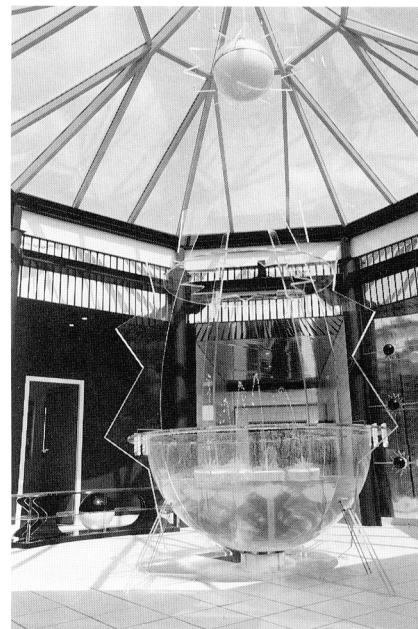


Fig. 5 Christian Lavigne, *In Illo Tempore, Aqua Nubit Lux*, environmental sculpture, 1990. (Laser Industrie Corp., Metz, France)

nomie daring. I have found it as difficult for an artist to obtain technological or financial aid from a corporation as it is easy for an advertising company to sell hot air to the same industry.

In my case, I was supported by grants from Laser Industrie (Metz), Atelier Bernard Martin (Angers), and CRITT Jet-d'Eau (Bar-Le-Duc), but refused many times by others. Finally I found a way to make this sculpture, thanks to the help of the AFPA (Verdun; Yves Jadot, director) National Center for Professional Training, which has access to a 3-axis machine, and the help of engineer Michel Thaly, who is interested in working with artists.

I am currently working on art pieces that I hope to show at the First International Exhibition of Numerical Sculpture. Right now I am preparing for the exhibit with my colleague Alexandre Vitkine. It will take place in Paris at the end of May 1993. The exhibition will bring together the pioneers of this new discipline.

Alexandre Vitkine and I just founded an association: Ars Mathematica. Interested persons should contact Ars Mathematica c/o Christian Lavigne, #1 Cour de Rohan, 75006 Paris, France.