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La Petite Escalère

Garden of the Haims

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- The history of a fascinating sculpture garden created by art dealer Paul Haim
- Amidst canals, bridges, paths made of railway ties, and many trees and flowers, they installed about 50 works
- Including monumental works by Rodin, Maillol, Niki de Saint Phalle, Zao Wou-Ki and Françoise Lacampagne

In the 1970s, in the region of the Landes, between Bayonne and Peyrehorade, on the banks of the Adour River, the photographer Jeannette Leroy and the art dealer Paul Haim created a sculpture garden around a modest farm, La Petite Escalère.

With the help of the faithful gardener Gilbert Carty, amidst canals, bridges, paths made of railway ties, and many trees and flowers, they installed about 50 works, some of them monumental, by artists such as Rodin, Maillol, Niki de Saint Phalle, Zao Wou-Ki, Françoise Lacampagne, Cárdenas, Mark Di Suvero, Léger, Matta, Zigor… Paul positioned the sculptures, and to help them vanish into the natural environment Jeannette would plant a shrub, a rosebush, dahlias, an oak, a maple, a gingko, a Caucasian walnut… "I don't want this garden to become ridiculous!" she said.
Paul Haim has evoked the bewitching beauty of La Petite Escalère better than anyone else: "The nonchalant visitor will pass from the shade of Les Barthes to the brightness of the Moura, from the freshness of the fountains to the suffocating heat of the forest. Coming around a bush, he allows himselfto be surprised by an unusual presence. Immutable. … Far from the agitations of the world, sinking into nothing-ness, watching the clouds go by, contemplating the places of joy."

Text in English and French.

Dominique Haim is director of the publication, and a collector.

Marie-Laure Bernadac is an Emerita Conservator of Cultural Heritage, and an art historian.

Pierre Wat is an art historian and critic.







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