

Wang Keping at Chambord - *Duos*

WANG KEPING
DUOS



Chambord invites Chinese artist Wang Keping for a residency followed by an exhibition from 15 October 2023 – 17 March 2024. Nineteen sculptures will be displayed on the second floor of the château, on themes of duality, freedom and sensuality.

Created using the traditional technique of direct carving, the sculptures' generous forms highlight the living aspect of wood, now shown in Chambord's woodlands, gardens and architecture, settings befitting the artist's favoured material.

- Direct wood carving performances using felled tree trunks selected from the Chambord woodlands from 9 to 15 October and 28 to 30 October
- Exhibition from 15 October 2023 – 17 March 2024
- Press opening Thursday 12 October 2023

Wang Keping in residence at Chambord

Chambord has embodied a true utopia ever since it was built, a brilliant work of art that still has secrets to reveal. **Since 2011, the *Domaine national de Chambord* has become a creative laboratory hosting residencies for artists and writers.** The château and the grounds are vivified by groundbreaking exhibitions, and the spirit of the place is imparted to the artworks via the creative imagination, thereby setting up a meaningful dialogue between the art and the site.

At Chambord from 15 October, Wang Keping will show nineteen mainly large-scale sculptures, variations on the theme of the couple, very present in his work. Inspired by the duality of the great staircase at the centre of the château, Wang Keping will give his own vision of the duo, of twinship, of human duality.

Performing in public

Wang Keping has selected **three oak trunks from the estate's woodlands which he will carve directly in public**, in the château's formal gardens during his residency (from 9 to 15 October and 28 to 30 October). These three new pieces will be displayed in the château courtyard.

■ **Exhibition curation:** Yannick Mercoyrol, heritage and cultural programming director of the *Domaine national de Chambord*

Intentions, *the Ball at Chambord*

"Great works of architecture are unique and unrivalled. They have in common a sense of beauty, a special charm, their humanity. At the heart of the Château de Chambord is the two-directional spiral staircase, a unique creation from Leonardo da Vinci's imagination epitomizing the soul of the Renaissance.

Like the Mona Lisa, the double-twist staircase generates wonderful, never-ending reveries within us. Yet when an artist is to show his work at the foot of such a giant, he faces the challenge of finding a way to resonate with his master's chef-d'œuvre.

I feel privileged and honoured to be invited to show my work here, but I also found it hard to choose pieces from my own work. The double-helix staircase kept turning in my mind. And then, one night, it became clear to me: I envisioned the two forms turning and entwining like a couple's two bodies in a close embrace, just as the beauty of architecture and human nature harmoniously blend into one another. Beauty gives rise to feelings of love, and love is the essence of civilization.

Divine coincidence! For years, Couples were what I had been creating. They had been waiting for such a moment of pleasure! Some of them were invited to attend. What luck – now they would be able to meet at a ball in a royal château, each couple dancing day into night, and night into day alongside the great master's chef-d'œuvre, to the melodious sounds of the Renaissance."

Wang Keping

A virtuoso artist who explores wood in all its potentiality

Wang Keping is heir to the long tradition of direct carving, using single-block tree trunks, with no assemblage. This technique is now quite rare, and Wang Keping is one of the few remaining virtuosos, enabling him to **work with an unusually wide range of woods from many species of trees.**

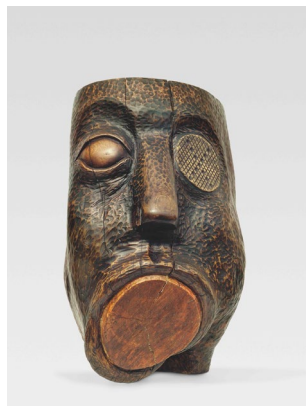
His sculptures show strains of primitive art, Chinese traditional sculpture and also the work of Brancusi, but it is the sensuality of wood that his work conveys above all, an erotic dimension that from the carved, burned and polished surface forms a skin, an object of desire. In formal terms, his vocabulary prefers generous, ample shapes inherently expressing the material's generative force.



Wang Keping in his Vendée studio, 2019 © Aline Wang, Courtesy of the artist and the Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris and Brussels

Wang Keping – Biography

Born in 1949 near Beijing, Wang Keping is one of the greatest Chinese living artists. Though he was attracted for a while by theatre as a young man, he turned to sculpture in the late 1970s, becoming a member of the “Xingxing / 星星” group which burst on to the international art scene in 1979 marking the de facto creation of the first avant-garde art movement to come out of the People’s Republic of China.



Wang Keping, *Silence*, 1978. Carved wood, birch ©Aline Wang

He became a standard bearer for young freedom-loving artists, and his sculpture, titled *Silence*, emblematic of opposition to censorship, made the headlines of the New York Times a few days after an exhibition was banned by the authorities. Married to a teacher of French nationality, Wang Keping waited for over three years before being allowed to travel to Paris in 1984. Two years later he began working with the Galerie Zürcher, a collaboration which lasted thirty years.

In the 1990s, a number of his monumental sculptures were installed in France, the USA and in Germany, but it was with *Spectateurs*, made for the «Champs Elysées de la Sculpture» in 2000, that his career really took off.

Large-scale group shows followed this event, culminating in a solo exhibition in 2009 at the Shenzhen museum, which presented nearly three decades of his work. Over the following years, several museums in France held exhibitions of his work: Zadkine (2010), Cernuschi (2011), Chaumont-sur-Loire (2016 and 2020), Rodin and Guimet (2022), while a first retrospective was given in Beijing at the UCCA Centre for Contemporary Art in 2013; one of his works was purchased by the Musée National d'Art Moderne.

Wang Keping has been represented by the Galerie Nathalie Obadia in Paris and Brussels since 2017.



Wang Keping checking out felled trees in the Chambord woodlands, 2023 © Wang Keping Studio. Courtesy of the artist and the Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris and Brussels

Wang Keping examining the trunk of a three hundred year-old oak that has just arrived in his studio, Vendée, 2020 © Michel Lunardelli, Courtesy of the artist and the Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris and Brussels





The Domaine national de Chambord © Olivier Marchant

The *Domaine national de Chambord*

Chambord has been a source of admiration and fascination throughout the world for over five hundred years. Listed as a historic monument in France in 1840, and a Unesco world heritage site since 1981, Chambord is one of the most astonishing buildings of the Renaissance. Much more than a royal residence or a hunting lodge, Chambord stands for values of humanism, inventiveness and the human genius.

Work refurbishing and restoring the site, developing the cultural programme and extending resources is ongoing, and a new page in the history of Chambord is ready to be written with an upcoming project for the future of the estate.

The priority given to a cultural policy that is cohesive with a diverse public, to welcoming visitors and the well-being of staff members, to projects that are innovative and excellence in ecological matters will form the backbone of development plans as we move towards 2030.

The *Domaine national de Chambord* has been French state property since 1930, and as such is a state-owned establishment of commerce and industry under the authority of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and the Ministry of Ecological transition and territorial cohesion.

The Chambord establishment took over the Grand Parc de Rambouillet following a decree issued by the Council of State dated 1st June 2018.

The Executive Board is presided by Philippe Donnet.

The state-owned establishment is directed by Pierre Dubreuil.

Exhibition events

- Public performances of direct carving of three pieces, from 9 to 15 October and 28 to 30 October
- An exhibition catalogue will be published and will be on sale in the shop at the château and on line (boutiquedechambord.fr)

Visitor information

- The exhibition is included in the general admission: full price **16€**; reduced price **13.50€**; **free to anyone under 26** from the European Union.
- Opening times: 9am to 6pm. Last entry 30 minutes before the château closes. The formal gardens close 30 minutes before the château.

Domaine national de Chambord

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