

Contemporary Art inside Geoparks. The experience of the Haute Provence Geopark (France)

Guy MARTINI , nadine GOMEZ-PASSAMAR

Haute Provence Geopark - France - < E-mail : guy.martini@hotmail.com >

From more than 20 years, the CAIRN Art Center in partnership with the Haute Provence Geopark is inviting famous international artists to realize artworks inside the 2000 Km² Geopark's territory. Today more than 130 artworks are realized and are offering a new dialogue between landscape and geology.

Among these artworks exist a specific program called « Refuge d'Art » which is a single, integral work of art, to be visited over a ten-day hike. Created by the British artist Andy Goldsworthy in partnership with the CAIRN and the Haute Provence Geopark, it is unique in Europe, involving an itinerary of 150 km that traverses a number of exceptional landscapes. It brings together hiking and contemporary art, thereby highlighting both nature and culture.

Linking up three Sentinels (stone cairns, each one located in the heart of a valley), the circuit follows ancient paths among the remnants of an agricultural way of life that was once intense. Goldsworthy wanted to mark the circuit with Refuges in the form of disused houses belonging to the non-protected rural heritage, including chapels, farms and sheepfolds. These have now been restored, and a specially-designed sculpture has been incorporated into each one. They provide shelter for a pause along the route, or indeed, in some cases, the possibility of an overnight stay.

This initiative, through the years, has developed a new « cultural » tourism inside the Geopark and has generated new employment of Geopark guides trained in the same time in geology, contemporary art and Geopark policies.