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Laurent Grasso's Cosmic "SolarWind" Light Artwork in Paris



Laurent Grasso, SolarWind, 2016 © ADAGP
(Semapa Paris Rive Gauche / Ciments Calcia Production Eva Albarran & Co, photo Romain Darnaud)

French artist Laurent Grasso has transformed two 40-meter high, 20-meter wide concrete silos in Paris's 13th arrondissement into a permanent public artwork.

The piece was commissioned as part of the Grand Paris project at the instigation of the 13th district council, Ciments Calcia, and SEMAPA

Grasso's monumental "SolarWind" installation is a poetic translation of cosmic flows into spectacular fluctuations of color and light projected onto the walls of the two silos, which are visible to more than one million motorists every day from the Périphérique orbital highway.

Using data collected by the CNES Space Observatory from various laboratories, the fluctuations in colour and light visually translate the activity and power of solar storms in real time while at the same time map all cosmic objects, such as meteorites, approaching Earth.

"SolarWind recalls the geomagnetic storms that caused the 1989 blackout in Canada as all electrical devices broke down. This work addresses our modern fears by establishing a tight connection between the unknown embodied by solar winds and its possible impact here on Earth," Grasso explains.

Grasso worked a team of optical engineers to realize his technologically complex mapping of these climate phenomena. "The power of solar flares confronts us with our lack of mastery. This is both a poetic and philosophical project infinitely expanding our imagination," he says.

Situated in the epicenter of a zone undergoing major transformations as part of the greatest urban renewal program Paris has experienced since the 19th century, "SolarWind" is Grasso's first permanent public artwork, marking one year since his last solo show at Galerie Perrotin in Paris.



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