

TERRAIN D'ENTENTE / COMMON GROUND

« For the poet, it is gold and silver, but for the philosopher it is iron and wheat that have civilized Man and lost mankind. »

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, « Discourse on the Origin of Inequality » (1755)

« TERRAIN D'ENTENTE / COMMON GROUND » is a site-specific artwork made for *le Jardin habité*. The landscape is turned into a 'theater of fictional operations' through the transposition of a military strategy board game.

The board game «*RISK*», first released in 1959 under the name « La Conquête du monde » (« The Conquest of the World») is played on a 'world scale territory'. The object of the game is to 'conquer the entire world and in so doing, eliminate all other players'. (excerpts of play rules)*

The game, seen as a metaphorical representation of the world, is a vast board game where a violent and sanguinary battle for power and domination takes place.

The chiefs of staff use small scale representations of battle areas, on which they buildup scenarios in order to prepare their attacks: the game goes beyond fiction and meets reality...

On the hill top, the highest point overlooking the village of La Brousse, six masts 9-meters-high are stuck in the ground, with monochrome floating banners – the 6 colors of the *RISK* board game – each one symbolizing a continent. The masts are placed according to the game's specific diagram (the deformed representation of a planisphere) which has been enlarged to match the size of the site, a large area of about 30 meters side wise. The placement of the masts respects the cardinal points directions.

To stick a flag in the ground is the first action that materializes the conquest of a territory. It is the gesture, sometimes meaningless, that an individual does to mark his possession, his hold – or his desire to hold – the world.

This gesture also points out how public space is privatized by intrusive advertising billboards urging us to buy, which are placed at strategic spots – there too, it's a fierce battle to conquer physical (streets, cities) as well as symbolic territories (the slogans invading our 'daily language').

To hold a flag up can also express a political or a social rebellion, or an identity claim. The banners that I propose for *le Jardin habité* are void of all inscription, they have no message to deliver, or rather, they have the potential to deliver 'all' individual messages of hope, dreams or peace.

Ludivine Caillard, March 2011

* Guy Debord and the Situationnists (and before them, Marcel Duchamp with chess) were using games as mode of action and as an artistic – and critical – statement. In 1965, he had imagined a game of military strategy: «The Game of War» (*Kriegspiel*).