

The path of Damastes

lfks 2008 / jean michel bruyère

The path of Damastes is a sculpture made of 21 white medical beds overhung by 21 fluorescent “daylight” tubes. The beds are animated with permanent movements, set and synchronized with a computer. Together they perform a true ballet.

Each bed is equipped with an electric scissor jack, which permits a vertical movement of the bed from 38 to 81 centimetres up from the ground. It also disposes of motorized control of positioning of the upper body, which permits a roundabout movement of part of the mattress in the angle values from 0 to 70 degrees. These movements can be executed either simultaneously or independently.

The 21 beds are linked together via a MIDI system to a PC which commands and synchronizes its programmed movements*. The beds are also animated individually and together they make a vast choreographical ballet. The numerous variations of creaks produced by the lattice structure under the beds in the effort to lift them compose the very music of the piece and its ballet.

The room in which The path of Damastes will be installed is to be entirely covered with a thick layer of dead leaves kept damp and fragrant through regular spraying. Besides their aesthetic and metaphorical contribution, the leaves also make it possible to hide the electric and electronic controls of each bed.

According to the spaces in which the installation will take place, the beds are arranged in one line, in a circle or in another way of alignment, but always in a very coherent, rigorous and regular arrangement (the exact space between each bed will be determined in situ and may vary between a minimum of 90 and a maximum of 115 centimetres).

The beds are equipped with mattresses and pillows, sheets, pillowcases and white blankets.

The fluo tubes are hung above and in the centre of each bed at 2.10 metres high. They are, like the beds, aligned and spaced out in a very precise way.

* : 84 electromechanical relays control the movements of the beds through 20 electronic interfaces which transform the MIDI information in electric impulses. In this way the beds are controlled by a MIDI musical sequencer (84 tracks) which determines the amplitude of the movement and the duration of each of their motors. The system uses 500 meters of cable to link the beds to the robot (relay + MIDI interfaces) and a sound card to enable the computer and the robot to communicate.

1. The Path of Damastes

Damastes is a character from Greek mythology. Damastes, also known as Proustes and Polypemon, lived by the road from Megara to Athens. He had a bed on which he forced travellers to lie down. For those whose size exceeded the size of the bed, he would cut off their feet and legs to make them fit perfectly into the bed. For those who were too small, he would stretch their limbs until they reached the exact measurements of the bed...

2. The bed in European tradition

In traditional and ancient customs, the bed is not only a place of rest, regeneration and death; it symbolizes the body.